



Students' Perception of Mobile Assisted Language Learning in ESP classroom at Higher Education

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ABSTRACT

Digital learning has become a potential learning tool since the COVID-19 pandemic that has caused the use of new technologies including mobile assisted language learning (MALL). Meanwhile, the implementation of MALL in English language learning particularly ESP still has different challenges due to technical, instructional and financial barriers. Several previous research suggest exploring more teaching experiences related to the use of mobile assisted language learning for the next contribution. This research aimed to find out the students' perception on the use of Mobile Assisted Language Learning at ESP class. It employed a descriptive qualitative method. It was conducted at ESP class in Islamic Religious Education (PAI) Study Program of Faculty of Tarbiyah at IAI Riyadlotul Mubahidin Ponorogo with enclose 15 students as a sample of this research. This research used the purposive sampling technique to take the sample. The data were collected through questionnaire and interview. To collect the data, the study employed the questionnaire with 10 items given to 15 students. The responses from the interview were concluded to answer the research questions. As a result of the study, it is shown that most of the students agree of using mobile assisted language learning for learning English in ESP class. By using MALL as medium of learning ESP in the class, it can increase students' English ability with appropriate English standard, motivate them to learn English, improve their confidence to speak and to write in English, help them to comprehend English textbook or article, and assist them to understand the international standardized text.

Keywords: Students Perception, MALL, ESP Classroom

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INTRODUCTION

English serves as a global means of communication. Having English skills or a solid understanding of the language is highly beneficial for future opportunities, particularly in achieving career success. For this reason, nearly all schools in Indonesia include English as a compulsory subject that students must learn. The importance of English in Indonesia lies in its role as a medium of communication in both educational and business settings. Learning English effectively in schools depends on having clear objectives and suitable teaching methods for the learners' age. When teachers provide clear and effective instruction, students are more likely to comprehend English successfully (Morrow, 2011).

English for Specific Purposes (ESP) holds significant importance for Indonesian professionals as it equips them with the language skills needed to perform effectively in their

respective fields. In today's globalized era, English is not only a medium of international communication but also a key competency in professional settings such as education, medicine, engineering, tourism, business, and technology. For Indonesian professionals, proficiency in ESP enables them to access international knowledge, collaborate with global partners, and enhance their competitiveness in the international job market (Anthony, 2018). ESP focuses on developing language skills used to specific occupational or academic contexts, which makes learning more relevant and efficient compared to general English (Basturkmen, 2019).

The rapid advancement of digital technology has transformed language education worldwide, particularly through the application of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). Since the COVID-19 pandemic, mobile technology has become an essential tool for online and blended instruction, providing students with increased access to learning materials and interactive resources (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). MALL enables learners to engage in flexible, self-paced, and multimodal English learning activities that extend beyond traditional classroom boundaries (Hwang & Fu, 2019).

In higher education, especially in English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classes, mobile devices are increasingly recognized for their potential to facilitate language practice, motivation, and autonomy. Despite its potential, the implementation of MALL in ESP contexts still faces several challenges, including technical limitations, lack of digital literacy, and uneven pedagogical integration (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2021). These issues often hinder the effectiveness of mobile learning tools in achieving targeted learning outcomes. Moreover, while many studies confirm the benefits of MALL in general English learning, limited research has explored how it influences ESP students' perceptions, particularly in relation to motivation, confidence, enjoyment, and flexibility. Addressing this gap, the present study investigates students' perceptions of MALL in improving English proficiency among ESP learners at a higher education institution in Indonesia.

The scope of this study focuses on 1st semester students of Islamic Religious Education (PAI) program, who used MALL as part of their ESP learning activities. The limitation lies in the relatively small number of participants (15 students) and the descriptive nature of the research, which may not generalize across broader populations. The objective of this research is to examine students' perceptions regarding the use of MALL in ESP classrooms, emphasizing its effects on their motivation, confidence, learning flexibility, and self-management. This study is aimed to give contribution related to existing literature by enriching the understanding of learner perception and motivation in mobile language learning (Alamer & Lee, 2021; Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). Practically, it provides valuable insights for lecturers, curriculum designers, and institutions seeking to integrate MALL effectively into ESP programs.

Drawing on Self-Determination Theory (Deci & Ryan, 2017) and Technology Acceptance Model (Davis, 1989), the conceptual framework of this study declare that MALL enhances language learning outcomes by fostering autonomy, enjoyment, and ease of use. Thus, understanding students' perceptions becomes essential for ensuring that mobile learning serves as an effective and engaging medium for English language acquisition in specialized academic contexts.

