Teachers' Perspectives on Foreign Language Acquisition and Mobile or Computer Assisted Language Learning: A Qualitative Study

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Abstract—The study underscores issues of teachers' perspectives, their understanding, awareness, utilization, and effectiveness of technological mediated mobile capabilities in foreign language acquisition (FLA). Seven teachers (FLA) from five nationalities were interviewed online, and the data collected and compiled along with notes were descriptively analyzed. The findings illustrate that although FLA teachers are ready to embrace changes and accept the usage of technology-mediated computer and mobile-assisted language learning (C/MALL) in online classes; however, this adaptability posits some challenges, which need technical support, training, interactions on its usage for language acquisition. The argument emphasizes the discourses between FLA teachers, parents, and institutions for creating a conducive environment and technological affordances for executing computer and mobile-assisted language learning in significant ways. Besides, it highlights the contradiction between the usage of Smart Mobile Devices (SMDs) for language acquisition and lack of efficiency and effective use of such devices by teachers, and the formalities of mobile use for teachers to include student-centered activities and students' immersion. Finally, the study presents implications and prospects for future studies based on the perception of FLA teachers, and parents towards the use of the computer or SMDS viewed as CALL or MALL.

Index Terms—mobile-assisted language learning, language acquisition, language learning, teacher perception, CALL

I. INTRODUCTION

Before March 2020, the concept of virtual and online learning was known to very few people. The sudden arrival of unprecedented and unforeseen pandemics has brought pernicious impacts on human lives and academia remains no longer an exception. Online learning, perhaps, gained momentum in the last decade of the last century, but today, it has become the main source of learning. There have been revolutionary changes in academia that recognized the vitality of technology-mediated learning in its contexts and purviews. This century witnessed a massive usage of mobile technologies by people making them aware of abrupt changes in global scenarios. Numerous advantages like handiness, smooth functioning, customization, and connectivity, make mobile phone users easy to adopt from different perspectives; alike, students and teachers today use it in learning and teaching. This provided a silver line in the dark clouds for stakeholders who took it first as a challenge and then transformed it into opportunities that included students' expertise in substantial mobile usage in daily life. Thus, the millennials are given ample opportunities to exploit their technological skills and this provided the required impetus to online learning. A little action required is to change the direction of students' inclination from games to language learning, and also underscore the prospects and affordances of mobile phone usage to guide them how Smart Mobile Devices (henceforth, as SMDs) may facilitate language learning by adequate access to resources to gain knowledge, acquaintance of language that can be translated through better communication and contribution to the native culture and global business world. Similarly, parents, teachers, students, and stakeholders who never had experienced such measures and technology-mediated and computer or mobile-assisted language learning (henceforth, C/MALL) affordabilities have now become familiar to utilize it effectively in online learning. These, for now, replace as an effective tool for offline classrooms. The attitude, method, panache, and approach to learning might differ to different subjects, but the fundamental requisites remain the same for all subjects. Alike, foreign language acquisition (FLA) has its own unique features to language learning since it facilitates different tools, techniques, and resources to solidify learning situations and opportunities for language learners. Therefore, the study tries to comprehend different perceptions around the orientation of the stakeholders and technical affordances. It also makes a seminal attempt to underscore issues of teachers' perspectives, their understanding, awareness, utilization, and effectiveness of technological mediated mobile capabilities.

Though several studies on C/MALL deliberated on teacher efficacy, student efficiency, knowledge, skills to operate mobile applications, and affordances, there is still ample scope of studies examining and focusing on the perception of FLA on the use of the technology-mediated C/MALL. These perspectives assist students to integrate their know-how into online classes; on the other hand, teachers may create such ambiance that invites, engages, and makes language learning complete. For this to happen, the researchers prepared a questionnaire that dealt with all the burning issues

teachers meet in language learning. Its main aim is to collect required information, via online personal interaction and online questionnaire, on how the prevailing learning concepts utilizing technology-mediated sources like C/MALL contribute to FLA and the findings, thereafter, assist researchers to understand how effective these devices and methods are in enhancing learners' language proficiency. Additionally, it will also guide FLA teachers to think more to make the best utilization of SMDs in offline classes, and also to introduce technology in the curriculum to influence the primitive notion of traditional practices in language acquisition and language learning.

In the light of the abovementioned introduction, the two given terms 'CALL' and 'MALL' need further explanation to make concepts clear for the worthy readers to better comprehend the forthcoming proceedings.

