Effectiveness of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) during the Covid – 19
Pandemic in Gujarat State: Charotar University of Science and Technology
(CHARUSAT) Students' Perceptions

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Abstract:

The major goal of this research is to determine the effectiveness of MALL during Covid-19 in the setting of Gujarat, India, based on the perspectives of ESL students at the university level. The theoretical basis for the study is Davis's Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), which he proposed in 1986. The study used the TAM framework, which focuses on two factors: perceived usefulness (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEU) (PEOU). The purpose of this model in this study is to better understand students' behaviour and attitudes regarding mobile technology. Both qualitative and quantitative research designs are used in the study. The data was gathered from a hundred UG and PG level students (50 males and 50 females) at CHARUSAT's Humanities and Social Science Department. According to the students' opinions on smartphones, the two variables were found to be working in the current study.

Keywords: Mobile Assisted Language Learning, Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), Covid – 19 Situation in Gujarat, ESL Gujarati Classrooms.

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Introduction

Rapid changes in the learning environment have occurred in recent decades, owing to rapid advances in information and communication technologies (ICT). Educators and scholars are being impacted by the use of technology in education in general, and ESL teaching and learning in particular, as the number of educational institutions adopting these new technologies in the traditional classroom environment grows (Soleimani et al., 2013, p. 457). It has also fostered the employment of new and innovative means of producing and transmitting information for the sake of communication and socialising, as Khan and Tufail (2020) note. Due to technology advancements, several equipment and modalities for learning and teaching in the field of SLA have evolved, such as cellphones, laptops, multimedia, iPods, e-learning, e-reading, video-calls, and so on. A student now has more confidence in using technology not only for educational purposes, but also for socialisation and amusement (p. 175).

Because of the entire lockdown caused by the COVID-19 virus, countries all over the world are currently in a global catastrophe. This epidemic has become one of the world's most daunting issues since World War II. Unlike many other countries, India has decided to implement a total shutdown beginning in March 2020. Following the COVID-19 principles for social distancing and avoiding face-to-face connection during these days has been suggested by health professionals and state governments. Even if the government is taking all preventative precautions, society is still in a dangerous state as India's social and economic situation worsens.

Because it is currently a major difficulty to prevent pupils from wasting valuable time, an online instructional system has been developed. The Gujarat government, in particular, is encouraging educational institutions to use digital learning to begin teaching and learning in schools and colleges. Distance learning via various technology equipment can yield astonishing outcomes if used appropriately in this sad as well as hard circumstance.

Furthermore, because most students in Gujarat receive tablets from the state government in their first year of graduation and already own smartphones, it is suggested in the current study that using MALL to integrate it into our educational system and reap the benefits in this pandemic would be quite beneficial.

M-Learning

With technological breakthroughs and improvements, internet access, laptops, and even mobile phones have made English as a Foreign Language (EFL) education more conducive to utilising the available technologies. In other words, and on a larger scale, previous research findings show that integrating and adapting mobile phones into the foreign language classroom environment provides language learners with a variety of opportunities and makes the learning process more meaningful by providing a platform for language learners to share and exchange ideas (Brown, 2001 as cited in YÜKSELR, 2017). Recent research shows that
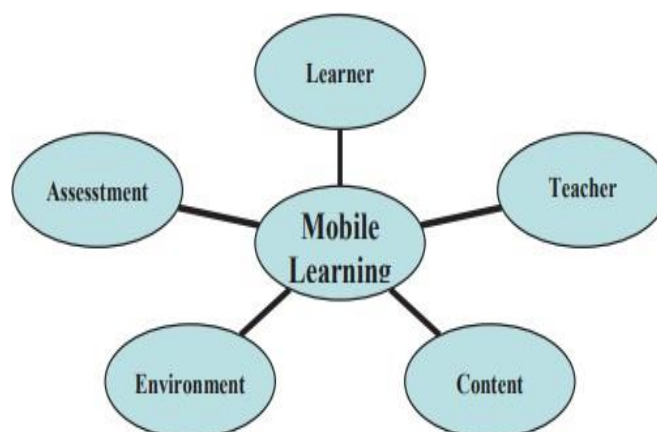
mobile-assisted language learning is more important than ever. During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Gujarat, the current study attempted to determine the efficacy of mobile assisted language learning (MALL) and its effects on the foreign/second language learning process.

