

## EFL TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON MOBILE-ASSISTED LANGUAGE LEARNING (MALL) RESOURCES FOR VOCATIONAL HIGH SCHOOL STUDENTS

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Submitted : 29 January 2022	This study aimed to ascertain vocational EFL teachers' perspectives on the development of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) resources in vocational schools. It employed a mixed-method approach in which data were collected simultaneously using an open-ended questionnaire and semi-structured interviews. The study involved 95 English teachers from vocational schools in two cities of East Java, Indonesia. Among the participants, four were invited to participate in an online interview to discuss their perspectives on the characteristics, use and development of MALL material for vocational students. Data analysis was performed using descriptive statistics. The analysis results showed that more than half of the respondents agreed that MALL resources were more accessible (65.4%), easier to generate (65.4%) and more successful at improving learners' autonomy (73.1%), compared to traditional materials. Additionally, 40% of teachers thought that MALL materials could be used to promote classroom interaction, and it was much easier for teachers to provide immediate feedback through mobile phone. In summary, 42% of teachers agreed that MALL resources could aid in foreign language acquisition. Due to students' proximity to technology and mobile devices, teachers recognized that MALL materials can be applied inside and outside the classrooms. Therefore, vocational EFL teachers must be able to develop and implement MALL materials in their classrooms.
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### Introduction

Long before the COVID-19 pandemic completely revolutionized education online, it had been proved that digital technology could assist English language learners in enhancing their language skills and expanding their language component. Research shows that digital-based language learning can improving help improve students' their reading comprehension, strengthening their interpersonal skills, and expanding their vocabulary repertoire (Patten, Kathryn B., Craig, Valcarcel, 2007). Students who have access to the internet and social media should also work on developing their intercultural competencies and global awareness. According to (Warschauer & Healey, 1998), integrating developing technology into an English language classroom has enormous potential to support individualization in big classrooms, multimodal practice, and dynamic and pleasurable learning experiences. As a result, interest in using computers to teach and study languages has remained strong.

Until the previous two decades, the most recent form of Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL) had garnered considerable attention (Burston, 2013). Individuals began utilizing smartphone devices into their language learning activities. Since then, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), the most recent incarnation of

CALL (Davie & Hilber, 2015), has been developed to aid in the promotion of digital learning. Several scholars have written about the advantages of mobile learning (m-learning) for classroom learning, such as using WhatsApp to communicate with students (Hartatik & Bia'yuni, 2020). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), which incorporates both formal and informal language learning that occurs via the use of digital devices such as mobile phones, tablets, and computers (Kukulska-Hulme & Shield, 2008) provides educators with several opportunities to promote learning both within and outside the classroom (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013). Due to the portability of mobile devices, formal and informal learning can occur anywhere and at any time (Motiwalla, 2007; Saran et al., 2009). As a result, mobile learning has the potential to enhance the autonomy and interaction among learners (Foomani & Hedayati, 2016; Sato et al., 2015; Tayan, 2017).

Mobile device use is increasing in popularity, particularly among young people (Teresa, 2011). On the other hand, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has been used in a range of learning situations with learners of varying ages. While parents of five/six-year-old children may be unsupportive due to their lack of preparedness to assist their children in learning with mobile devices, elementary school teachers appear to be very enthusiastic about incorporating MALL into language classrooms (Sadykova et al., 2016), although their optimistic attitudes remain lower than those of secondary school teachers (Baek et al., 2017).

Regardless of the benefits, there are certain disadvantages to integrating smart gadgets into the classrooms. Despite the fact that students enjoy MALL assignments (Davie & Hilber, 2015) and think that MALL-based learning resources are more authentic and more accessible (Octavia et al., 2019), they believe paper-based tasks contribute more to their learning (Calabrich, 2016). Even though the usage of mobile devices in the classroom may facilitate learning, students confessed that they required assistance in accessing their abilities since they felt uneasy when required to discuss information with unfamiliar internet users (if learning included internet). As a result, learning might be stifled, and learners may develop skepticism.