METHOD

This study employed a descriptive qualitative method to examine students' perceptions of MALL as a tool for learning ESP. The aspects of perception observed included learning motivation, the effectiveness of the learning process, and student knowledge. The research population consisted of 1st semester students of Islamic Religious Education (PAI), and through purposive sampling, one classes with a total of 15 students were selected. Data collection was carried out using a questionnaire distributed via Google Form, consisting of 10 items measured with a 4-point Likert scale, where 1 indicated "strongly disagree (SD)," 2 "disagree (D)" 3 "agree

(A),” and 4 “strongly agree (SA)” and also interview the participant or student to strengthen the result of questionnaire. The motivation dimension was measured with 3 indicators, the effectiveness dimension with 5 indicators, and the knowledge dimension with 3 indicators. The findings provided an overview of students’ perceptions of using MALL in learning ESP at Islamic Religious Education study program. The results were interpreted and analyzed to offer insights that could serve as a basis for evaluating the implementation of MALL in the ESP classroom.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This research aims to investigate students’ perceptions of utilizing the Mobile Assisted Language Learning as a digital tool for learning English. The participants were first introduced to the features and functions of the Mobile Assisted Language Learning, allowing them to explore and practice English through the platform. After engaging with the application several times, the researchers distributed a questionnaire to gather students’ opinions regarding its use in their learning process. The questionnaire consisted of 10 statements designed to capture their perceptions of the Mobile Assisted Language Learning as a digital medium for English for specific purpose (ESP). The data obtained are presented in Table 1 below :

Table.1.

No	Statement	SA	A	DA	SDA
1	By using MALL I have more chances to improve my English	36%	58%	6%	0 %
2	I am engaged in learning English independently through MALL	30%	62%	8%	0%
3	Using MALL increase my motivation in learning English	50%	50%	0%	0%
4	I feel enjoy learning English by using MALL	72%	24%	4%	0%
5	I can enhance my confidence to practice English by using MALL	32%	56%	12%	0%
6	I can practice my English skill as many time as I want	68%	24%	8%	0%
7	The lesson is attractively delivered by using MALL	28%	60%	12%	0%
8	Using MALL helps me to manage my own learning	40%	56%	4%	0%
9	MALL help me improve my English skill	56%	44%	0%	0%
10	MALL is easy to use	72%	28%	0%	0%

The first statement in the questionnaire was, “By using the MALL (Mobile Assited Language Learning), I have more opportunities to improve my English at English for specific purpose class.” The results indicate that 36% of students strongly agreed and 58% agreed with this statement, while only 6% disagreed and none strongly disagreed. Additionally, based on interview to a student, DA, she said,”MALL can improve my English well.” (DA, Interview, 25th August 2025). These findings suggest that most students perceive the MALL providing significant opportunities to enhance their English skills. Students strongly perceive MALL as expanding learning opportunities beyond the traditional classroom. This finding is consistent with the dominant affordances attributed to mobile technologies in language education: portability, flexible access to input and practice, and the possibility of micro-learning episodes that fit into learners’

daily routines (Sung et al., 2015). In an ESP context, MALL's potential is particularly relevant for targeted, discipline-specific learning such as technical vocabulary acquisition, phrase, and scenario-based speaking tasks. Recent studies reviews of mobile-assisted vocabulary learning and applied studies in ESP report that mobile flashcards, spaced-repetition tools, and small-task apps increase both exposure to and rehearsal of domain-specific terms — a probable mechanism behind students' sense that MALL creates more opportunities for improvement in ESP courses.

Regarding the third statement, the findings show that 50% of students strongly agreed and the remaining 50% agreed, while none selected disagreement or strong disagreement. These positive responses suggest that the MALL application plays a significant role in fostering students' learning motivation. The absence of any negative responses demonstrates that the application is widely perceived as engaging and supportive in encouraging learners to actively participate in improving their English. Moreover, MJF said I feel enjoy learning ESP trough My mobile phone with the whole application supported.” (MJF, Interview, 25th August 2025). Such results highlight the app's effectiveness in creating a motivating learning environment, which is essential for sustaining students' interest and progress in language acquisition.

This finding also reflects that MALL fosters learner engagement and motivation by offering interactive, flexible, and personalized learning experiences (Kukulka-Hulme, 2020; Hwang & Fu, 2019). The absence of any negative responses suggests that students find MALL applications not only useful but also stimulating and supportive in sustaining their enthusiasm for learning English. Learner motivation has been consistently identified as a key factor influencing language achievement, and mobile technology has been found to enhance both intrinsic and extrinsic motivation. According to Deci and Ryan's (2017) Self-Determination Theory, autonomy and competence are central to maintaining motivation. MALL supports these psychological needs by allowing students to learn independently, monitor their own progress, and receive immediate feedback (Lai, 2020). Such autonomy-driven learning environments can explain the high levels of motivation reported in this study.

