The Use of Mobile –Assisted Language Learning (MALL) by Iraqi EFL College Students' and their Attitudes Towards it

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Abstract

Mobile -assisted language learning (MALL) is regarded as a fashionable topic in the educational technology to enhance learning, which has gained popularity among students because of the availability of the various mobile technologies . It contributes a lot to the teaching and learning process and students are no longer satisfied with the traditional way of teaching and show tendency to gain the advantages of technology in classes especially mobile devices.

The current study aims at investigating EFL students' attitudes towards the mobile devices in the language learning process. In addition, it explores their actual use of mobile devices as assisted tool for the learning purposes.Two questionnaires have been constructed; first one for students attitudes towards mobile assisted language learning. Second, a questionnaire of the use of mobile assisted language learning. Both questionnaires were administered to a sample of 237 students at the department of English. The results of the first questionnaire analysis have showed the students' positive attitudes towards mobile devices. And the second one revealed that mobile devices are excessively used for language learning purposes by the students mostly as dictionaries , and for research and data collection.

Thus, it is recommended to make use of MALL in the teaching and learning process as a teaching aid and a supplementary source which can motivate students as well as actively involve them in the learning process. Consequently, the results of this study could be regarded as an inspiration for investigating in deep mobile learning approach practically and experimentally.

Keywords: Attitudes, Mobile assisted Language learning (MALL), Use

استخدام طلبة الكلية العراقيين الدارسين للغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية للنقال كمساعد في تعلم اللغة وتوجهاتهم نحوه

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الخلاصة

يعد النقال وسيلة مساعدة في تعلم اللغة ،من المواضيع العصرية في التقنيات التربوية المستخدمة في تحسين التعلم والذي حصل على شعبية بين الطلبة بسبب توافر العديد من التقنيات النقالة المختلفة. وقد اسهم كثيرا لعملية التعلم والتدريس. ولـم يعـد الطلبة راضيين عن الطرق التقليدية في التدريس واظهروا ميولا للحصول على فوائد التكنولوجيا وبالأخص الوسائل النقالة.

تهدف الدراسة الحالية الى التحقق من توجهات الطلبة الدارسين للغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية نحو الأدوات النقالة في عملية تعلم اللغة، إضافة إلى أنها تتحرى عن الاستعمال الواقعي لتلك الأدوات. لذلك صيغت استبانتان، الأولى لمعرفة توجهات الطلبة، والثانية لمعرفة الاستعمال الحقيقي للأدوات النقالة مساعدا في عملية تعلم اللغة.طبق كلتا الاستبانتين على عينة من 237 طالب وطالبة في قسم اللغة الانكليزية.

أظهر تحليل نتائج الاستبانة الأولى توجهات الطلبة الايجابية نحو الأدوات النقالة. كما توصلت نتائج الاستبانة الثانية إلى أن الأدوات النقالة تستعمل بكثرة لأغراض تعلم اللغة من قبل الطلبة وتمثلت في الاستخدام القواميس واستخدامها للبحث وجمــع المعلومات.

لذلك ينصح باستعمال النقال كمساعد في عمليات التدريس والتعليم و وسيلة تدريس أو مصدر داعم والذي بدوره يحفــز الطلبة ويشركهم بفعالية في عملية التعلم. تبعا لذلك، تعد نتائج الدراسة ملهمة للبحث التجريبي والتطبيقي وبعمق في موضوع التعلم النقال .

الكلمات الدالة: التوجهات، النقال وسيلة مساعدة في تعلم اللغة، الاستعمال

1- Introduction

1.1 The Statement of the Problem and its significance

The wide use of digital technologies have been influenced people's lives especially young students who are skillful in using them. Subramaniam and Harun [1] declare that the rapid development in technology resulted in the emergence of mobile learning.MALL refers to

"language learning that is assisted or enhanced through the use of a handheld mobile device. MALL is a subset of both Mobile Learning (m-learning) and computer-assisted language learning (CALL). MALL has evolved to support students' language learning with the increased use of mobile technologies such as mobile phones (cellphones), MP3 and MP4 players, PDAs and devices such as the iPhone or iPad. With MALL, students are able to access language learning materials and to communicate with their teachers and peers at anytime, anywhere"[2].