Another consideration when integrating mobile devices into the classroom is the potentials for disturbances and interruptions (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013), not to mention the battery life of mobile devices (Şad & Göktaş, 2014). While it may be possible to prevent this issue by providing each classroom with an adequate number of electrical plugs and sockets for all pupils, the high expense, particularly in developing nations, should be addressed (Hockly, 2013).

However, the optimization of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) is not only dependent on the tools (i.e., mobile devices) but also other factors, such as teachers who contribute to learning. Teachers, as facilitators of learning, should recognize that mobile devices offer several opportunities for discovery learning, as previously stated (Khazaie & Ketabi, 2011). Examining instructors' perspectives on the usage of mobile devices in foreign language instruction can aid in solving the issue. The investigation's findings will not only progress MALL, but will also assist language teachers, particularly English teachers, in honing their skills in promoting learning using mobile devices.

Previous research concludes that teachers have a good attitude regarding the usage of MALL in the language classroom. For example, Liu (2015) discovered that pre-service teachers reacted favorably to the collaborative learning enabled by MALL assignments. Liu demonstrates how a Facebook Group might aid instructors in sharing their field experiences, thereby increasing their sense of belonging. Oz (2015) has conducted a comparable investigation, where it was found that the gender, grade level, and grade point

average (GPA) of pre-service teachers influenced their attitudes on MALL. GPA and gender were found to be significant determinants of teachers' perspectives on MALL.

Regardless of their optimistic outlooks, teachers expressed reservations regarding the use of mobile devices in the classroom. Dashtestani (2013) interviewed and questioned a group of EFL teachers who admitted to being unfamiliar with instructional approaches and practices that can be used in conjunction with the usage of mobile devices in the English classroom. Additionally, they noted a dearth of competence in the design of MALL operations. As a result, they were fearful of potential problems during class, which resulted in the prohibition of cell phone use in EFL classrooms. Additionally, teachers are hesitant to "move on" from Computer-Assisted Language Learning (CALL), which may account for their difficulty to learn more about MALL (Van de Vyver, 2016).

According to Van de Vyver (2016), further research on instructors and students' perspectives on Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can aid in the identification of the most relevant characteristics influencing mobile device use in a language classroom. Therefore, many scholars were encouraged to examine the perspectives of EFL instructors and students on the integration and implementation of MALL in EFL classrooms. While Octavia et al., (2019) examined the perspectives of vocational students on MALL materials in EFL classrooms, Khan et al. (2018) and Pratiwi et al. (2020) explored the EFL instructors' points of view and attitudes towards the implementation of MALL in EFL classes. Since English instruction in vocational schools frequently receives relatively little attention from academics and policy makers, the current study sought to elicit responses from English teachers employed in vocational education regarding their concerns on implementing MALL in the classroom. To make it explicit, this study addressed the following research question: "How do vocational English teachers perceive the characteristics, use and development of MALL-based resources in vocational EFL classroom at the secondary level of education?"

## **Research Method**

The purpose of this study was to elicit information about English teachers' perspectives on mobile device integration in vocational high schools. This study employed a mixed-method approach in which quantitative and qualitative techniques were applied concurrently to collect and interpret data (Creswell, 2009). Specifically, a survey was conducted to ascertain teachers' perspectives on the characteristics, use and development of MALL material for EFL students in vocational high schools. Following that, a semi-structured interview was undertaken to reveal what the teachers thought about implementing and developing MALL material in their classrooms. Teachers who had been using MALL in the EFL classroom could give their insights on the technique's deployment, while teachers who had not yet used it could also contribute their thoughts on MALL implementation in the EFL classroom. Ninety-five vocational English teachers were surveyed (aged 26-51 years old). Many of the teachers came from schools that concentrated on tourism, manufacturing, accountancy, and health care. The educational backgrounds of the teachers range from bachelor's degrees (88%) to master's degrees (12%). The teachers are degree qualified with an average of 1-10 years of teaching experience (44%); 11-20 years of teaching experience (42%); and more than 20 years of teaching experience (14%).