A. Computer-assisted Language Learning (CALL)

Today, we witness students attending online classes replacing the classical education methods. Modern technologies have created a plethora of opportunities to create computer software programs, journals, and lessons that include exercises on reading comprehension, vocabulary building, writing, grammar, listening, and speaking for attaining fluency and correct pronunciation for language acquisition and language learning. Students take more interest in the easy access to data, multimedia-based improved audio-visual study materials and data transmission technologies, and try to explore and learn more for better interpretation of language concepts. Levy (1997) has defined CALL as they search for and study of applications of the computer in language teaching and learning. Egbert (2004) defines it as learning a language through computers or with the aid of computers beyond the matter and the context. Simply defining Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) as an innovative instrument and method to assist language learners to develop their language skills, which enhance their communication skills, cognitive skills, and develop creativity, autonomy, efficiency, and collaboration.

Since the start of its journey in the 1960s, CALL picked momentum in the last lap of twentieth century with the invention of new storage devices CD-ROMs, CD, MP3, DVD, e-books, journals blog, website, and e-library that cater to all students' demands. These devices can store dictionaries, encyclopedia information, language course content in the latest video forms using graphics, animations, and other multimedia tools to make learning interesting and affordable. Lee (2000) believed that CALL focuses on individual needs; further, Ravichandran (2000) revealed that it allows learners to work on their own learning material to meet their learning objectives. Kung (2002) affirmed that language teachers using CALL have increased strikingly due to a range of language experiences. Therefore, CALL facilitates students with adequate contents to study their course and develop their language skills at their own interests, needs, time, pace, and learning styles. We may summarize CALL with Bahrani's definition that states:

> The computer-delivered combination of a large range of communication elements- text, sound, graphics, pictures, photographs, animation, and moving video. Language Learning is concerned with the development of communication skills and has traditionally and creatively exploited all these communication elements in its classroom context. (Bahrani, 2011, p.273)

B. Mobile-assisted Language Learning (MALL)

The technological advancements have brought tremendous changes not only in the information and communications technology sector but also enabled learners to use SMDs in their day-to-day learning. Every child uses a mobile phone at early childhood and eventually it becomes a significant part of life. The SMDs include mobile phones, tabs with an internet capability, language software, electronic encyclopedia, dictionaries, MP3 players, etc. The salient features of portability, flexibility and ease to operate different applications make it user-friendly and effective. Similarly, learning through SMDs, in language acquisition and language learning perspective, is a modern technique that facilitates learners to perform their learning activities and access the course learning materials easily and freely without any constraints at their own convenience of place, time, and resolve using the SMDs. Holbah and Sharma (2021) revealed that teachers used technology to conduct activities that allowed students to participate and enhance their cognitive skills. Many studies found learners achieve better results when they utilize their knowledge, skill, intent to enjoy, self-efficacy, and easy handling characteristics in language acquisition.

Twarog and Pereszlenyi-Pinter (1988) carried out research on MALL that indicated the 1980s but with the telephone-assisted language because telephones were the only means to provide distant language learners with assistance and feedback. MALL came to academia in this century and has grown immensely in the last decade in the language learning domain. Kloper et al. (2002) on reflecting MALL argued five unique educational attributes of SMDs; portability; social interactivity; context-sensitivity; connectivity; and individual learning.

Kukulska Hulme and Shield (2008) explained MALL as formal or informal learning mediated via handheld devices that are potentially available for use anytime, anywhere. Several studies have been undertaken in the century that focused on the MALL applications, multimedia usages, and developments on incorporating features to develop communication skills (e.g. Stanford Learning Lab; Chinnery, 2006; Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008; Thornton & Houser, 2003; Garcia Cabrera, 2002; Belanger, 2005; Kukulska-Hulme, 2005). Therefore, we may call it a younger sister of CALL but has a bright future to dominate the world of academia with its cutting edge features.

Before we continue the research process further, it is equally important to understand the related studies previously carried out utilizing the technology-mediated instruction using CALL or MALL and how far they contributed to this language acquisition and language learning. Besides, it will facilitate easy sail to take up the research questions

effectively to arrive at certain conclusions to serve as a panacea to most language acquisition problems, and propositions for future reference; therefore, the brief explanation of the previous connected studies follows.