It is important for EFL teachers to adopt modern assisted tools which support teaching like MALL. The adoption of modern technological devices and integrate it with pedagogical instruction is nearly neglected by the faculty , though the dependence on just the class instruction is not enough and has no impact on the students' perception .Moreover, students are not interested in the traditional teaching.

Moghaddam and Mousavi[3] claim that students are no longer satisfied with the traditional classroom, since they handle technological devices which are equipped with multimedia programs like blue tooth , internet, access, etc.

Mobile phones contribute to the process of teaching and learning especially in higher education for many reasons ;first, students show great tendency to spend time on their mobile phones. Second, they are good users of mobile phones (applications and devices).Third, mobile phones are wireless network and this helps in accessing online information anytime, anywhere as well as providing authentic information input about language use.

Chkotuo [4] states that learners' attitudes towards the use of mobile devices in learning has an important role in their output quality. Yu, et al.[5] regard learning English via mobile devices so easy and available as it could be occurred "while waiting lunch in a restaurant ;…while waiting the bus or in the bus; learn English in the Mall"

1.2 The Aims

The research aims at:

1-identifying the Iraqi EFL students' attitudes towards MALL.

2- exploring the Iraqi EFL students' current use of MALL.

1.3 Hypotheses

1-Iraqi EFL College Students' attitudes towards MALL is negative.

2-Iraqi EFL College Students' use of MALL is average.

مجلة جامعة بابل للعلوم الإنسانية، المجلد 28، العدد 2: 2020.

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The sample of the study is chosen from the department of English, Morning Studies, College of Basic Education, Mustansiryha University during the academic year 2017-2018.

1.5 The Definitions of Basic Terms

1.5.1 Attitudes

Attitudes refers to the "tendency to respond positively or negatively towards a certain idea, object, person, or situation. . Attitude influences an individual's choice of action, and responses to challenges, incentives, and rewards (together called stimuli)." [6] .Attitudes indicate the way the persons feel or think about something[7:27].

1.5.2 Use

Use indicates the act of holding, taking, or achieving something [8]. Use could be defined as the act of employing something for a purpose[9:475].

1.5.3 MALL

Cakir [10] defines MALL as "any form of learning that happens when mediated through mobile devices". Al Aamri [11] regards MALL as an e-learning via mobile devices like personal digital assistance (PDA), mobile phone , IPOD, cell phone, etc. , which are widely and commonly used in daily life and surely they could be also used for learning.

2- Literature Review

2.1 MALL and learning

Definitely, education is gaining support and advantages of the technology development more and more by time especially the innovations of mobile devices . Karkmaz [12] states that "MALL has recently become a focus of research as a sub-branch of the wider field of study, computer assisted language learning (CALL)."

El Hariry [13] admits that the use of mobile devices has contributed a lot to learning as it enhances collaborative learning ,improves students' skills and their weak points, and gains interest and self confidence.

Cakir [10] adds that mobile phones offer many functions like" SMS, voice-messaging, MMS, internet access, video recording, voice recording, MP3/MP4 player, digital camera, and access to social networking platforms such as Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp etc". All of these could be utilized in the teaching and learning foreign language , for example, SMS for sending out vocabularies. Moreover, by the Internet access which is offered by mobile phones , EFL learners can easily access the Internet to search for information , download dictionaries, and collect data .

Karkmaz [12] believes that students prefer mobile learning as it is "enhancing mobility and portability, enabling anytime and anywhere learning, providing the learner with fast and easy access to sources of information, and the excitement of learning with innovation".

Ismail & Mustaffa [14] explain that one of the merits of mobile devices is that there is no need for the physical presence and that teacher

can direct , correct, comment, assign tasks even if he is not present. Burston (2013) confirms that there is an interest to free "learning from the constraints of time and place". Khabari [16] believes that learning English is regarded as a major factor for the professional success in many countries ,so there should be convenient environment for learning, providing more convenient environment for people to learn English.

Moghaddam & Mousavi [3] emphasize that MALL is essential in language learning as it can enhance receptive and productive skills and help and motivate reluctant students to learn effectively . Mehdipour and Zerehkafi [17] notice that

"mobile learning can be a useful add-on tool for students with special needs. However, for SMS and MMS this might be dependent on the students' specific disabilities or difficulties involved".