Empirical research conducted at all three levels of education has also found that mobile learning contributes to the development of critical thinking and initiative, increases collaboration between students as well as between teachers and students, enables the teacher to immediate feedback and assessment, prepares students for professional reality, personalizes learning, gives educational opportunities to those who can not access good quality education, and reduces school costs (UNESCO, 2013).

MALL Vs. Face-to-Face Learning: What's the Difference?

MALL	Face-to-Face Leaning
Through mobile devices, students can learn digitally	Based on Paper and Pen
Learners are active participants in the creation of knowledge	Learners are passive recipients of the information
Adaptable to situation	Contextualized
There are no limitations in terms of location or time	Time and location are intertwined
A student-centered approach	A teacher-centered approach

According to Ozdamli & Cavus (2011), the essential pillars of MALL are the learners, teachers, content, assessment, and environment.

Figure 1: Model adopted from Ozdamli and Cavus, (2011)

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All of the components in an m-learning environment are successfully connected, as shown in the diagram above. The learner takes centre stage here, with all other parts working to support them (Makoe, 2010). Similarly, in m-learning environments, the teacher or instructor plays a significant but different role from traditional techniques. Technology, E-books, E-files, and other E-tools have revolutionised educational methods, and the teacher has become a facilitator.

Statement of Research Problem

Mobile learning is one of the most popular techniques of teaching in all disciplines of education in the twenty-first century, as it has a significant impact on today's students' learning results. The scenario in India is similar to that in other countries throughout the world. Despite the fact that it is a developing country, the government is still doing everything it can to maximise the benefits of modern gadgets in educational institutions. Covid-19 has wreaked havoc on all countries, causing massive losses in many areas of life. As a result, it is a pressing topic that the researchers have attempted to address through the study of how keen university students in Gujarat, India, are to use mobile phones for language learning when at home.

Objectives of the Study

The current study's goals were as follows:

1. To investigate Gujarati ESL learners' perspectives of the usage of smartphones for language learning during the Covid-19 outbreak.

2. During the lockdown, determine the effectiveness of MALL in language learning at the university level.

Research Questions

The following research questions were addressed in this study:

1. How prepared are Gujarati ESL students to use MALL during the lockdown?

2. During the Covid-19 Pandemic in Gujarat, how helpful was m-learning for language learners at the university level?

Conceptual Framework

The Technology Acceptance Model (TAM) is a follow-up to Fishbein and Ajzen's Theory of Reasoned Action (TRA) (1980). The goal of TRA was to comprehend and anticipate human attitudes and behaviours. Another theory, known as the theory of Planned Behavior, was then developed for the limited and specialised application of TRA (TBA). TAM, which anticipates and studies the acceptance and rejection of modern technology, was coined by Fred Davis in

