

Effectiveness of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL): Perception of University Teachers in Nawabshah Pakistan

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to explore the perceptions of university teachers about Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for English language learning purpose and the tools and techniques used for making the process of English language learning effective. Qualitative research was employed to collect the data from English language teacher of two public sector universities of Nawabshah Pakistan. Two English language teachers participated in this study. The research instrument used for the study was semi-structured interviews conducted with English language teachers. Qualitative data was analyzed using the process of coding, transcription and generating themes from the collected data. The results of the study exhibited that Mobile assisted language learning plays paramount role in teaching and learning English language. This study concluded that the using MALL the students academic learning could be positively affected.

KEYWORDS – Mobile Assisted Language learning, Semi structured interviews, qualitative research, perceptions

1. INTRODUCTION

The English language is considered very important factor for students personal and professional life career development. The English language abilities and capabilities connect students with the global world. Students can achieve lifelong personal, professional, and academic objectives in a world where English language has become an important norm (Raphael, 2017). Teaching of English depends on new and novel teaching methods, techniques and programs introduced by the higher education institutions. The latest trend in teaching and learning around the globe exists on use of computer, software and information technology skill program.

Because, technology has changed the way of teaching and learning (Pourhossein, 2017; Robert, 2005) in this modern age of globalization and computer technology. The integration of technology with the existing teaching and learning methods is the future of teaching and learning (Robert, 2005). It gives an indication that the academic growth and development of any country depends upon the use of information and communication technologies (ICT) skills. The current education system is improving methods of teaching and learning very rapidly. Since the last decade few remarkable improvements in the education system have been introduced through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

It is a new method to learn English language, which is comfortable and easy because it uses the technology such as computers, laptops and smartphones. Moreover, in recent COVID19 pandemic the trend of online learning became the most popular and need of the time. This is because, schools, colleges and universities switched from physical mode of teaching to online mode of teaching and learning. It was technology that made it possible to learn and teach from home stations at any time. Although, there is widespread use of digital communication technology in the world, but still researchers are working on use of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in teaching English language. Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is increasingly used and applied in academic settings in order to assist and boost English language learning and teaching in Pakistan. It is need of the time to use devices like smart phones for teaching and learning purpose to facilitate students. More specifically, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) should be integrated with online classes.

Jin (2017) conducted survey on MALL using Wechat App and recommended that Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) should be introduced in college and university courses.

In this standpoint, many programs and software have been developed to cater academic needs of students, teachers and institutions as well. In the case of Pakistan still there is little research on Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for English language learning and teaching purpose. This study attempts to explore University teachers' perspectives about Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) and the importance of tools and techniques that assist students learning English language effectively and efficiently.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

In COVID-19 epidemic all schools, colleges and universities were closed to save human lives. Since it was a dangerous virus and it directly affected human health thus, people were advised to keep social distancing to limit virus transmission (Sintema, 2020) to other people. COVID scenario raised number of concerns including reduction academic quality and student learning results (Naciri et al., 2020). As a result, a need emerged to implement innovative pedagogical approaches and curriculum practices to strengthen teaching and learning process in the educational institutes. The authors also explored mobile learning (M-learning) to describe use of mobile devices in educational environments.

M-learning is a term that refers to the educational process of using mobile phones to learn. M-learning brings together variety of information and communication technologies to deliver education effectively. Teachers were motivated to include mobile assisted technology in curriculum design, classroom, language and instructions. Technology can boost student self-efficacy in the classroom (Jan, 2016). The benefits of M-learning include the ability to learn outside of the classroom and the development of higher-order thinking skills among children. Use of mobile phone can help students to create an interest in learning and improve their weak areas. Students can use mobile phones to discuss academic topics and subjects with peers and teachers outside of the class. On the other hand, teachers can exchange course materials, lectures, announcements, course assignments and lecture notes with students via WhatsApp and other information technology resources.

In a broader sense, M-learning guides and assists students to develop technological, conversational and solving problems skills, fostering a culture of collaboration, facilitating information sharing, and maximizing educational achievements. According to Pakistan Telecommunication Authority (2021) the number of mobile phone users in Pakistan has expanded rapidly in recent years, from 5.0 million to approximately 188 million. The Tele-density has reached to 85.65%. Not only Smartphones but also other tools such as tablets and small screen computers have become increasingly important for people in this modern era of computer and information technology. A large number of teachers believe that iPads and Apps are useful in classroom (Wang & Chang, 2012) teaching and learning. Learning is influenced by a variety of variables (Arif, Asghar, & Mukhtar, 2020) in this digital world. Mobile phone availability does not automatically imply M-learning. The elements that influence pre service teachers' M-learning preparation is currently understudied (Cheon et al., 2012) and there is need to study pre service and serving teachers in schools, colleges and universities.