Another empirical studies also support these findings. For instance, Viberg and Grönlund (2017) found that mobile learning positively affected students' motivation by providing continuous access to authentic materials and opportunities for collaboration. Similarly, Burston (2020) emphasized that the integration of MALL applications increased learners' persistence and satisfaction due to their interactive and game-like features. Moreover, Mahdi (2018) confirmed that mobile-assisted environments significantly improve both motivation and achievement in English learning, particularly when the applications incorporate feedback, multimedia content, and gamified interaction. In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), maintaining motivation is essential for sustaining learners' engagement with discipline-related vocabulary and communicative tasks. The positive perceptions revealed in this study demonstrate that MALL can effectively create a motivating and autonomous learning environment, supporting students in achieving higher levels of English proficiency relevant to their professional fields (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2021). Hence, the findings suggest that the implementation of MALL in ESP classes not only improves English achievement but also nurtures students' intrinsic motivation to continue learning beyond the classroom setting. In other situation, based on interview on 29 August 2025, TRR, an ESP student said, “using MALL make me happy in English learning and I am really engaged to get the material.” This statement strengthen the previous explanation that applying MALL can effectively engaged students motivation in ESP learning. (TRR, Interview, 29th August 2025)

For the fourth statement, the data reveal that 72% of students strongly agreed and 24% agreed, while none expressed disagreement. These results demonstrate that students genuinely enjoy using the MALL as a medium for learning English in English for specific purpose class. One of the key reasons for this positive perception is the app's multisensory design, which allows learners to engage through multiple channels such as sight, sound, and touch. Students can interact

with the application via touchscreen features, watch instructional videos, listen to audio materials, and participate in hands-on tasks using digital tools. This multisensory approach not only enhances comprehension and memory retention but also creates a more engaging and enjoyable learning experience, making the process of acquiring English skills both effective and motivating.

This indicates that MALL creates an enjoyable and engaging learning environment that stimulates students' interest. Enjoyment in language learning is often linked to the interactive and multisensory nature of digital platforms, which utilize visual, auditory, and tactile elements to maintain learners' attention and promote deeper engagement (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). The multisensory experience provided by MALL applications—through videos, pronunciation audios, touch-based interactions, and gamified exercises—supports multimodal learning and strengthens memory retention (Hwang & Fu, 2019). As Alamer and Lee (2021) explain, positive emotions such as enjoyment play a vital role in sustaining motivation and persistence in second language acquisition. Thus, students' enjoyment of MALL activities likely contributes to their sustained participation and improved learning outcomes in ESP contexts.

Moreover, enjoyment derived from mobile learning environments enhances both intrinsic motivation and affective engagement (Li & Lan, 2021). Learners are more likely to invest effort in language tasks when they perceive them as pleasurable and meaningful. Studies have shown that MALL promotes a sense of flow—a psychological state of deep involvement—by allowing students to control their pace of learning and receive immediate feedback (Burston, 2020; Sung et al., 2016). These findings reinforce the current study's results, suggesting that the interactive design of MALL helps transform English learning into an enjoyable and rewarding process.

The findings for the fifth questionnaire indicate that 32% of students strongly agreed, 56% agreed, and 12% disagreed, with no students selecting “strongly disagreed.” In the same way, DA said that she feels joy and confidence when learning English by using MALL. She said it can boost her confidence to express her idea in English. . (DA, Interview, 29th August 2025)

These results suggest that the majority of learners perceive the MALL as a tool that helps boost their confidence in practicing English. The app provides a supportive and non-threatening learning environment where students can freely practice without fear of being judged. By offering constructive feedback and guiding learners toward improvement, the application allows students to make mistakes safely and view them as part of the learning process. This positive and encouraging atmosphere fosters greater self-assurance, enabling students to take more opportunities to use English actively in real-life situations.

Confidence is a critical affective factor in language performance; learners with higher self-confidence are more willing to communicate and take linguistic risks (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). MALL supports this development by offering a low-anxiety, self-paced, and private environment in which students can practice English without fear of making mistakes in front of peers (Stockwell & Hubbard, 2021). This aligns with Krashen's (1982) Affective Filter Hypothesis, which posits that reduced anxiety and increased comfort facilitate better language acquisition.