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1986 as a variation of the aforementioned ideas. Through its analysis and testing, TAM has proven to be a dependable and valid model (Khan & Tufail, 2020, p. 176).
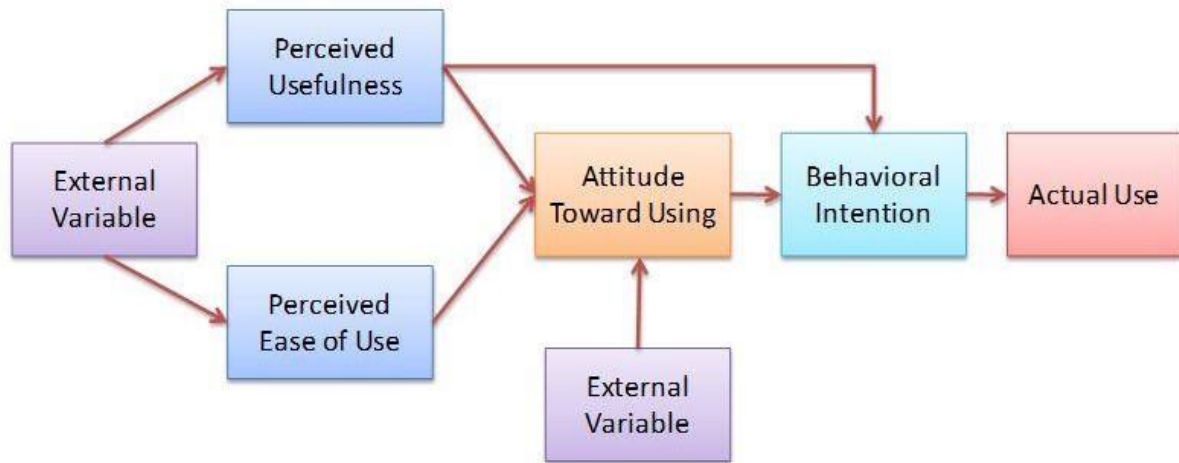
Figure 2: Theoretical Framework (TAM)

Perceived utility (PU) and perceived ease of use (PEOU) are two essential aspects in the Technology Acceptance Model that influence people's perspectives and perceptions about technology adoption and provide insight into users' intents to learn new skills. As defined, PU is the extent to which a person believes that employing a particular strategy would improve his job or other duties. PEOU, according to Davis, is the degree to which a person perceives his work to be more easy as a result of the usage of a particular system. As a result, people are more likely to adopt applications that they believe are easier to use or that can help them perform certain jobs better (Davis, 1989 as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020).

This model intends to give a succinct technique for understanding and predicting the impact of external variables such as training, access, experience, or system quality on people's attitudes, beliefs, and goals when utilising a certain technology. TAM was used by Durodolu (2016) in his research to assess its variables for information literacy. This research has improved our understanding of TAM and demonstrated that it is a suitable model for IT and other technologically driven studies. Resistance has also been noted as a major contributor to failure in adjusting to new technologies and achieving information literacy (IL).

A large number of researchers have employed TAM to better understand m-learning. Several successful studies have been conducted to improve its effectiveness by adding more factors. The intention of language learners to utilise mobile devices is positively influenced by PU. Furthermore, if consumers believe that using a given technology will improve their effectiveness, they will be more extrinsically motivated to use that technology (Change et al., 2013).

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Review of the Literature

Various studies show that while certain developing nations in Covid-19 are successfully embracing online learning, it is on a limited scale. Because many countries have insufficient technology, they are unable to offer nationwide online classes.

Khan & Tufail (2020) carried out a study entitled 'An Investigation into the Effectiveness of MALL during COVID-19 at the Higher Education in Pakistani EFL Classrooms'. The objectives of the study were: (i) To understand the perceptions of Pakistani EFL learners regarding the use of smartphones for language learning in Covid-19, and (ii) To apprehend the effectiveness of MALL in language learning at a higher level during the lockdown. A mixed-method approach was used in the investigation. The female undergraduate and postgraduate students in the English department of Multon University make up the sample population. MALL is highly optimistic and favourable, according to the study's findings. In this Covid-19 situation, learners see mobile phones as a convenient and accessible source of language learning, according to the report.

Ali et al. (2020) carried out a study entitled 'The Acceptance of mobile Assisted Language Learning as Primary Learning Tool for Learners in Covid 19 Situations'. The study's goal was to find out what public university students thought about using MALL for English language learning in Covid 19 circumstances. The participants in this study were selected at random from all of Punjab's public universities. Only post-graduate students (English only) were selected as samples from these universities. A total of 100 English students from ten public sector universities in Punjab were randomly recruited for the study. A questionnaire was used to conduct the research. Its findings revealed that students felt that studying through MALL is a novel and unconventional approach to learning, especially in this Covid 19 environment where mental stress has pushed people to their limits.