M-learning is a new trend in higher education and teacher education that is still in its early stages of growth (Park, 2011). Hence, more research is needed to identify the barriers of M-learning preparation (Hussin et al.2012). M-learning acceptability is equally important for pre-service instructors, in addition to M-learning readiness. Significantly, pandemic has raised the relevance of m-learning preparedness and acceptability, which is essential to preserve social distance without interfering teaching-learning process. It should train instructors to implement M-learning in the field, which will be impossible unless M-learning is first implemented in teacher education institutions. There are 457 educational programs accredited with NACTE in Pakistan (NACTE, 2021). Recently there are few teacher education departments that offers higher degree programs in Pakistan. Few universities also offer virtual or remote learning programs across the country. During epidemic, most distance and virtual universities continued to operate online teaching. Traditional teacher education institutes teaching-learning process suffered due to abrupt shift from physical learning to online learning approach. In Pakistan, researchers looked into several areas of ICT and learning for pre-service teachers. The incorporation of ICT courses in teacher education programs was explored by Majoka, Fazal, and Khan (2013).

Abdullah and Mirza (2020) assessed distance and online teacher education institutions' teaching practices. Soomro, Kale, and Yousuf Zai (2014) investigated pre-service teachers' attitudes regarding learning via social networks in Pakistan. Nonetheless, there is a lack of research on how to use ICT, particularly widely available cell phones, in an emergency. In fact, teacher education policymakers were unable to devise an effective strategy for implementing mobile learning approaches during epidemic. Learners can obtain necessary skills and competencies through non-formal education. It helps students demonstrate commitment, involvement, and accountability in learning process (Linden, 2015).

Non-formal education is advantageous since it allows students to control their own education. It aids multicultural awareness, self-esteem, self-respect, self-management, motivation, creativity, and self-confidence (Melnic, 2014).

On an intellectual level, students' study and practice taking initiative, teamwork, cooperation, problem-solving, communication skills, and administrative talents (Guilherme & Morgan, 2009). There is lot of latitude and resources for engaging students in activities outside of the classroom in non-formal education (Alfaro, 2017). Foster (2011) believes that many society segments and clusters collaborate and work together to promote education in both formal and non-formal settings. He emphasized on importance of establishing knowledge communities to foster learning in underserved populations, such as remote locations of Pakistan. Truly speaking, the non-formal sector has not been well studied or planned in Pakistan. Therefore, policymakers lack accurate information about number of students involved, educational materials utilized, the issues encountered during the process, and the obstacles encountered by teachers and learners. It is also unknown what difficulties teachers face teaching textbooks in such situations. Resultantly, educators in such classrooms receive no support or assistance. By assisting such educators, we may be able to improve the way students learn English language in Pakistan.

3. METHODOLOGY

In the light of above literature the research work is based on the following one research question.

R. Q. 1. What are teacher's perceptions regarding Language learning through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?

The instruments used for this study were Semi Structured Interview Questionnaire. Interviews were conducted with English language teachers of department of English at QUEST University Nawabshah, and department of English SBBU University Nawabshah Pakistan. Two teachers from each university participated in the interview. Semi structured interviews were conducted with English Language Teachers of two Public Sector Universities of Nawabshah to answer this Research Question. Interview data were transcribed, coded and themes were generated accordingly. The Research question contained 2 interview questions that focused teachers' perceptions about Language learning through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). The description of questions is produced as under:

- What is your perception that Mobiles played paramount role in online teaching and learning during COVID-19 Pandemic in Pakistan?
- How do you think that Mobile assisted language learning facilitates students' academic learning effectively?

4. FINDINGS

Research Question 1: What are teacher's perceptions regarding Language learning through Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL)?

Data were analyzed qualitatively. Content analysis approach was used for data analysis. Several categories emerged during interview that focused Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in Pakistan. First teachers were asked whether Mobiles played paramount role in online teaching and learning during COVID-19 Pandemic in Pakistan. In response to this question teachers responded as:

Mobiles played an important role in online teaching during COVID-19 Pandemic. Because, I noted that all the students do not possess desktops and Laptops and they could not afford it. Thus, mobile was the only source of learning for them. **(TEACH 1)**

we cannot deny the importance of mobile Learning specially when we consider pandemic situation, so this is the new Window for many of us because previously we had gone through the physical Classes now this time we had gone through the online classes and many other things...we cannot ignore the importance or benefits of MALL. **(TEACH 2)**

Moreover, when teachers were asked whether Mobile assisted language learning (MALL) facilitates students' academic learning effectively they responded:

Mobile assisted language learning facilitates learners understanding language learning process easily. MALL promotes student motivation, develop self-Language learning, helps to enrich vocabulary, promote speaking, grammar and listening skill. **(TEACH 1)**

Again, the point comes that when we have to use mobile in a right way. When Users and learners use it for academic purposes then it is very much beneficial for them. (TEACH 2)

5. CONCLUSION

In this research semi-structured interviews were conducted from two English language teachers at two university of Nawabshah Pakistan. The teachers agreed that the mobiles played an important role in online teaching during COVID-19 Pandemic. A mobile phone provides easy access to the language learning. The language learning through MALL shall be promoted. According to teachers mobile assisted language learning makes the process of learning easy and effective. MALL promotes student motivation, develop self-Language learning, helps to enrich vocabulary, promote speaking, grammar and listening skill.

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