

EFL Teachers' Perceptions of Mobile Device Use in Oman: Regulatory Considerations and Differences Across Gender and Experience

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Abstract

This descriptive study explores the perceptions of EFL teachers in Omani Cycle 2 schools regarding the use of mobile devices in English language teaching. The sample consisted of 91 male and female teachers, and data were collected using a survey questionnaire. The findings revealed that teachers generally held positive views toward integrating mobile devices into English classrooms and supported the establishment of regulatory practices to guide their use. The results also showed no statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender or years of experience. Additionally, the study identified a general consensus regarding the anticipated challenges associated with mobile device use. The findings further highlighted strong agreement among teachers on the importance of ethical considerations and the need for clear policies governing the use of mobile technologies in the classroom. The paper concludes with implications and recommendations for effective mobile device integration in English language teaching.

Keywords: *EFL, mobile device, technology, classroom, gender*

1. Introduction

The rapid advancement of technology across all aspects of life necessitates its integration into education. As explained by Barnes (2014), the availability and acceptance of mobile devices facilitate the use of diverse applications, creating a blended learning environment that combines face-to-face instruction with technology integration and web-based learning (p. 41). In Oman, the integration of mobile devices aligns with the English Language Curriculum Framework (Ministry of Education, 2010), which emphasizes the use of various

technologies, understanding their applications, solving daily-life problems through appropriate technological tools, and promoting transliteracy. A substantial proportion of Omani school students own smartphones, with usage rates reaching 86% among Cycle 1 students and 91% among Cycle 2 students (Siddiqi et al., 2020). This widespread access presents an opportunity to enhance student engagement by integrating mobile devices meaningfully into educational settings.

The versatility of mobile devices enables learning anytime and anywhere, easing temporal and geographical constraints (Al-Shamsi et al., 2020). This flexibility supports continuity of learning, especially during school closures due to extreme weather or unexpected events such as

the COVID-19 pandemic. Additionally, digital platforms accessed via mobile devices foster a paperless environment, reducing the need for physical storage of assignments, projects, and examinations through tools such as e-portfolios and e-textbooks with direct links to resources. The integration of mobile devices also encourages innovative teaching approaches, such as flipped classrooms, thereby enhancing instructional delivery. The interactive nature of mobile devices increases student participation and engagement in classroom activities, fostering greater motivation and interest in learning. Integrating mobile devices into the curriculum can further prepare students for the digital age by developing essential digital literacy skills—now considered vital for future readiness. A notable example from higher education is the widespread adoption of Massive Open Online Courses (MOOCs) and platforms like Moodle at Sultan Qaboos University (SQU), which support the delivery of high-quality online content (Al-Kindi & Al-Suqri, 2017). This shift highlights the importance of Bring Your Own Device (BYOD) practices, which can also benefit schools by enhancing access to instructional materials and reducing textbook-related

costs (Barnes, 2014, p. 56). With proper internet access, students can retrieve information, submit assignments, receive feedback, and participate in various activities from any location.

Mobile learning (ML) refers to the use of mobile devices for educational purposes and emphasizes learning through exploration, communication, and interaction with digital content across diverse contexts (Sharples et al., 2009, p. 237). ML can be viewed as a form of contextual learning, allowing learners to access information linked to their geographical location and personal learning needs (Kukulska-Hulme, 2006). According to Sharples et al. (2009), for mobile learning initiatives to succeed, learners need access to technology, ownership of devices, stable connectivity, curricular integration, and institutional support (p. 239). Against this backdrop, the present study explores the perceptions of Cycle 2 English language teachers regarding the use of mobile devices in English language teaching by addressing the following research questions:

1. What are EFL teachers' perceptions of using mobile devices in teaching English?
2. Are there statistically significant differences in teachers' perceptions based on gender and years of experience?
3. What challenges hinder the use of mobile devices in English classrooms?

4. What are EFL teachers' perceptions regarding future regulation of mobile device use in English classrooms?

2. Literature Review

Rooted in theories such as Connectivism, Social Constructivism, and Activity Theory, mobile learning benefits from the affordances of mobile devices to support learning anytime and anywhere.

Connectivism, developed by Siemens and Downes, posits that learning occurs through networks of information and connections formed across diverse sources. According to Alam (2023), knowledge can be acquired not only through traditional tools such as textbooks and lectures but also through digital platforms, social media, and online resources. The theory emphasizes the centrality of technology and its multimodal affordances in facilitating learning. Learners expand their personal learning networks by forming dynamic connections that help create and refine their understanding (AlOlaimat, 2016). Within this framework, learning is seen as a fluid, evolving process shaped by personal experiences and interactions with digital knowledge sources.