Fazeena at al. (2015) carried out a study entitled 'A Theoretical Approach to initiate Mobile Assisted Language Learning among school leavers and University Students of Sri Lanka'. The purpose of this paper was to provide the findings of a study that was undertaken to determine the prospects of m-learning among the project's target study community, which consisted of Sri Lankan school leavers and undergraduates. Design Based Research (DBR) was used throughout the entire study. The study community has a satisfactory degree of mobile penetration, according to the results of this survey. They are more tech-savvy and have experience with mobile apps. The bulk of the learner population is between the ages of 18 and 25, indicating that they are youthful and enthusiastic about m-learning. As a result, this will be an excellent opportunity to launch a mobile-based learning solution that will be well-received by the academic community.

Ali at al. (2020) conducted a study entitled 'The Application of Mobile Assisted Language Learning in Pakistani ESL classrooms: An Analysis of Teachers' Voices'. The objectives of the study were: (i) to explore the perceptions of Pakistani teachers regarding integrating MALL in classrooms, and (ii) to investigate their viewpoint regarding MALL and

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conventional methods. The population for this study comes from Lahore, where all public sector colleges were used as data gathering sources. Six teachers were chosen at random for this study using simple random sampling procedures for conducting interviews. The study included both qualitative and quantitative data collection approaches. The findings demonstrated that MALL, as a novel approach of teaching and learning, is an intriguing, up-to-date, original, and impactful method that has been proven in several research.

Arvanitis & Krystalli (2020) carried out a study entitled 'Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL): Trends from 2010-2020 Using Text Analysis Techniques'. This research looked at the pattern of a significant number of academic publications published between 2010 and 2020 that used text analysis techniques and technologies to investigate Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL). A total of 340 publications were retrieved and examined, including journal articles, conference proceedings papers, book chapters, and books. The preliminary analysis explains how the area of mobile assisted language learning has progressed over the years, as well as the main characteristics and research trends of this decade. The early findings of this study revealed that MALL concerns have piqued scholars' interest and worry throughout the last ten years.

Research Design and Methodology

As previously stated, the goal of this study was to determine the impact of the MALL at the university level in Gujarat during the Covid – 19 Pandemic. A mixed-methods strategy was used in this investigation. It's because it's been subjected to both qualitative and quantitative research. The random sample approach was used to distribute a closed-ended questionnaire with 10 questions and a five-point Likert Scale. Finally, three open-ended questions were used to conduct a Personal Interaction (PI). The sample population consists of 50 male and 50 female undergraduate and post-graduate students from the Humanities and Social Sciences (HSS) Department at the Charotar University of Science and Technology (CHARUSAT), Changa, Gujarat.

The data was acquired via a Google form and interviews. In the first round, participants filled out a hundred questionnaires using Google forms, which were then distributed via Telegram (App). The twenty students were then asked five interview questions in order to collect qualitative data in addition to the quantitative data. Because the current study was conducted during a lockdown, the researchers had a difficult time collecting data from each participant.

Techniques of Data Analysis

The data is initially processed, labelled, and categorised in the data analysis process. The results of a simple descriptive statistical study using SPSS are presented in the table. The information gathered through Personal Interaction (PI) is examined qualitatively and presented as themes.

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Analysis of the Quantitative Data

The quantitative information gathered via Google forms/questionnaires was analysed and coded. The following are the codes assigned to the scale: SA stands for Strongly Agree, A for Agree, N for Neutral, SD for Strongly Disagree, and D for Disagree. The following is a summary table of the data that was analysed.