2.2 MALL and improving language skills

Moghaddam & Mousavi [3] suggest some practical ideas and ways to improve the receptive and productive language learning skills.

1- Listening skill

It could be enhances by listening to; authentic material, recorded teachers' voice, a classmate voice , audio clip ,and checking pronunciation by the talking dictionaries.

2- Speaking Skill

It could be improved by speaking on the phone, repeat after video or recorded material, answering or asking questions, and participate in chatting or in a debate.

3-Reading skills

It could be enhanced by reading passages via mobile devices , internet, or a book, repeat reading after a recorded texts, make use of electronic dictionaries, and reading materials sent by the teacher via mobile devices.

4-Writing skill

It might be enhance through sending SMS , email, or text message, by writing notes , stories, or even chat, and by checking spelling using dictionaries.

2.3 Mobile phones properties

Rionaldi [18] states five properties for the mobile devices;

1-portability indicates that they could be taken to different places because of its size and weight.

2-Social interactivity refers to social interaction and collaboration among students.

3-Context sensitivity means that privacy of the information which privately gathered and responded.

4- Connectivity indicates that mobile devices could be connected to the internet, or other devices to share with them information.

5-Indivuality refers to the mobile devices activities which could be customized for an individual learner.

2.4 Advantages of Mobile Devices

Some of the advantages of mobile devices are stated below:

1. Mobile devices can provide learning in/ outside the classroom and in/formal learning.[13]

2.They make the learning process enjoyable .[13]

3-They guide the learners to "an authentic learning context and incorporate the field objects with closely related information in the handheld device to initiate the process of knowledge acquisition " (1).

4-They promote sharing information among students and between the teacher and the students.[4]

5-They enable learners to receive information from the whole world wherever and whenever they are [16].

6-They offer different activities like SMS,MMS camera, video, and others (Ibid).

7-They "enhance student-centered learning, …support differentiation of the student learning needs"[19]

8-They are portable , available, and convenience .[18]

2.5 Limitations of mobile devices in learning

There are some limitations for mobile devices:

1. They have "small screen size, limited memory size, small keyboards, limited battery, high cost" "[13]

2. They may be misplaced ,stolen , corrupted, or disconnected because of the poor network[13].

3-There may be limitations in the multimedia offered by mobile device depending on its hardware and software [20].

4-They may not designed for educational purposes [20].

3-Procedures

3.1 Population and sample

The population of the research includes the 1st ,2nd, 3rd Iraqi EFL college students at the Department of English , Morning studies , in the College of Basic Education at Mustansiryha University. The study is implemented during the academic year 2017-2018.The sample consists of 237 students which represents the 85% of the whole population excluding the x- primary teachers and the repeaters.

3.2 The Instruments

Two questionnaires are used here to achieve the aims of the research; the first one is a questionnaire to identify the Iraqi EFL learners' attitudes towards MALL ,which consists of 10 items collected from literature in this field [12],[1],[18],[21], [22], [23] (See appendix1) . And the second one is to explore their current use of MALL which consists of 18 items designed by the researcher depending on her observations and experience and from literature in this field [12],[1],[18],[21],[22],[23].(See appendix 2).

3.2.1 The Validity and the reliability of the questionnaires

Both questionnaire are exposed to a jury of experts in the fields of TEFL, literature, and linguistics(See appendix 3). They were asked to determine the suitability of the items and also requested to add or modify items. The experts suggest to omit 2 items as they were similar in meaning and modify one item. Then, a pilot administration was hold on to achieve the reliability of the questionnaires.30 students were chosen from the Department of English , in the College of Basic Education, Evening Classes. It showed the clarity of the items and that the required time is about 5 minutes for each one. After two weeks, a re-administration of the questionnaires were carried out on the same sample to calculate the reliability and by using Pearson correlation formula , it is found that the reliability of the first questionnaire is 0.87 and for the second questionnaire is 0.91.Accordingly, they are reliable.

