

# **Investigating The Obstacles That Face Primary and Intermediate Students in Using Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) from Teachers' Perspectives**

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### **Abstract**

The aim of the study is to investigate the obstacles that face the primary and intermediate students in utilizing the mobile applications in learning English language from the teachers' perspectives. The participants of the study were male and female teachers from the primary and intermediate schools in the first Al-Rusafa Education directorate, first Al-Karkh Education directorate, and Heet Education directorate in Anbar. To achieve the aim of the study, the following question was set: "what do the teachers' perceive as obstacles to utilize MALL for English learning?" A questionnaire was used to answer the question of the study. The findings revealed that the teachers agreed on some obstacles that face the students to use MALL in learning English language. The highest percentage as an obstacle that face students was entitled "The compatibility between the material in the textbook and the mobile applications learning program" followed the item entitled "Lack and absence of teachers' training sessions on using MALL".

**Keywords:** Obstacles, Primary and Intermediate Students, Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), Teachers' Perspectives.

### **1. Introduction**

The researchers notice that the Arab world starts to use mobile applications in education. This innovative approach of teaching English language needs to be investigated in the Arab world to measure its effect on education. The University Of Anbar urges the instructors and the students to use technology in learning. The University established technology labs and provided the University instructors with facilities to record their lectures on the virtual labs.

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## Statement of the Problem

The researchers have faced some difficulties in using smartphone applications in teaching the English language inside and outside the classroom, and they tried several times to use mobile assisted language learning (MALL), but during the implementation of MALL several problems emerged which push both the students and the instructors to leave MALL and use the usual teaching and learning methods. The present paper is an attempt to investigate EFL school teachers' perceptions toward the obstacles that face them to use MALL.

### **1.2 Question of the Study**

The study tries to answer the following question: "What do the school teachers in Iraq perceive as obstacles to use MALL in teaching English learning?"

### **1.3 Significance of the Study**

To the best of the researchers' knowledge, no study has investigated the obstacles that face the school teachers in Iraq in using MALL. The outcomes of the study can benefit the English language teachers, curriculum designers, syllabus planners, and the Policy-Makers at Ministry of Education.

### **1.4 Limitations of the study**

The limits of the study are as follow:

- 1-The participants of the study were from English language primary and intermediate school teachers
- 2-Location: The locations of the schools are in Baghdad, Rashdiah District, and Heet District in Anbar province.
- 3-Time: the study was conducted in the first semester of the academic year 2018-2019 and its applications can be changed in the future.

## **2. Literature Review**

In the last 20 years when the educationalists utilized the computer in teaching and learning language inside the classroom, they start to investigate the difficulties and the obstacles that face both students and teachers in using mobile assisted language learning in (MALL) in education. As the Smartphone is being used in education, it is time to investigate the obstacles, boundaries, limitations, and difficulties that face or encounter the teachers in using MALL in teaching the English language (Al-Khayyat, 2015). The education via mobile or what is called Mobile learning (M-learning) has got popularity in changing the methods of teaching and learning English language, but as it is a novice pedagogical method, it has accompanied with challenges from both teachers and learners. The first implementation of the

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mobile as assisted language learning was done by SMS, because the Smartphones did not exist at that time (Plana et al., 2016:4).

One of the big challenges with Smartphone teaching is to ensure that duties are fitted to the aim of learning the devices used. The research into Computer Assisted Language Learning, there was a hope to see tasks that were built for "pen and paper" to be transferred essentially as is. Thus, in many situations, promoters and practitioners did not take merit of the potential interactivity afforded by computers (Levy, 1997). Concerning "Mobile devices" is that many activities follow the same thing into CALL (Godwin-Jones, 2011).

Mobile device is not far in providing technological service than what computers do. It has some features that distinguished it from other technological devices such as the small size and the possibility of download applications. The application varied from social communication to games and even there is a space for education to be used. The existence of such a range of "personal and social applications" implies that learners may not perceive their mobile devices as appropriate tools for learning (Stockwell, 2013: 5).

Concerning the ambiguity that the mobile devices carry, El-Hariry (2015: 299) states that " a lot of researchers are conducted to understand how the mobile devices could be used to reach better education because they include a wide variety of applications and different learning and teaching techniques".

Saricoban, and Ozturan (2013) find that the Japanese University Students Spend most of their time using mobile device, but they still face difficulty to learn the English language. So, it is good chance to try MALL with Japanese students to develop their language performance.

Concerning the obstacles that may encounter the EFL learners is the technology; Network speed is the major obstacle that face the learners. The weak signal bothered the learners to use mobile applications in learning the English language, also the small size of the Screen, the capacity of battery, small size of the keyboard, low volume of Sound, and ....etc are the major obstacles that face the EFL learners to use MALL inside and outside the classroom (Smordal and Gregory, 2005).

### **1.5 Review of Related Studies**

After reviewing the previous studies, the researchers found that very rare studies investigated the students' attitudes toward the difficulty that face them in using mobile device in learning. Most of the study investigated students' attitude toward using mobile in language learning.