Social Constructivism holds that

knowledge is actively constructed rather than passively received. Amineh and Asl (2015) argue that teachers should consider learners' prior knowledge and create opportunities for them to apply what they learn. Mobile learning supports this perspective by allowing learners to build understanding, reflect on their experiences, and engage collaboratively with peers. Collaboration—a core element of Social Constructivism—is often facilitated by mobile technologies through tools such as social networking sites, online learning environments, and virtual classrooms (Al-Zahrani, 2015). These platforms promote meaningful learning through authentic tasks that involve interaction between learners and instructors. Social constructivists also highlight the importance of student-centered environments in which learners take an active role in constructing knowledge (AlOlaimat, 2016).

Activity Theory also provides important insights into mobile learning. As a conceptual framework, Activity Theory examines the structure, development, and context of computer-supported activities (Kaptelinin & Nardi, 1997). Drawing from Vygotsky's triangle model, it describes how components such as tools, subjects, and objects interact within an activity system. For example, in a mobile learning context, a device serves as the mediating tool between the learner (subject) and

the learning task (object), while rules and community norms shape interactions among participants (Gedera, 2014). Activity Theory emphasizes the dynamic and context-sensitive nature of human activity, making it relevant to the understanding of mobile technology use in educational settings.

Mobile learning (ML) refers to learning facilitated through mobile devices such as laptops, tablets, smartphones, and other portable tools. Sharples et al. (2005) note that what distinguishes mobile learning from other forms of learning is the mobility of learners. For ML to be effective, it must align with learning objectives, student needs, and appropriate pedagogical frameworks (Ng et al., 2020).

Mobile devices have transformed how learners access and engage with information. Rather than merely possessing knowledge, learners use mobile devices to locate and interact with information in new ways. ML supports the delivery of multimedia content and facilitates synchronous and asynchronous communication through voice, text, and multimedia tools. It also enables personalized, contextualized, and authentic learning by offering materials that connect directly to learners'

backgrounds, experiences, and environments (Traxler, 2009).

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers specifically to the use of mobile technologies in language learning. MALL enhances the acquisition of language skills while creating opportunities for communication using mobile-supported tools (Cho et al., 2018). A growing body of research supports the effectiveness of mobile technologies in improving listening (Al-Shamsi et al., 2020), listening and speaking (AlOlaimat, 2016; Al-Zahrani, 2015), vocabulary (Xodabande & Hashemi, 2022; Mangena, 2021; Wu, 2014), and letter recognition among early learners (Al Semiri, 2021). These studies consistently demonstrate that mobile learning promotes engagement, motivation, and improved achievement in various language domains. Collectively, the literature affirms that mobile devices can complement traditional instruction by offering personalized, flexible, and contextually relevant language learning experiences.

3. Methods

This study employed a descriptive research design to investigate the perceptions of Cycle 2 EFL teachers regarding the use of mobile devices in English language teaching. Descriptive

research is suitable for providing detailed insights into attitudes, opinions, and perceptions of a particular group, making it an appropriate approach for exploring teachers' perspectives in this context.

The population of the study consisted of all English teachers working in Cycle 2 schools across Oman. According to the Statistical Book (2022–2023) issued by the Ministry of Education, the total number of EFL teachers in Cycle 2 schools is 1,516. A sample of 91 teachers—representing different regions of the Sultanate—participated in the study.

Table 1: Number of Male and Female Teachers in the Sample

Sample	Frequency	Percent
Male	20	22
Female	71	78
Total	91	100

3.3 Instrument

Table 2 : Dimensions of the Questionnaire

Dimensions	No. of items
Mobile devices' overall advantages	10
Benefits of mobile devices to Language acquisition	5
Challenges of using mobile devices	5
Regulating the use of mobile devices in English classrooms	4
Total	24

3.4.1 Validity and reliability of the instrument:

Table 3 : Questionnaire Reliability

Cronbach's Alpha	N of items
0.957	24

3.4 Procedures:

4. Results and Discussion

This section presents the statistical findings and provides discussion of the results in relation to the research questions.