### **Research Instrument**

The questionnaire used to collect the data was adapted from (Dashtestani, 2013). It included 10 closed-ended questions that elicited instructors' perspectives on the use and development of MALL-based materials. This section asked respondents to choose one of four Likert scale degrees: strongly disagree, disagree, agree, and strongly agree. Then, representatives of teachers were invited into a semi-structured interview, in which a list of guided questions was created in advance and could be expanded upon during the session if necessary. Given that one of the primary problems of surveys is low response rates, the interview data were used to enhance the survey data collected previously (Fraenkel & Wallen, 2009). The responses of the interviewees were analyzed to both verify their survey and add to the body of knowledge regarding the implementation of MALL in the classroom. Prior to the use, the questionnaire and interview guideline were validated by an expert in language learning. The expert validation results showed that the questionnaire and interview items were intelligible, accurately represented the criteria assessed in the study, and were pertinent to the study's objective.

### **Data Collection**

Teachers' perspectives of MALL implementation and MALL material development were elicited using a questionnaire developed from Dashtestani (2013). The questionnaire was distributed via the internet to participants (using google forms). The data were collected over a two-month period (May 25th - July 25th, 2021). Following the poll, interviews with four teachers' representatives were performed. An interview guideline was prepared to elicit information on the respondents' interactions with digital learning resources in the classroom. The interview guideline contains a list of questions that helped reveal the EFL teachers' perspectives on MALL materials for vocational high school students.

### **Data Analysis**

Three steps must be completed to examine the questionnaire responses (Wang, 2009). After collecting the data, questionnaire responses were tabulated, analysis was performed, and results were presented. This study used closed-ended items to elicit data on vocational high school teachers' perspectives of MALL implementation in English classrooms. The survey asked the respondents to indicate whether they strongly opposed, disagreed, accepted, or strongly agreed with the statements. The data were interpreted numerically, as in "90% of teachers agree that EFL teachers should be capable of producing MALL content." The percentage of responses provided by respondents was calculated using the following formula:

$$\text{Percentage} = \frac{N_t}{\text{total}} \times 100\%$$

where  
Nt = number of teachers who belong to the same category  
total = total number of teachers

The interviews yielded insights based on content analysis and Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)-related topics (these themes are divided into three categories: the characteristics of MALL materials, the usage of MALL materials, and the development of MALL materials). The term "MALL materials" refers to a variety of

English instructional materials that can be delivered or accessed using mobile devices. After the interviews were transcribed, the data were collected, and the responses were recognized and documented based on the themes.

## Result and Discussion

This study used a questionnaire and an interview guideline to elicit the perspectives of vocational English teachers regarding the usage of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) resources and the development of MALL materials in English courses. Table 1 summarizes the respondents' answers to the questionnaire's statements.

No	Statement	Responses			
		Strongly Disagree 4	Disagree 3	Agree 2	Strongly Agree 1
1	EFL teachers should be able to develop MALL materials for their teaching.	1.9%	7.7%	76.9%	0%
2	MALL materials are more authentic than traditional EFL materials.	2%	11%	33%	6%
3	The use of MALL materials encourages interaction in EFL classrooms.	1%	4%	40%	8%
4	MALL materials are more accessible than traditional materials.	1.9%	13.5%	65.4%	19.2%
5	Producing MALL materials requires spending low costs.	1%	19%	27%	5%
6	Immediate feedback can be provided using MALL materials.	1%	4%	40%	7%
7	MALL materials can be easily developed.	1.9%	21.2%	65.4%	11.5%
8	Using MALL materials will empower learners to be more autonomous.	1.9%	0%	73.1%	25%
9	The use of MALL materials facilitates language learning.	1%	0%	42%	9%

**Table 1.** Teachers' Perspectives on MALL Materials and MALL Materials Development (adapted from Dashtestani, 2013)

According to the results of the questionnaire, most of the teachers agreed with the statements made in the questionnaire, as shown in Table 1. The teachers agreed that EFL teachers should have the ability to generate MALL resources for their classroom instruction (76.9%). They also believed that MALL materials were more accessible than traditional materials (65.4%), more easily generated (65.4%), and more successful at empowering learners' autonomy than traditional materials (73.1%).