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Saidouni and Bahloul (2016) investigate EFL teachers and learners attitudes towards the effectiveness of MALL. The participants were 80 post graduate students, and 14 EFL instructors. Questionnaires were used to collect the data of the study. The results revealed that the learners and the instructors have positive attitude towards the significance of MALL in education.

Saricoban and Ozturan (2016) investigate the effect of MALL and students' attitudes toward MALL. The participants attitudes toward MALL. The participants were 36 students at preparatory school. A mobile SMS application with a questionnaire were used to collect the data of the study. the results revealed that students feel enjoyable in using MALL.

Yuradagul and Oz (2018) investigate the attitude of students towards MALL. The participants were 294 students. A questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The finding revealed that students like the use of MALL.

El-Emran et al., (2016) investigate, students and instructors attitudes towards MALL in higher education Universities in Oman and UAE. Two questionnaires were used to collect the data of the study. The participants were 383 students and 54 instructors. The results showed that there were positive attitudes towards MALL regard to the students' country. Also, MALL can be a "Promising Pedagogical technologies" to be used in education.

Ali et. Al., (2018) investigate the perceptions of teachers working in different post graduate colleges in Pakistan about the integration of mobile phone in their English class rooms. The participants were 100 teachers randomly selected. An organized questionnaire was used to collect the data of the study. The findings revealed that MALL is a new phenomenon and it is approved by Pakistani teachers in their language classrooms.

Nikou and Economides (2019) investigate teachers' acceptance mobile-based assessment (TAMBA) model which "extends the technology acceptance model by introducing individual, social, institutional and instructional design factors". A questionnaire was developed to collect the data of the study. The participants were 161 STEM teachers from 32 European countries. The proposed TAMBA model explains about 50% of the variance in teachers' intention to adopt mobile-based assessment. "Perceived Ease of Use" was found to be the most important determinant in teachers' intention to use mobile-based assessment. The findings revealed that focusing on mobile assessment quality design as well as on institutional support are

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important factors for STEM teachers in order to accept mobile-based assessments in schools.

## 2. Research Methodology

The aim of the study is to investigate the obstacles that the teachers face in using MALL, thus the paper is based on qualitative and quantitative procedures to collect the data of the study by using a questionnaire which was built by the researchers.

### 3.1 Participants of the Study

The participants of the study were 30 EFL school teachers who were chosen from 3 schools, the first one is in Baghdad at Al-Ameriah District, the second one is at Al-Rashdiah District, and the third one is at Heet District in Anbar province. The schools were chosen purposefully due to logistic matter. They are located to the researchers' residents. Table 1 shows the distribution of the EFL teachers.

Table 1: Teachers distribution.

School	Location	Males	Females
Al-Ma'arifa Basic School	Baghdad	6	4
Bint-Alhuda Basic school	Rashdiah	non	10
Al-Mirbid Basic school	Heet	3	7
Total		9	21

## Research Instrument

The researchers have distributed open questions to the participants which required them to mention the most obstacles factors that they think might face them to use Smartphone's applications in teaching the English language. From the outcomes of teachers' responds, the researchers designed a questionnaire which consisted of 15 items. The teachers have to respond to each item either as a major obstacle, minor obstacle, or not an obstacle to use MALL.

### 3.2 Validity and Reliability of the Questionnaire

The validity of the questionnaire was obtained by giving it to specialists in curriculum, methodology, and educational technology in University Of Anbar and Iraqia University. Modifications have been done according to their suggestions. To examine the construct validity of the questionnaire, it has distributed to a pilot sample which consisted of 7 EFL teachers. After 15 days, the questionnaire has been distributed to the sample of the study under the same conditions. Cronbach Alpha was used to reveal the reliability coefficient. The value was 0.91.

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### 4 Results of the Study

To answer the question of the study "what do the teachers' perceive as obstacles to utilize MALL for English learning?" a percentage ratio was used to analyze the items of the questionnaire. Table 2 shows the results.

Table 2: The percentage ratio of teachers' responds Al-Ma'arifa Basic School, Bint-Alhuda Basic school, and Al-Mirbid Basic school.

Items	Major obstacle	Minor obstacle	Not An Obstacle
1. To own Smartphone device.	6.25	9.37	84.37
2. I feel teaching via MALL is boring.	12.50	15.62	75.00
3. The school policy is to use technology equipment than MALL program.	6.25	8.38	88.47
4. I feel it is difficult to use MALL in writing and speaking.	50.00	9.37	40.62
5. It is uncomfortable to read materials via mobile screen.	90.60	9.37	0.00
6. I feel that MALL programs isolate me from collaboration.	9.37	15.62	75.00
7. MALL programs create personalized learning .	68.75	18.75	12.15
8. The absence of MALL culture in our society.	87.50	9.37	3.12
9. The majority of MALL programs are being designed by – non-governmental institution, thus they lack reliability and validity measurements.	84.37	9.37	6.25
10. Lack and absence of teachers' training sessions on using MALL	90.62	6.25	3.12
11. Download the appropriate instruction applications.	78.12	15.62	6.25
12. Instruction for using the application program	71.87	21.87	6.26
13. The absence of intrinsic and extrinsic motivation to use MALL	78.12	21.87	0.00