3.2.3 The administration of the questionnaires

The final forms of the questionnaires were administered to the sample; one questionnaire per week to avoid the misconception and the mix of ideas between the two questionnaires. The first questionnaire was hold on the 8th of May 2018 and the second one was on the 15th of May 2018.

3.2.4 Scoring scheme

The items of the two questionnaires are measured by five-point rating scale and marks are assigned as (Strongly agree 5, agree 4, neutral 3, disagree 2, strongly disagree 1).

4-Results and interpretations

4.1 Results related to the first aim

To verify the first aim of the research , which identifies the Iraqi EFL college students' attitudes towards MALL, the subjects' responses have been analyzed using Fisher formula and weighted means. The calculated weighted means are compared to the theoretical mean (3). Items are arranged descendantly according to their rank. See table 1.

مجلة جامعة بابل للعلوم الإنسانية، المجلد 28، العدد 2: 2020.

Journal of University of Babylon for Humanities, Vol.(28), No.(2): 2020.

Table 1 The Weighted Mean and the Rank Order of the EFL Learner's Attitudes Towards MALL

Rank	No. of items	Scale					Weighted Mean	Percentile Mean
		Strongly agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1		
1	5	118	71	28	17	3	4.198	%83.96
2	4	98	89	39	6	5	4.135	%82.7
3	9	98	92	33	8	6	4.130	82.6%
4	1	68	125	34	7	3	4.046	80.92%
5	6	67	98	56	11	5	3.89	%77.8
6	3	65	86	59	22	5	3.776	%75.52
7	2	57	86	71	20	3	3.734	%74.68
8	7	49	86	70	23	9	3.603	%72.06
9	10	54	75	73	26	9	3.588	%71.72
10	8	56	72	61	39	9	3.535	%70.7
							3.863	%77.266

The table showed that all items of the questionnaire are acceptable and preferable by the subjects as their weighted means are more than the theoretical mean(3).

4.2 Results related to the second aim

To explore the Iraqi EFL learners' use of MALL , also Fisher formula is adopted here to find out the weighted means of the questionnaires' items and compare them to the theoretical mean(3). A descent order is used to arrange items according to their rank. See table 2.

Table 2 The Weighted Mean and the Rank Order of the EFL Learner's Use of MALL

Rank	No. of Item	Scale					Weighted Mean	Percentile Mean
		Strongly Agree 5	Agree 4	Neutral 3	Disagree 2	Strongly Disagree 1		
1	8	126	66	41	4	0	4.324	%86.48
2	1	108	98	24	5	2	4.286	%85.72
3	16	121	56	44	14	2	4.181	%83.62
4	2	98	81	46	10	2	4.109	%82.18
5	13	94	76	46	17	4	4.009	%80.16
6	9	80	94	42	16	5	3.962	%79.24
7	18	80	70	56	18	4	3.936	%78.72
8	5	73	95	49	13	7	3.902	%78.04
9	14	89	62	66	14	6	3.894	%77.88
10	17	82	65	68	18	4	3.856	%77.12
11	10	78	71	65	16	7	3.831	%76.62
12	7	83	68	53	26	7	3.818	%76.36
13	15	82	58	58	31	8	3.738	%74.76
14	12	70	74	44	39	10	3.616	%72.32
15	3	48	79	84	15	11	3.582	%71.64
16	6	43	80	81	23	10	3.518	%70.36
17	4	57	57	82	33	8	3.514	%70.82
18	11	62	63	59	35	18	3.489	%69.78
							3.864	%77.323

The table showed that all the items of the second questionnaire are used by the subjects as their weighted means are more than the theoretical mean(3).

4.3 Interpretations of the results

It is obvious that students show positive attitudes towards MALL because the weighted means of the all items of the questionnaire are higher than the theoretical mean 3.The same is true concerning the use of MALL by EFL students ,i.e., all the weighted mean of the 18 items are more than the theoretical mean 3.These results indicate the following:

1-Students show high positive attitudes towards MALL ,but items number 5 ,4 gain the highest weighted means. Both indicate that EFL students use mobile devices as dictionary for vocabulary acquisition and it has been increased because of the text message written in English via mobile devices.

2-According to the use of MALL , all the items are highly used by the students .The items number 8,1 got weighted means higher than the other items. Item number 8 indicates that EFL students use mobile devices as dictionary, and item number 1 shows that they use mobile devices for research and data collection.