Another study demonstrated that mobile learning fosters self-efficacy and learner confidence. For example, Mahdi (2018) found that mobile-based learning significantly improved learners' self-confidence and willingness to communicate by providing immediate feedback and self-assessment opportunities. Similarly, Hazaea and Alzubi (2020) noted that MALL environments enable learners to view errors as natural parts of the learning process, which in turn strengthens their confidence and promotes autonomy. These insights support the present findings that MALL not only enhances students' enjoyment but also empowers them to take ownership of their learning and use English more actively.

In the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP), where communicative competence and confidence are essential for professional communication, MALL provides a valuable platform that blends enjoyment, self-expression, and self-assurance. By making the learning process interactive and emotionally supportive, MALL applications help learners develop both linguistic

proficiency and affective readiness—two indispensable components of successful English learning.

The results for the sixth questionnaire indicate that 68% of students strongly agreed, 24% agreed, and only 8% disagreed, with no respondents selecting “strongly disagreed.” These findings suggest that the MALL provides learners with the flexibility to practice their English skills as frequently as they wish. Unlike traditional learning methods that often require students to search through textbooks for specific materials, the application offers an engaging and user-friendly platform where learners can explore new content more efficiently. Furthermore, the app grants immediate access to English lessons at any time, allowing students to learn at their own pace and convenience. This accessibility not only enhances independent learning but also creates greater opportunities for consistent practice, which is essential for language mastery. These findings suggest that the MALL provides learners with the flexibility to practice their English skills as frequently as they wish. Unlike traditional learning methods that often require students to search through textbooks for specific materials, the application offers an engaging and user-friendly platform where learners can explore new content more efficiently. Furthermore, the app grants immediate access to English lessons at any time, allowing students to learn at their own pace and convenience. This accessibility not only enhances independent learning but also creates greater opportunities for consistent practice, which is essential for language mastery. These findings also highlight learners’ strong appreciation for the adaptability and convenience that mobile-assisted language learning offers. Flexibility is one of the defining advantages of MALL, enabling students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere, thereby overcoming temporal and spatial barriers commonly associated with traditional classroom settings (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020). Through mobile applications, learners can engage in short, self-paced activities—such as listening to podcasts, completing vocabulary drills, or recording speaking tasks—during their free time, which promotes continuous exposure to the target language (Hwang & Fu, 2019).

This flexibility supports the principles of ubiquitous learning (u-learning), where education becomes accessible beyond the classroom and integrated into learners’ daily routines. Studies have shown that such constant accessibility increases learners’ opportunities for authentic practice and fosters autonomous learning habits (Burston, 2020; Wong, 2017). Learners can review materials, repeat exercises, and revisit feedback as needed, allowing them to take ownership of their learning progress. According to Lai (2020), this self-directed learning capacity is crucial in developing lifelong language learning skills, as it empowers learners to manage their goals, pace, and strategies independently.

Additionally, flexibility in learning contributes to increased motivation and reduced anxiety, as students feel more in control of when, where, and how they study (Dörnyei & Ushioda, 2021). This autonomy lowers affective barriers and creates a more relaxed environment conducive to effective language acquisition.

The results for the eighth statement show that 40% of students strongly agreed, 56% agreed, and only 4% disagreed, with no students selecting “strongly disagreed.” These findings suggest that MALL supports learners in effectively managing their own learning activities. Meanwhile, RAA an ESP student said, “ Using MALL, I can learn English wherever I am and whenever I want to learn to improve my English skill.” . (MSK, Interview, 29th August 2025). With the advancement of digital language learning tools, English instruction is no longer confined to traditional classroom settings. Instead, students have the autonomy to design and organize their learning experiences independently. The MALL allows learners to set their own pace, choose topics of interest, and practice at times that best suit their schedules. This flexibility empowers students to take greater responsibility for their learning, fostering autonomy and self-directed study beyond school hours.

This positive response demonstrates that students perceive mobile-assisted language learning as a valuable tool for fostering autonomy and self-directed learning. In contemporary

language education, learner autonomy is widely recognized as a crucial factor for academic success, as it enables students to take ownership of their learning process (Lai, 2020; Benson & Reinders, 2019). The features of MALL—such as on-demand access to materials, personalized learning paths, and flexible scheduling—allow learners to plan, monitor, and evaluate their learning experiences independently.

Research consistently supports the idea that mobile technologies facilitate self-regulated learning (SRL) by enabling students to control the pace, timing, and content of their studies. Hwang and Fu (2019) emphasized that mobile learning environments empower learners to make strategic decisions about when and how to engage with materials, thereby strengthening their metacognitive awareness. Similarly, Viberg and Grönlund (2017) found that mobile platforms enhance students' capacity for planning and reflection, two key dimensions of SRL. By allowing learners to track progress and revisit lessons at their convenience, MALL encourages continuous engagement and responsibility in learning English.