II. PREVIOUS STUDIES

To build a robust platform for the research, it is a prerequisite to understand the development of CALL and MALL (discussed above) and to know the perspectives of FLA teachers on the implementation in online learning. The current situations in online learning created abundant opportunities to investigate the pros and cons of CALL or MALL on students' learning. Numerous studies illuminated teachers' perceptions on its effective usage, self-efficacy, pedagogical affordances and challenges of these devices (Churchill et al., 2012; Handal et al., 2013; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2014; Mills et al., 2014; Pegrum et al., 2013; Sad & Goktas, 2013; Thomas & O'Bannon, 2013; Woodill, 2013). Teachers' perceptions on integrating SMDs to enhance teaching are paramount to the success of implementing mobile technological innovation in education (Handal et al., 2013; Marinakou & Giousmpasoglou, 2014). More exposure to the foreign or second language through mobile phone also enhance interest and develop reading, writing, and listening skills, as Sharma (2018) claims that the students are usually exposed to language through; watching TV, videos, movies, listening to music, read books, classroom instructions, interaction, and mobile-phone applications.

Since SMDs has a significant part in students' routines, it may be for reading and sending messages, sharing photos, writing opinions on specific issues, listening to music, watching videos using social media platforms. On the other hand, students and teachers communicate through emails, writing blogs, attending videoconferences, planning and sharing routine activities, searching information and content for subjects, and many more creating a healthy digital learning environment. The two concepts CALL and MALL contribute to developing language proficiency in reading comprehension, listening audios, grammar, writing, quizzes, worksheets, assignments, pronunciations, speaking, etc. The former emphasizes using computer technology for language learning and its related features, the latter trails CALL by using mobile technologies and related concepts applying it to language learning. Therefore, students use both CALL and MALL extensively not only to build cognitive ability to improve language proficiency but also to build strong bonding with teachers, relatives, and friends. Additionally, sustaining the power of SMDS may be used to affect learning both in the social-cultural and cognitive aspects (Pachler, 2009) whereas it also stimulates interaction among students outside the classroom (Sharples et al., 2009). Both are complementary and supplementary each; however, MALL differs from CALL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use" (Kukulska-Hulme & Shields, 2008, p. 273). Both play a major role in gauging learners' achievements accurately validating their results. Ebadi and Bashir (2021) revealed that mobile-based dynamic assessment enhances EFL learners' written proficiency as a result of the collaborations between the learners and the instructor using text and voice-based mediation. These findings state the efficacy of using mobile technology as a tool and technique in language teaching and learning beyond traditional classrooms to relaxed learning environments. The use of ICT has been extensively used in the current scenarios; alike, CALL and MALL have gone ahead among students and researchers and proved their worth with its salient features mainly individualized learning.

The aforesaid studies have underscored the usages in language acquisition and language learning in different perspectives; however, ignoring the major stakeholder teachers' view on the effectiveness of CALL and MALL for their students. Similarly, a few studies established evidence proving its positive effects on learners' motivation (Kim et al., 2013), and on the degree of collaboration and interaction both among learners and between the teachers and learners (Goh et al., 2012).

III. RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The following questions guided this study:
1. What are the teachers' perspectives towards CALL/MALL usage in language acquisition and language learning?
2 Does the CALL/MALL significantly improve students' language acquisition and language learning?

IV. RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

The case study was preferred as the qualitative scientific inquiry approach to investigate the effectiveness of CALL and MALL when implemented in the pandemic to further understand parents' and teachers' perceptions of English as a foreign language learning. It followed the triangular method for data collection through personal interactions, online questionnaire, and participant observations. The questionnaire was prepared in Arabic to get more insights and feedbacks. Adequate deliberations were undertaken to design a questionnaire and later modified on the experts' opinions to ensure the reliability of the data obtained.

A. Participants

A group of seven (four males and three females) working at the English Language Institute in Jazan University was randomly selected for conducting personal interactions after obtaining their permission to participate. The participating faculty members were originally from Sudan, Egypt, Yamen, and Saudi Arabia. Four of them were doctoral and three

obtained their master's degrees, all working in different colleges. All seven participants spoke both English and Arabic (as their native language) fluently.

TABLE 1
SUMMARIZES DEMOGRAPHIC INFORMATION FOR THE PARTICIPANTS

	Parents' age	Teaching Experience in KSA in KSA	Highest level of education	Language use at home
PR/TR-1	35-40	More than 10	Ph.D	Arabic
PR/TR-2	40-50	More than 10	Ph.D	Arabic
PR/TR-3	50-60	More than 10	Ph.D	Arabic
PR/TR-4	40-50	More than 10	Ph.D	Arabic
PR/TR-5	30-35	Less than 10	Master	Arabic
PR/TR-6	35-40	Less than 10	Master	Arabic
PR/TR-7	30-35	Less than 10	Master	Arabic

B. Data Collection

Informal-interaction

To get reliable and real inputs, the researcher conducted informal interviews telephonically to allow respondents to express their opinion more freely. This was required to get better respondents' understanding of a topic, situation, setting, etc. It sets a platform to administer questionnaires to get their genuine opinions responding to the given questions. During the personal interaction, ten semi-structured questions were asked to engage and respond in narrating their education, teaching experience, professional careers, personal interests, learning environments, educational expectations for students, experience using C/MALL in online teaching and learning, opinions about use of mobile technology and suggestions. The participants answered all questions.

V. TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES

A. Role of the Professor in Motivating or Encouraging Students to Use Technology in Education

The teachers in this study demonstrated their commitment to motivation and encouragement to use mobile technology in their students' language learning and claimed that the learners will be able to learn faster, perform and develop their linguistic skills. All were unanimous on incorporating CALL and MALL in language acquisition and language learning because of distinct features mobile technology has. The students reflect better learning since they can easily access the sources on mobile to extract information by using MALL as per their convenience of time, place, and affordances. The teachers believed that these experiences were by and large fruitful for students to develop good communication skills. Some of the responses to the question are given below.

> Use of CALL and MALL guide students on how to use technology tools to learn English (attend lessons, do homework and class fees, participate and interact during lectures) [TR1]

> The role of the professor lies in motivating the student to use technology by providing examples of how to use these techniques in building vocabulary, grammatical exercises, and different language skills, and how the student can use various means to develop self-learning skills, and may also encourage him through continuous reminders and some assignments that require the use of student of that technique. [TR3]

> Undoubtedly, the professor plays a pivotal role in motivating his students to use technology in education by setting a set of tasks and assignments and assigning them to search for answers and additional information using the technologies available to them. [TR4]

> The role of the professor in motivating students to use technology in education lies in: the use of modern and flexible programs that can be applied with students so that it is easy for the student to use them as well, such as Blackboard, Zoom, Oxford Dictionary, Canvas, the electronic version of the curriculum and others; assigning students to perform some tasks and duties and submitting them electronically through some electronic applications such as Blackboard and others; and diversification and renewal in the use of effective electronic means such as the whiteboard, illustrator, images, audio and video clips, presentation files such as PowerPoint, Prezi, and share them with students during the lecture instead of being limited to the electronic book only. [TR7]

B. Assistance the Professor Provides for Students to Use English using Mobile Technology

Students learn better and faster when they get support from their teacher to use the English language using computer-mediated mobile technology. The teachers illustrated that providing ample support in content, feedback, allowing them to use social media, providing them additional language learning applications, etc. help them improve their linguistic and cognitive skills to overcome their difficulties. For example

> Determine the level of students' educational attainment through exercises and direct and indirect questions during lectures; also provide individual and group instructions and directions to students to help them overcome their difficulties. [TR1]

The professor can provide direct assistance to the student by introducing him to the various technical means and their types and advantages available to the student, and there is no harm in presenting a comparison or comparison with the student to be aware of the advantages (and defects, if any), and he can help him on how to use them in his scientific, linguistic and cognitive achievement through direct practical application.   [TR3]

By motivating students to read various topics from websites, and encouraging them to practice and solve additional exercises or standardized tests such as IELTS and TOEFL, as well as by helping them to join English language courses provided by trusted bodies such as the British Council and Cambridge centers.

[TR4]

By providing websites and applications that help the student learn English. Also activating the technical use in virtual classes by sharing links to sites such as (white board to teach writing or some games such as Kahoot).

[TR5]

C. *Home Environment Motivates and Encourages the Student to Study the Language*

The home environment plays a vital role in students' life since it creates conducive learning conditions to partake and develop their reading and writing skills. All participants responded positively and agreed that the homely learning environment language enhances students' abilities to adapt, think and learn for future success, and providing positive experiences facilitates social interaction, attention and activities to stimulate progressive attitudes to learn, reducing distractions and enhancing affective skills. Besides, it also motivates and encourages students to develop socio-cultural communication and build good relations with their peers, family, and community. For example

Yes, when the appropriate tools and resources are available for learning and the appropriate family environment for study, as well as a continuous follow-up from the parents.   [TR1]

The home environment can motivate the student if they see that their son is motivated to learn, and it is preferable that the student declare this to his family so that he receives moral and material support and encouragement. The family can also cultivate the spirit of perseverance and competition in their son through supervision and follow-up to create the desired home environment.   [TR3]

Yes, by creating a quiet environment suitable for education. During the e-learning period during the pandemic, I encountered a large number of students who could not open the microphone and participate in speaking activities due to the inconvenience around them. It did not create a suitable environment for them to learn.