5-Conclusions, Recommendations, and Suggestions for Further Studies

5.1 Conclusions

The research aims at exploring the students use of MALL and their attitudes towards it. Both hypotheses ,which were proposed previously, are rejected. And the results reveal the following conclusions:

1-Iraqi EFL students' show positive attitudes towards Mall .

2-Iraqi EFL students' are good user of MALL .

This indicates that students have implemented and integrated MALL in learning English language as supplementary tool to enhance and enrich learning. Students look to be autonomous learners as they do not depend on teachers and they gain their progress via MALL.

5.2 Recommendations

The researcher recommends the following:

1- Faculty have to insert mobile devices in the teaching and learning process.

2-The use of mobile devices as teaching aids to enhance oral and written proficiency in EFL.

3-The use of mobile devices in teaching will enhance motivation and activate students who really involved in the learning process.

3-The use of mobile devices in teaching as supplementary source since they could be used any time and everywhere, plus they are available for most students.

4-MALL provides students with wonderful opportunities to learn ,so they should use it wisely and surely not just for wasting time or entertainment.

5.3 Suggestions

The researcher believes that the following suggestions are good expectations in the field of TEFL:

1-A study to explore the effect of MALL on the students' oral or written proficiency.

2- An experimental study to investigate the effect of MALL on the students' achievement in different subjects; like grammar, reading comprehension, writing essay, etc.

3-A similar study could be held on students at the level of intermediate and secondary schools.

4- A study to investigate how to integrate MALL in learning and teaching .

مجلة جامعة بابل للعلوم الإنسانية، المجلد 28، العدد 2: 2020.

Journal of University of Babylon for Humanities, Vol.(28), No.(2): 2020.

Appendix 1

A Questionnaire of EFL students' attitudes towards MALL

	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-Mobile devices have assisted my overall learning process .					
2-I plan better for my learning with mobile devices than without them.					
3-The use of mobile devices in learning makes me more productive.					
4-My vocabulary acquisition has increased because of text messages written in English through mobile devices.					
5- My vocabulary acquisition has increased because of my mobile devices dictionary.					
6-I find it easy writing and receiving messages in English through mobile devices.					
7-My motivation has been enhanced by the use of mobile devices in and outside the classroom.					
8-I believe mobile devices will help me to utilize time productively.					
9- I would like to install language learning applications in my mobile devices to improve my language.					
10-I can remember everything if I read it from my mobile devices					

Appendix 2 A Questionnaire of EFL students' use of MALL in learning English

	Strongly agree	agree	neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1-I use mobile devices for research and data collection.					
2-I scan, share, read and save the related materials through mobile devices.					
3-I use English as a medium of communication while writing an email on mobile devices .					
4-I use English as a medium of communication while chatting on facebook.					
5-I read notes from my mobile devices.					
6-I get some extensive reading materials via mobile devices.					
7-I use mobile devices for social network in English like facebook, twitter and whatsapp.					

8-I use mobile devices as dictionary/ translator.					
9-I use mobile devices to install English learning applications.					
10-I use mobile devices to listen to audio materials in English.					
11-I use mobile devices to play games for English vocabulary like crosswords and puzzles.					
12-I use mobile devices to keep English vocabulary list.					
13- I use the mobile devices keyboard for spelling practice.					
14-I use mobile devices to watch video materials in English.					
15-I use mobile devices to send or write messages in English.					
16–I use mobile devices to check pronunciation.					
17-I use mobile devices to speak with others in English.					
18- I have my course materials at hand on my mobile devices.					

Appendix 3
Jury Members
1. Prof. Dr. Duha Attallah Hassan (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
2. Assistant Prof.Saad Salal(College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
3. Assistant Prof. Muaayad Rashed (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
4. Instructor Dr. Azhar Jasim(College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
5. Instructor Dr.Ridh Ghanim (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
6. Instructor Afrah Munshed (College of Basic Education, Al-Mustansiriyah University).
7. Instructor Habar Hussien(College of Basic Education , Al-Mustansiryah University)

CONFLICT OF INTERESTS
There are no conflicts of interest

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