Table 4 : Means and Standard Deviations of Teachers' Perceptions on the Use of Mobile Devices

Dimensions	No. of items
Mobile devices' overall advantages	10
Benefits of mobile devices to Language acquisition	5
Challenges of using mobile devices	5
Regulating the use of mobile devices in English classrooms	4
Total	24

The table above shows that the overall mean and standard deviation are 3.986 and 0.69, respectively. This indicates that teachers generally hold very high positive perceptions of using mobile devices, with a moderate degree of variability in their responses. The dimension related to Regulating the use of mobile devices in English classrooms recorded the highest mean score ($M = 4.192$, $SD = 0.861$) of the four dimensions, reflecting very high positive perceptions.

regarding the regulation of mobile device use. This suggests that teachers are supportive of efforts to enable and manage mobile device integration in educational settings. It also implies that they acknowledge the necessity of regulating mobile device use to maintain focus, discipline, and an effective learning environment. The standard deviation ($SD = 0.861$) further suggests relatively low variability in responses, indicating a consistent pattern of agreement among teachers.

Table 5 : Descriptive Statistics of Mobile Devices' General Advantages

Item	Mean	SD
Mobile devices can enhance students' motivation to learn English.	4.12	1.009
Using mobile devices can provide open access to the required materials to teach and learn English.	4.11	.948
Using mobile devices can create a more enjoyable learning experience.	4.04	1.084
Using mobile devices can support different learning styles.	4.04	.999
Mobile devices can contribute to solving the annual shortage of English textbooks through using e-books.	4.03	.983
Mobile devices facilitate the use of blended learning.	3.97	.960
The portability of mobile devices can provide a bigger potential for self-learning.	3.96	.965
Using mobile devices can help in providing instant feedback.	3.96	.930
Mobile devices are engaging tools that can increase students' participation in English classrooms.	3.90	.907
Mobile devices offer a distinguishable learning experience compared with the conventional classroom	3.68	1.021

Overall	3.981	.809
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Overall, the mean score for all items combined is 3.981, indicating a highly positive perception of the advantages of using mobile devices in teaching English. The standard deviation for the overall score is 0.809, suggesting moderate variability in teachers' perceptions across the various dimensions assessed. The item "Mobile devices can enhance students' motivation to learn English" received the highest mean score of 4.12, indicating that teachers perceive mobile devices as effective tools for motivating students in English learning. Conversely, the item "Mobile devices offer a distinguishable learning experience compared with the conventional classroom" received the lowest mean score of 3.68, suggesting that teachers are somewhat less convinced of the distinctiveness of mobile device-based learning experiences.

Table 6 : Descriptive Statistics of Benefits of Mobile Devices for Language Acquisition

Item	Mean	SD
Mobile learning can improve listening by providing authentic materials for listening with self-directed activities.	4.12	1.020
Mobile learning can support accurate pronunciation.	4.00	1.125
Mobile devices can contribute to the improvement of their speaking skills.	3.92	1.077
Mobile learning can improve reading skills by providing students with texts that are suitable with their interests and understanding.	3.89	1.027
Mobile learning can enhance writing skills by offering students novel writing experiences, such as blogging.	3.67	1.033
Overall	3.848	.655

The provided data offered insights into EFL

teachers' perceptions regarding the potential benefits of mobile learning across various language skills. Overall, the mean score for all items combined is 3.848, indicating a highly positive perception of the potential benefits of mobile learning across different language skills. The standard deviation for the overall score is 0.655, suggesting relatively low variability in teachers' perceptions across these dimensions. This implies a degree of consensus among teachers regarding the effectiveness of mobile learning in improving various language skills.

Table 7 : Independent Samples t-test Comparing Teachers' Perceptions by Gender

Gender	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	T-value	P
Male	20	3.741	.782	-1.816	.614
Female	71	4.055	0.651	-1.639	

As shown in Table 5, an independent samples t-test was conducted to examine whether teachers' perceptions toward the use of mobile devices in English language teaching differed by gender. The results revealed no statistically significant difference between male ($M = 3.741$, $SD = 0.782$) and female teachers ($M = 4.055$, $SD = 0.651$), $t = -1.816$, $p = .614$, indicating

that gender did not influence teachers' overall perceptions.

Although female teachers reported slightly higher mean scores than male teachers, the difference was minimal and did not reach statistical significance. This suggests that both male and female teachers generally held similarly positive views regarding mobile device integration in the classroom. Overall, the results highlight a broad consensus among teachers irrespective of gender, reinforcing the notion that mobile-assisted language teaching is viewed favorably across demographic groups.