In addition, the survey indicated that 40% of the respondents thought that MALL materials were more authentic and were able to encourage interaction in the classroom. Respondents who had about the same number of responses were separated into two



groups: those who agreed (27%) and those who disagreed (19%) with the statement stating that developing MALL materials involves minimal expenditure. Most teachers, nearly half, felt that instant feedback could be provided to students when learning incorporates MALL-based resources, and 42 percent of respondents believed that MALL-based materials may assist language learning more effectively than paper-based materials.

Similarly, one of the teachers interviewed admitted that she had to use MALL materials both inside and outside because technology and mobile devices are very close to students.

*MALL...mobile...is very close to students. Students are using mobile, HP, Gadget, etc. They are even more sophisticated than teachers. It is very necessary. And the material provided should indeed be current. So, the students can connect with the material provided. They like the material because it suits their needs. (Teacher no. 2, female)*

The use of mobile phones in English classrooms, on the other hand, was described negatively by one instructor who shared her unfavorable feelings about the practice. Since mobile phones may be a significant distraction from the learning process, she stated that they were only permitted to be used in her classrooms during specific hours.

*The students only use it as a dictionary, more often browse the meaning of words using google translate. Due to their lack of skills in using the app, they may sometimes get a wrong interpretation of the words. If they insert a proper Indonesian word to the column, I believe the translation can be correct. In my classroom, the use of handphone is limited to only browsing meaning in Bahasa or vice versa. They can use a paperback dictionary too if they have one. Handphones distract them a lot. It only takes 15 minutes for them to stay focused on the lesson if the use of handphones is not limited. (Teacher no. 4, female).*

The ability to generate MALL materials is critical for teachers, according to the teachers. It was, without a doubt, necessary to incorporate it into the professional development of EFL teachers. As an illustration, an instructor argued:

*Yes, very important. The development of MALL materials is an essential part of EFL teachers' professional development. [...] Yes, some of them are. They don't want to... some are willing to, but most of them are not willing or "allergic" to the so-called digital. Well, therefore, we, the young people, at our late 30, need to develop that (MALL materials). Otherwise, we cannot facilitate our students' interests. Indeed, we need to keep up with the times. (Teacher no.1, female)*

Furthermore, one teacher mentioned how she improved her skills in developing MALL materials:

*For my development education about MALL, I join some seminars in English Department, and I browse information about MALL, reading some journals about that. (Teacher no.3, female)*

Another instructor, on the other hand, indicated that MALL materials were not particularly effective in the department where she was teaching, and that MALL materials development abilities would not be beneficial to her in the long run:

*But I think it again depends on the department (where the teacher teaches). I think MALL will be very beneficial for Informatic Engineering students. But because I teach in other departments, [...] I do not teach at the Informatics Engineering department, so non-mobile based materials are more useful here.*

In summary, three of the four teachers examined agreed that MALL resources were critical in the teaching of English. However, one of the interviewees believed that she did not need to generate MALL materials in her classrooms because she was teaching automotive students, who, in her opinion, should focus on manuals and manufacturing guidelines.

## **Discussion**

Based on the findings, most vocational-school teachers who took part in this survey had positive feelings toward Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)-based resources. As a result of the poll, it is obvious that MALL materials are seen as effective and easily accessible. Khubyari & Haddad Narafshan (2016) observe that technological advancements resulting from the widespread adoption of mobile multimedia devices and applications have created enormous prospects for English as a foreign language (EFL). Let alone, the usage of technology in classrooms has increased at a breakneck pace as pupils have grown more tech-savvy (Lavin et al., 2010), and there is a trend toward increased writing and reading on computers and other electronic devices (Boudjadar, 2015). However, interviews revealed some issues that must be addressed in the classroom. One of the most frequently mentioned issues by English instructors in the interview sessions is a lack of adequate training, which results in a lack of skill in understanding computer literacy and adapting digital-based resources for their students. Therefore, teachers' technological literacy must be enhanced and their technological potential in English Language Teaching (ELT) should be maximized, because neglecting the functions of information and communication technology is unreasonable (Sulistyo et al., 2019).