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14.	The compatibility between the material in the textbook and the mobile applications learning program.	96.87	3.12	0.00
15.	Mall does not provide rich explanation like some websites do.	18.76	59.36	21.86

Table two shows that there are differences in the obstacles that encounter the teachers to use MALL. The highest major obstacle that encounter the teachers is the item entitled "The compatibility between the material in the textbook and the mobile applications learning program" with ratio 96.87, followed the item entitled "Lack and absence of teachers' training sessions on using MALL", with ratio 90.62. The highest ratio of the minor obstacle is for the item entitled "Mall does not provide rich explanation like some websites do" 59.36, and followed the item entitled "access to internet" 25.00. The highest ratio for the items which the participants considered them not obstacle to use the Smartphone is for the item entitled "The school policy is to use technology equipment than MALL program" 88.47, followed the item entitled "To own Smartphone device".

### Discussion of the Results

The teachers agreed on the most important points that face them as obstacles to use MALL in teaching English language. The teachers in the schools agreed that the most major obstacle that face them to use MALL is that the compatibility between the material in the textbook and the mobile applications learning program. The mobile applications are designed to serve a specific field and cannot find a program that can go side by side with the instructional material in the student's textbook or the activity book. Also, they agreed that Lack and absence of teachers' training sessions on using MALL is a major obstacle factor they face to use MALL to teach English language. The educational application may serve the learners to develop a specific skill, but not all skills and techniques. As a minor limitation, the teachers agreed that the instruction for using the application programs is not available in most programs. This indicates that the teachers do not know how to use learning application programs. Also, MALL does not provide rich explanation like some websites do is considered as a minor obstacle with high ration. Some website programs are designed based on specific curriculum. They considered as guided lessons and may solve most of the activity book. Unlike

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the educational websites programs, the MALL application programs are restricted to specific skill or task.

When merging both the major and minor limitations, it can be inferred that the teachers considered that the majority of MALL Programs are being designed by non-governmental institution; thus they lack reliability and validity measurements. The instrument validity and reliability are very important factors in education. Validity focuses on reducing error in the measurement tool, because it is the extent to which the tool measure what is it designee to measure, so it must be designed in a precise way. There are five types of validity for each instrument, the criterion validity, face validity, content validity, and construct validity. In other hand each instrument must be reliable. Validity evaluates the stability of measures. The instrument must be stable in any circumstances. The results of the study revealed that most of MALL programs lack validity and reliability features.

### **Conclusion**

It can be inferred that the obstacles that encountered the EFL teachers are as following:

1. The incompatibility between the material in the textbook and the mobile applications learning program.
2. Lack and absence of teachers' training sessions on using MALL
3. It is uncomfortable to read materials via mobile screen.
4. The majority of MALL programs are being designed by – non-governmental institution, thus they lack reliability and validity measurements.
5. The absence of MALL culture in our society.
6. Download the appropriate instruction applications.

### **Recommendations**

The researchers recommend the following:

- 1- Establishing English language learning application programs adopted and updated by governmental educational institutions. This may be adopted by AROQA institution in the Kingdom of Jordan.
- 2- Establishing training sessions to train schools' teachers to use MALL programs, and the strategies which increased learner's intrinsic and extrinsic motivations.
- 3- Urge the EFL teachers to record their lectures and up-load them on the school's web-site.
- 4- Including the syllabus some subjects that push the students to use MALL program under the supervision of the Ministry of Higher Education.



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التحقق في المعوقات التي تواجه طلبة الابتدائية والمتوسطة في استخدام الموبايل المساعد

لتعلم اللغة من وجهة نظر المعلمين

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المستخلص

هدف الدراسة هو التحقق في التحقق في المعوقات التي تواجه طلبة الابتدائية والمتوسطة في استخدام الموبايل المساعد لتعلم اللغة من وجهة نظر المعلمين. كان المشاركون في الدراسة من مديرية تربية الرصافة الأولى، ومديرية تربية الكرخ الأولى، ومديرية تربية هيت في الأنبار. لغرض تحقيق هدف الدراسة، تم صياغة السؤال التالي: " ماذا يرى المعلمون كمعوقات لاستخدام الموبايل المساعد لتعلم اللغة لتعلم اللغة الانجليزية؟" تم استخدام استبيان لإجابة سؤال الدراسة. أظهرت نتائج الدراسة ان المعلمين اتفقوا على بعض المعوقات التي تواجه الطلبة في استخدام الموبايل المساعد لتعلم اللغة في تعلم اللغة الانجليزية، وكان اعلي نسبة كمعوق للاستخدام للفقرة بعنوان "التوافق بين مواد الكتاب و تطبيقات برامج الموبايل" تبعتها الفقرة بعنوان "نقص وغياب دورات تدريب المعلمين لاستخدام الموبايل المساعد لتعلم اللغة".

الكلمات المفتاحية: المعوقات، طلبة الابتدائي والمتوسط، الوبايل المساعد لتعلم اللغة، آراء المعلمين.