[TR5]

D. *Student Encourages the Teacher to Use Technology and Teach the Scientific Subject (The Course)*

Academia demands a teacher's transformation from a classical to a student-centered approach to teaching and learning because teachers are their role models and contribute immensely to student learning. They not only deliver academic knowledge but also impart ideal socioemotional, cognitive, and affective skills to develop students' life skills. Therefore, it's important for millennials to encourage their teachers to adapt to innovative technological skills in teaching and developing linguistic skills. Teachers opined that

Yes, the distinguished student always yearns for everything that is new and useful, especially in the field of technology, unlike the average and weak student - individual differences.   [TR2]

Yes, the student encourages me as a professor to use technology in order to be familiar with the different teaching methods and so that I can follow the learning methods of my students and share their experiences with each other through me as a professor. Sometimes I find it an opportunity to present some educational material through that channel that my students have involved me in to confirm the correctness of their learning methods.   [TR3]

Yes, and strongly, the current generation is enabled and enjoys technology. When technology is used, student interaction increases. I make sure to use it in accordance with the objectives of the article.   [TR5]

Yes, the female students' love for technology as the vast majority, the speed of their interaction, the presence of various means that help the students and the professor alike and break the deadly routine in the traditional classrooms, as in the traditional classrooms the teacher is the source of information, while the virtual classrooms have diverse sources of information and the professor is just a facilitator and assistant to deliver the information.   [TR6]

E. *Things that Motivate or Encourage Teachers to Use Technology and the Educational Institution's Role to Motivate Teachers*

Several factors motivate teachers to use technology that includes their interaction and experience using ICT, vast usages of SMDs; new technology and its benefits, and demand to accomplish teaching objectives. Institutions do facilitate teachers by conducting goals-focused training, communicating and collaborating on new projects that need support, and coordinated efforts to develop productive content to meet students' and market demands. A few more factors described by respondents are

Student attendance and interaction with the teacher and the educational material, availability of appropriate technical equipment, and continuous training of faculty members on the latest teaching methods.   [TR1]

One of the things that motivate me to use technology is the student's psychological readiness to do some extracurricular duties, but in the same context and course objectives, and what encourages me is my ability as a professor to be able to transfer my skills and explain them to the student easily. The educational institution encourages me by introducing the different programs and offering courses in this regard, but there is no guide or glossary for the different technologies, as far as I know. [TR3]

I mentioned earlier, the different levels of the students and their individual differences encourage me to diversify in the use of modern electronic means. The English language instructor at Jazan University encourages faculty members to use technology in lectures, short tests through the Blackboard, speaking skill tests through the Zoom program, and reinforcement lessons for students who are struggling in the English language. [TR7]

VI. IMPLICATIONS

The current study illustrated that the teachers have encouraged and motivated students to support the usage of CALL and MALL in English language learning. The teachers opined that CALL/MALL usage in language acquisition and language learning produced significant results proving its worth on learners' linguistic skills. Additionally, the interactions and deliberations cemented relations between teacher and students, and among learners creating conducive learning environment. However, findings revealed different levels in the teacher's usage to technology-mediated language learning using SMDs, students' readiness, lack of proper instructions, and non-availability of glossary or guide on technology. The findings indicated unanimity for adopting technology in language learning and ensuring proper delivery of digital resources. adaptability posits some challenges, which needs technical support, training, interactions on its usage for language acquisition. The aforesaid arguments emphasize the discourses between FLA teachers, parents, and institutions for creating conducive learning environment and technological affordances for executing computer and mobile assisted language learning in significant ways. Sharma (2022) stated that the students made the best use of technology and used social media applications and language apps in smartphones to participate in group reading activities and solve problems. Besides, it highlights the contradiction between the usage of SMDs for language acquisition and lack of efficiency and effective use of such devices by teachers, and the formalities of mobile use for teachers to include students-centered activities and students' immersion. Nevertheless, some variations were reflected in socio-economic conditions, educational and professional experiences; therefore, a more in-depth probe of reasons not discussed in the study might be investigated in future studies with larger sample sizes. Future studies might also focus on creating technology-mediate-cum-intervention curriculum designs that may contribute to English as foreign language acquisition and language learning using smart SMDs. Besides, the current study stretches its prospect of transforming from a classical-to-modern and teacher-to—student centered learning approach using SMDs to promote and scrutinize the pros and cons that may be ineffective and dormant in other learning environments. The relationship between parents' perceptions of CALL/MALL practices, teachers' practices, and their students' commitment to these teaching practices may be explored further. Many related studies may be thought upon widening the scope of CALL and MALL usage and Social Media Platforms in other disciplines to meet students' challenges to accomplish academic objectives and their smooth transition to new professional culture.

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