According to the results of the survey, vocational-school teachers believe that MALL materials are crucial in the learning of a language, and specifically in the learning of English. It is in harmony with a study by (Bachore, 2015) that mobile technologies are drawing a rising number of users, expanding capacity, and enabling more sophisticated application. Even if MALL materials are more easily accessible and more successful in terms of empowering learners, they can also be a source of distractions. Basically, online learning, including MALL, has potential for providing more flexible access to content and instruction at any time, from any place (Means et al., 2013; Miangah, 2012; Peng et al., 2013). Frequently, students who were permitted to carry mobile phones into the classes, according to one of the interviews, could only retain their focus to learning for a maximum of 15 minutes. Students' ability to be distracted and interrupted is supported by prior research conducted by (Martin & Ertzberger, 2013), which also reveals that having mobile devices in the classroom may cause distractions and disruptions for students. However, as a matter of fact, the optimization of MALL materials is not solely dependent on the instruments (i.e., mobile devices) that are introduced into the classroom. There are, of course, other aspects that contribute to learning, such as the presence of professors or instructors. Teachers in their roles as learning facilitators should be aware that mobile devices have a variety of potentials that should be investigated (Khazaie & Ketabi, 2011).

Inadequate training can also result in EFL teachers being unable to adapt MALL materials to their students' needs (Halim & Halim, 2016). The results of the interview showed that vocational teachers are aware that they are not very proficient in mastering computer literacy and, as a result, perform poorly when it comes to modifying and/or adapting MALL materials to meet the needs of their students. On the other hand, (Baker, 2016) suggests that English teachers must have extensive knowledge of both the language and the pedagogy in order to be effective in the classroom. Following their realization of this, the teachers involved in this study felt that they needed to learn more about MALL. Teachers noted a variety of approaches to addressing this issue during one of the interviews, including attending MALL seminars, searching for information about MALL on the internet, and reading journal articles that cover pertinent subjects. Online teacher professional development (TPD), such as online courses, can give a platform for teachers to realize their full potentials while also increasing their involvement in the programs they are involved with (Silvia, 2015) because teachers are demanded to continuously develop their competence through professional development endeavors (Puspitasari et al., 2021).

Similar to existing research, which suggests that teachers are generally enthusiastic about digital learning, particularly MALL (Sadykova et al., 2016), the vocational teachers in this case expressed that they were willing to learn more about it because they perceived themselves as not being very competent in digital literacy. More specifically, the teachers had positive attitudes toward digital technology in language instruction and agreed that MALL materials were more authentic and effective in empowering learners when compared to conventional materials. The legitimacy and effectiveness of MALL resources are among the MALL potentials that should be investigated (Khazaie & Ketabi, 2011). Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) materials, according to one of the research participants, were only practical in Informatic Engineering classes. Despite this, she still considered that digital learning was advantageous.

Overall, the vocational-school teachers who participated in this study had positive attitudes toward the use of MALL, and specifically MALL materials, in their classes. Thus, integrating MALL into language learning curriculum, learner support, and the need for continuous teacher training is an advantageous effort (Kan & Tang, 2018), and emerging mobile technologies have considerable potentials for the effective language learning environment for language learners (Miangah, 2012; Yang, 2013).

## **Conclusion**

Introducing digital tools, such as mobile devices, into an English language classroom, can help students study in a more collaborative and enjoyable environment because they can have flexible access to content and instruction at any time, from any place easily. Vocational English teachers had generally positive perspectives on incorporating MALL materials into their classrooms, which is encouraging. They were also conscious of the fact that they needed to increase their abilities in generating digital-based materials to meet one of the students' needs, that is to experience more interesting and authentic learning processes.

Given the limitations of this study, it presents a significant opportunity for future research to examine MALL implementation and MALL material development in vocational schools in greater depth. It is also possible for other researchers to broaden the findings by examining the challenges faced by vocational teachers in developing MALL-materials, evaluating the proficiency of the teachers, and even developing a training



program to provide the teachers with sufficient skills to deal with digital technologies and current educational dynamics.

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