Table 8 : Distribution of Teachers by Years of Experience

	Number	Percentage
1-5 years	14	15.4
5-10 years	25	27.5
more than 10 years	52	57.1
Total	91	100

Table 9 : ANOVA Comparing Perceptions by Years of Experience

	Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Between Groups	1.797	2	.898	1.92	.152
Within Groups	41.096	88	.467		
Total	41.096	9-			

As shown in Table 9, a One-Way ANOVA was carried out to explore whether teachers' perceptions varied according to their years of

teaching experience. The analysis indicated that the differences among the three experience groups were not statistically significant, $F(2, 88) = 1.924$, $p = .152$. In other words, teachers with different lengths of service expressed comparable perceptions regarding the use of mobile devices in English language teaching.

Although the groups differed slightly in their mean scores, these variations were not large enough to indicate a meaningful difference. This result suggests that the duration of teachers' professional experience—whether relatively short or more extensive—does not appear to influence how they view the integration of mobile devices in the classroom. Instead, teachers across all experience levels seem to share similar attitudes toward mobile-assisted teaching.

Table 10 : Descriptive Statistics of Challenges of Using Mobile Devices

Item	Mean	SD
Weak Internet can hinder the effective use of mobile learning.	4.29	.873
Students may misuse the features of mobile devices.	4.09	.927
The high cost of mobile devices can be an obstacle.	3.91	1.071
Mobile devices can be a distraction for students when learning English.	3.73	.955
Teachers are reluctant to use mobile devices	3.23	1.075

due to a lack of training.		
Overall	3.848	.655

As presented in the table, the descriptive statistics illustrate a clear agreement among teachers regarding the key challenges associated with using mobile devices in English language teaching. The highest-rated challenge was the issue of weak Internet connectivity ($M = 4.29$, $SD = .873$), suggesting that teachers view technical limitations as the most significant barrier to effective mobile learning. This was followed by concerns about students' potential misuse of mobile device features ($M = 4.09$, $SD = .927$), indicating that classroom management and ensuring appropriate use remain important considerations for teachers.

Teachers also highlighted the high cost of mobile devices as a notable obstacle ($M = 3.91$, $SD = 1.071$), reflecting the financial constraints that may affect both students and schools. The perception that mobile devices may distract students during English lessons received a moderately high mean score ($M = 3.73$, $SD = .955$), showing that teachers remain cautious about the possibility of reduced focus in technology-supported environments. Meanwhile, the item concerning teachers' reluctance due to lack of training received the lowest mean score ($M = 3.23$, $SD = 1.075$), though it still reflects a concern for some participants.

5. Conclusion

The findings of this study reveal that Cycle 2 EFL teachers in Oman hold generally positive perceptions of the use of mobile devices in English language teaching. Teachers acknowledged the pedagogical value of mobile devices, including their ability to enhance learning engagement, access to resources, and flexibility. While certain challenges such as weak internet connectivity and potential device misuse were noted, teachers did not view these issues as substantial barriers to implementation. Furthermore, no statistically significant differences were found based on gender or years of experience.

Overall, the study underscores the importance of supporting mobile device use through clear regulations, appropriate training, and improved infrastructure to ensure effective and ethical classroom integration.

6. Limitations

Although this study contributes important insights into teachers' perceptions, several limitations should be acknowledged. First, the study relies solely

on self-reported questionnaire data, which may not capture the full complexity of classroom practices. Future research may benefit from using interviews, observations, or mixed methods.

Second, the study focuses exclusively on English teachers, limiting generalizability to other subject areas. Finally, results represent teacher perceptions at one point in time; longitudinal research is needed to assess how perceptions evolve as mobile learning becomes more established.

7. Implications

The study highlights several implications for policymakers, teacher educators, and school administrators. Teachers' generally positive views toward mobile device use indicate readiness for wider integration into teaching practices. Consequently, stakeholders should consider enhancing technological infrastructure and internet connectivity in schools.

Moreover, clear policies and ethical guidelines are needed to ensure responsible device use. Professional development programs should also be strengthened to equip teachers with the skills needed to effectively incorporate mobile learning into their instructional strategies.

8. Recommendations

1. Integrate mobile device use explicitly into the national English curriculum.
2. Strengthen technological infrastructure to support reliable connectivity.
3. Develop clear school-wide policies to guide ethical and appropriate device use.
4. Provide continuous professional development on mobile learning strategies.
5. Encourage collaboration between teachers, policymakers, and curriculum designers to ensure coherent integration of mobile learning tools.

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