Sr. No.	Categories	SD	D	N	A	SA
1.	I find that mobile phones are portable and thus easy to use.	4%	11%	8%	47%	30%
2.	Smart phones are preferred against other digital devices	12%	12%	21%	38%	17%
3.	During Covid – 19, I am inspired to study a language using mobile devices.	12%	16%	14%	42%	16%
4.	Because of Covid – 19, I prefer to learn the language employing various variety of applications on my phone while I'm at home.	9%	16%	14%	44%	17%
5.	When I'm learning a language on my mobile device or tablet at home, I frequently run into issues like a lousy internet connection or time management etc	5%	6%	15%	27%	47%
6.	During Covid – 19, it was rather simple to exchange information and communication with my professors and classmates via mobile devices.	17%	8%	10%	43%	22%
7.	Even during the Covid-19 lockout, mobile devices allowed to continue my study.	13%	15%	16%	34%	22%
8.	Due to the availability of mobile	9%	16%	12%	44%	19%

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	devices during the Covid-19, I was able to learn a language without regard to time or space constraints.					
9.	Even when I was in lockdown, I was able to increase my language learning performance by using my phone.	15%	9%	21%	39%	16%
10.	I am willing to use my Smartphone for educational purposes during Covid-19.	14%	11%	15%	39%	21%

In response to question 1, the majority of respondents agreed that mobile phones are convenient and user-friendly. Agreeing and strongly agreeing responses account for 77% of all responses, which is more than the other three types of responses. It demonstrates that Gujarati ESL students are more at ease with their mobile devices. However, the other responses of disagreement and neutrality cannot be completely ignored, as the combined result of disagreements is 15%, with the remaining 8% remaining neutral, indicating that there are still some issues with the portability and ease of use of mobile devices that learners are experiencing.

Respondents to question 2 expressed agreement and disagreement with the stated statement. Because today's students are required to use mobile devices for learning, the respondents were asked whether they prefer mobile phones to computers. The data reveal little difference between agreement and disagreement, with the overall result of 55 percent for agreement and 24 percent for strongly disagreed and disagreed. Furthermore, 221 percent of those polled were undecided. It is apparent that half of the population prefers mobile phones to computers, while the other half is content with utilising both types of gadgets or using computers for learning purposes the majority of the time.

In Covid-19, the overall result of the agreement is 58 percent, which means that half of the public feels motivated and inspired as a result of using mobile phones for language study. During the Covid-19 issue, it reveals that English language learners in Gujarat are now feeling more encouraged to learn the language through mobile phones. Their favourable attitude about using technology devices in the classroom may help them achieve tremendous academic performance. However, the situation does not appear to be stable, since 28% of respondents disagreed, while 14% were neutral.

Question 4 elicited both good and negative responses, depending on the respondents' preferences. The combined result of the accepted responses is 61 percent, indicating that more than half of the populace benefits from various apps on their mobile devices while on lockdown at home. Some respondents have expressed their opposition to the usage of mobile apps, with a total population of 25%, or more than half of the total population. However, 14%

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of students were undecided, indicating their apprehension or incapacity to effectively use their cellphones.

The findings in response to question #5 describe one of the most significant problems we have in integrating mobile learning into our academic environment. The majority of students agreed with the statement, and their total score is 74 percent, which is a good score. It has given us a clear picture of how challenging it is for language learners to use mobile phones for language acquisition. This is a particularly pressing issue in Gujarat, where students confront issues such as poor internet access and time management. The remaining population is small, with only 11 percent disagreeing and 15 percent remaining indifferent.

In response to question 6, the data also shows that the total number of agreed respondents is 65 percent, which is more than half of the total population. It demonstrates that, in the opinion of the students, mobile devices have aided them in better communication with both their teachers and their peers. The primary aim of a mobile device is to allow users to communicate more effectively, and learners are benefiting from this in their learning process. However, the combined result of the disagreed responses is 25%, indicating that some of the students are having difficulty communicating with one another.

Table 07 shows that half of the population has reacted affirmatively, with a total of 56 percent of agreed respondents. Though the overall response isn't entirely satisfying, as 28 percent of the public disagrees, 50 percent of respondents say that their language acquisition has been favourably affected by the use of mobile phones, which is a good indicator. Furthermore, 16 percent of respondents were undecided, indicating apprehension among learners about their own language learning abilities and the impact of mobile phones in this regard.