The flexibility inherent in MALL also supports the learner-centered paradigm, shifting the focus from teacher-led instruction to student-managed exploration. According to Kukulska-Hulme (2020), mobile learning technologies extend the boundaries of the classroom by integrating formal and informal learning opportunities, empowering students to organize their own linguistic input and practice outside institutional settings. This aligns with the concept of ubiquitous learning (u-learning), where learners can access and manage learning anytime and anywhere, thus bridging the gap between classroom instruction and real-life communication contexts (Wong, 2017).

The final statement of the questionnaire indicates that 72% of students strongly agreed and 28% agreed, with no respondents selecting “disagreed” or “strongly disagreed.” Meanwhile, according to interview at 29 August 2025 to MSK, an ESP students, she said, “MALL is easy to use for language learning.” These positive responses highlight that most students perceive the MALL as highly user-friendly. Its simple design, clear instructions, and intuitive features allow learners to navigate the platform with ease, even without extensive technical knowledge. The accessibility of the application reduces potential barriers to learning and enables students to focus more on improving their English skills rather than struggling with technology. This ease of use makes the MALL a practical and supportive tool for integrating digital resources into English language learning. These results indicate that students perceive MALL as a highly user-friendly and accessible tool for English learning, particularly in the context of English for Specific Purposes (ESP). Ease of use is a critical determinant of technology acceptance, influencing both learners' willingness to adopt and their sustained engagement with digital learning tools (Davis, 1989; Şumak et al., 2017). When students find an application intuitive and simple to navigate, they are more likely to focus on the learning content rather than on overcoming technological challenges (Hsu, 2023).

In language learning, usability plays a crucial role in shaping learners' motivation and confidence. According to Wu and Marek (2018), user-friendly MALL platforms lower cognitive load and help learners engage more deeply with linguistic input. Similarly, Çakmak and Erçetin (2018) found that clear instructions, intuitive navigation, and responsive feedback systems enhance learner satisfaction and make mobile-based environments more effective for language acquisition. The intuitive design of MALL minimizes distractions and technical difficulties, enabling learners to dedicate more cognitive resources to practicing language skills.

In the ESP context, ease of use is particularly important because learners often engage with specialized vocabulary and professional discourse that require focused attention (Bouziane & El Messaoudi, 2022). A user-friendly MALL environment allows students to access content relevant to their field of study—such as medical, business, or technical English—without unnecessary distractions. Moreover, the accessibility of mobile learning tools allows ESP students to study flexibly at any time and place, aligning with the needs of learners who may be balancing academic and professional responsibilities (Kukulska-Hulme, 2020).

Accessibility and usability also enhance learners' sense of technological self-efficacy. When users can easily interact with a learning application, they develop confidence in using digital tools for educational purposes (Hazaea & Alzubi, 2020). This confidence further motivates learners to explore additional features of MALL, such as pronunciation tools, interactive exercises, and multimedia input, thereby deepening their engagement with English learning. In this way, the intuitive and inclusive design of MALL not only reduces anxiety associated with technology but also supports long-term language development.

CONCLUSION

This study explored students' perceptions of Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL) as a digital tool for learning English in an English for Specific Purposes (ESP) classroom. Based on questionnaire and interview data from 15 students in the Islamic Religious Education (PAI) study program at IAI Riyadlotul Mubajhidin Ponorogo, the results demonstrate overwhelmingly positive attitudes toward MALL integration. The findings revealed that most students strongly agreed that MALL enhances their motivation, confidence, and enjoyment in learning English. Learners also perceived that MALL promotes independent learning, provides flexibility to practice anytime and anywhere, and supports their ability to manage their own learning process.

The use of MALL allowed students to engage with English materials interactively and meaningfully, which improved their communicative competence and increased their confidence in using English for academic and professional purposes. Students valued the accessibility and user-friendliness of MALL applications, reporting that the tools were easy to use and helped reduce learning anxiety. Furthermore, MALL encouraged self-directed learning and fostered learner autonomy, aligning with principles from the Self-Determination Theory and Technology Acceptance Model, which emphasize autonomy, competence, and ease of use as key motivators for technology adoption in education.

Overall, the study concludes that MALL is an effective digital medium for enhancing students' learning experience in ESP contexts. Its integration in higher education can serve as a sustainable strategy to improve language proficiency, foster learner motivation, and promote flexible and autonomous learning. However, further research involving larger participant samples and diverse ESP disciplines is recommended to validate and expand upon these findings.

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