In response to question no. 8, 63 percent of the whole public favoured the usage of mobile devices in their omnipresent learning. By ubiquitous learning, we imply learning that takes place without regard to time or place, allowing the student to learn at any time and in any location. Learners' mobility is assessed by mobile phones, which has a positive impact on their learning processes. Only around a quarter of the people polled agreed with each other. 12 percent of respondents were undecided, indicating that they are not completely opposed to the statement, but are concerned about the widespread use of mobile phones for studying.

In response to question #9, the data shows that the participants' perspectives on how m-learning might help them enhance their academic performance are rather diverse. The total number of agreed respondents equals 55%, or half of the population. It appears that Gujarati ESL students are reaping significant educational gains from their smartphone usage. However, 24% of respondents disagreed, claiming that they were ineffective in their learning process. The remaining 21% are undecided regarding the impact of mobile phones on their learning.

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Finally, the responses to question 10 have shown a new perspective on the learners' readiness and desire to use smartphones for academic reasons. According to the findings, 60 percent of respondents are willing to utilise smartphones for learning on a cumulative basis. This trend of academic learning via mobile phones is gaining traction in developing nations like India, which is a good sign. In this case, learners' readiness may offer positive effects. As the sum of their responses shows, 25% of respondents disagreed. It's possible that their conflict stems from the difficulties they're having with m-learning. Furthermore, 15% of respondents are still undecided about whether or not they will utilise it.

Analysis of the Qualitative Data

After careful listening to the audio, the interviews were recorded and transcribed. The data was coded, categorised, and themes were retrieved using a thematic technique.

Role of MALL for Gujarati ESL Learners during COVID-19 in Gujarat State

All of the interviewees believe that mobile learning is important in their language acquisition, particularly during the Covid-19 outbreak in Gujarat. They believe that mobile gadgets are assisting them in keeping in touch with their lecturers and, as a result, with their academics at this time of difficulty. It has given them a simple way to pursue online learning. One of the most essential aspects of MALL, according to several of them, is that they may now employ their time and energy without even leaving their homes.

MALL's Imagery

The respondents' perceptions of ease and complexity follow a similar pattern for analysis. The majority of them have acknowledged the reality that mobile phones have offered them with convenience and comfort due to quick access and learning opportunities, even while they were quarantined. However, there are various issues that have made mobile learning in Gujarati less successful to some extent. Poor internet availability is the most prevalent problem that ESL students have when using their phones, and it can be a tremendous difficulty for these students. Other disadvantages include health concerns (eye strain) and a lack of competence.

Switching to MALL during Lockdown

Gujarati ESL students are keen to use mobile devices for instructional purposes, according to all of the responses to this question. They are motivated because their education is now being completed through virtual classes, and they have been able to effectively manage their time even in Covid-19. They are motivated by their ease using mobile gadgets. Another crucial feature that encourages kids to use mobile phones for learning during the lockdown is their relationship with their teachers and friends.

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Discussions and Implications

In every subject of education, m-learning is undoubtedly an innovative method of teaching and learning. The effectiveness of the MALL in the context of Gujarati ESL during Covid-19 was evaluated in this study. The TAM framework was used in the research. Its two key components were PU and PEOU. This model was primarily used in the research to comprehend learners' behaviour and attitudes about mobile technology. The study's focus was on the students' perspectives, and the students responded positively and enthusiastically to their use of cell phones in the classroom.

People typically use technology because of the inherent motivation they obtain from its benefits and rewards, according to Davis (1989, as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020). In terms of perceived usefulness (PU), 55 percent of respondents agreed that m-learning improved their language learning ability during Covid-19, and 60 percent indicated that they would be prepared to use mobile devices for academic purposes.

Motivation is an important aspect in education that can boost learning and teaching processes in a variety of ways (Pintrich & Schunk 2002 as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020). According to Lunsford (2010, as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020), mobile learning has given students limitless chances for efficiency and connectivity in their studies. Respondent #01 stated that m-learning has motivated them to use technology for educational objectives.

My motive for utilising a cellphone during lockdown is that it keeps us in contact with our lecturers and allows us to continue learning with them. So, rather of wasting time waiting for the Covid-19 status to improve, we should continue to fight using phones and various apps.

Because of the ease of access, their perceptions of mobile learning have been pushed. Nanthida (2011, as referenced in Khan & Tufail, 2020) claimed that consumers' perceptions of a technological system's ease of use are influenced by the benefits of usability and enjoyment they perceive. In the words of responder #2,

During lockdown, it is simple to learn languages using mobile devices. Learners can use their mobile phones to access language.

According to Davis (1989, as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020), individuals are more likely to use something if it appears to be simple and straightforward. In terms of perceived ease of use (PEOU), 77 percent of respondents preferred mobile phones to desktops because they are portable and simple to use. Stockwell, who stated in 2007 that students prefer mobile phones to PCs because they are more convenient and portable, agreed with this viewpoint.

Huang et al. (2012, as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020) have also highlighted the convenience of m-learning due to its prominent qualities such as natural, unprompted, and omnipresent learning. Learners have a positive attitude about the use of mobile phones because they understand the advantages of distance learning. They can take their classes on their phones at any time and from anyplace in this scenario.

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Furthermore, learners face challenges with their mobile phone use, such as poor internet connectivity, a lack of competence, and eye strain. Because of their size, Thoronton and Houser (2005, as cited in Khan & Tufail, 2020) believed that mobile screens could be a barrier in the learning process, and Respondent # 03 agreed:

I don't spend a lot of time on my phone or sit in front of the computer for long periods of time... However, in this case, I am compelled to learn using a screen or a mobile phone, which I find both tedious and irritating. This gives me a headache, and my eyes become fatigued too quickly as a result.

Yes, I have problems, according to another participant, but they are primarily due to a poor internet connection and a lack of experience.

Recommendation and Final Thoughts

Students' attitudes toward MALL are generally supportive and positive. In this Covid-19 crisis, the study found that learners have a potential for using mobile phones for language learning since they see it as an easy and accessible source of learning. As a result, the majority of them are willing to utilise smartphones to further their education. Their preparedness is a motivating element, demonstrating that the TAM framework is a suitable way to assess technology consumers' behaviour. Students and teachers in Gujarat, on the other hand, are in desperate need of comprehensive training in the realm of mobile technology in order to reap the maximum benefits from it. Other researchers can conduct additional research to determine the elements that are generating challenges in integrating MALL in virtual ESL/EFL classrooms during the lockdown, as well as how MALL can be made more effective in learning and teaching English in India, particularly in Gujarat. Furthermore, the issues that learners and teachers face when using mobile phones for language acquisition can be examined further in the Gujarati context. This study can be duplicated for different educational levels in India with more research, and instructor perceptions should be included.

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Appendix

Questionnaire

1. I find that mobile phones are portable and thus easy to use.

2. Smart phones are preferred against other digital devices.

3. During Covid – 19, I am inspired to study a language using mobile devices.

4. Because of Covid – 19, I prefer to learn the language employing various variety ofapplications on my phone while I'm at home.

5. When I'm learning a language on my mobile device or tablet at home, I frequently runinto issues like a lousy internet connection or time management etc

6. During Covid – 19, it was rather simple to exchange information and communicationwith my professors and classmates via mobile devices.

7. Even during the Covid-19 lockout, mobile devices allowed to continue my study.

8. Due to the availability of mobile devices during the Covid-19, I was able to learn alanguage without regard to time or space constraints.

9. Even when I was in lockdown, I was able to increase my language learningperformance by using my phone.

10. I am willing to use my Smartphone for educational purposes during Covid-19.

Interview Questions

1. What role does mobile learning play for Gujarati ESL students in the Covid-19epidemic, in your opinion?

2. Have you encountered any challenges or do you feel comfortable using your phone tolearn?

3. What is the reason for your willingness to utilize your phone as a means ofcommunication during a lockdown? (e.g. self-management or easy to learn etc.)