

## **Smart-Phone Assisted Language Learning in a Public University in Saudi Arabia**

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*Received: 1 October 2022*

*Reviewed: 1 December 2022- 26 February 2023*

*Accepted: 30 March 2023*

*Published: 31 March 2023*

### **Abstract**

The present study tried to investigate EFL teachers' and learners' facilities regarding smartphone-assisted language learning (SALL) in the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University (KKU), Saudi Arabia, including their attitudes, perceptions, levels of proficiency, and the challenges they experienced. The study also pursued to inspect whether EFL teachers' experiences have any significant influence on their facility of SALL. Investigation data consisted of (45) EFL teachers and (68) EFL learners. Two questionnaires were used to collect data. Some statistical analyses were used. The results showed EFL teachers' and learners' positive perceptions of SALL. Participants stated that (SALL) is beneficial and has supported and enhanced EFL teaching and learning. Most EFL teachers said they needed more skills to advance SALL activities and mentioned some challenges they confronted. The results also indicated significant differences among participants' SALL facility based on their professional development and teaching experiences, but no differences based on their gender were found. These results also showed that emphasizing professional development in SALL for KKU EFL teachers could promote greater proficiency and the facility to overcome challenges. The study concluded by providing recommendations on advancing SALL implications and suggestions.

Keywords: EFL learners; EFL teachers; facility; implication; smartphones

### **Introduction**

In the last twenty years, the development of smartphones has grown at a tremendous pace. Modern technology has advanced far, and its implications are so far-reaching that the option of online education is now apparent. Several researchers have pushed us to embrace our online education system and, ideally, combine offline education with the online format. In this scenario, smartphones could be the perfect way to encourage online education. (Wanga et al., 2020).

The smartphone is a marvelous version of our mobile phone. It provides a complete operating software framework that offers a consistent interface and app developer platform. Users can enjoy videos, play games, listen to music, use calendars, cameras, and the internet, and use them in many other ways. A small device has brought almost all the services together for the users. The smartphone is considered a mini-computer in one's palm. One can use it not only for communication but also for all computer programs. (Mighani et al., 2019)

EFL teachers and learners are using technology-oriented learning teaching. In the last decade, blended learning has grown in popularity and is a mixture of face-to-face and technology-assisted education. SALL has been incorporated into teaching English-language learning methods and techniques recently. (Dewi et al., 2020).

The traditional methods of teaching, based on the teacher's role as the primary source of information and the learner being passive receiver of information, are no longer appropriate in the current era. Teachers should use more modern educational goals and create learner-centered environments. Mohammadi et al. (2019) in their study pointed out the challenges of having large classes and the lack of language laboratories or libraries in schools. Moreover, students are used to being passive learners in a teacher-centered classroom.

Some educational institutions and learners have used smartphones to learn and teach English. Hence, a wider range of mobile phone applications are available for reading, speaking, listening, writing, note-taking, and translating. In this case, the use of smartphones cannot be denied as it establishes a self-learning platform through immediate feedback. (Mekhzoumi et al., 2018). Smartphones add material to the learning process. Learners can search and find their learning materials according to their level of interest, making them autonomous. Learners are exposed to more authentic learning experiences (Tappoon, 2020).

The smartphone is an influential source of authenticity. It is a perfect platform for learner-learner and learner-teacher communication self-assessment, peer-teaching, and peer review. Language learners use different learning strategies, both direct and indirect, so using a smartphone is a good approach for EFL learners. Since smartphone users are booming in all countries, learners believe smartphones can be a new model for English language learning and teaching (Howlett, 2019).

The results of this study are expected to: (1) Help curriculum designers, researchers, and policymakers with valuable outcomes. (2) Help EFL teachers and learners to have adequate professional improvement, effective strategies, and collaborating technology-based syllabuses. (3) Investigate the aspects that affect teachers' and learners' facilities regarding implying smartphones in learning English. (4) Understand the process of applying smartphones in learning English and its challenges. (5) Inspire educational institutions to offer effective and suitable professional development programs that help incorporate smartphones successfully in EFL contexts. This study aimed to investigate EFL teachers' and learners' facilities of smartphone implications in learning English in an EFL context and its challenges. The study tried to answer the following questions:

- a. What are the attitudes of EFL teachers and learners toward implying smartphones?
- b. What are EFL teachers' perceptions regarding their facility in implying smartphones?
- c. What are EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions regarding smartphone challenges?

### **Literature review**

Rao (2019) explained that mobile learning and teaching platforms include cell phones, portable computers, smartphones, tablets, tablet PCs, personal media players, and laptops.

Learning and teaching English with a mobile device comprises acting tasks by locating online learning resources and transferring data such as sounds, texts, images, or movies through devices.

The educational use of a mobile device authorizes wider access to authentic language tools. Hence, SALL focuses on learner-centered learning than the traditional teaching practice. Hui-Ya, (2016) clarified mobile learning's educational views in three concepts: authenticity, personalization, and cooperation.

There is a strong bond between smartphones and TEFL. Yeh and Wu (2015) opined that smartphones are used in the educational field, especially in language education. They investigated several studies that mobile devices are widely used in learning English. For example, specialists have continuously explored the effects of mobile devices on learning English. Hundreds of apps exist in the Google Play store for learning purposes. Typical explanation resources in the mobile annotation app contain accents, highlights, sticky notes, snapshots, text entry marks, pop-up comment windows, a range of lines, and freehand sketches.

Ahmed S. T. (2019) confirmed that social media apps on the smartphones, such as WhatsApp, Twitter, and Facebook, achieve this purpose by providing adequate room for engagement, conversation, and accessible learning. Jafari and Chalak (2016) examined how the apps affect the teaching of Iranian EFL junior school pupils' vocabulary. A pre-test and post-test were performed to assess the learners' vocabulary levels before and after the experiment. The experimental group took vocabulary instructions four days a week for four weeks, using WhatsApp, while the control group was taught the vocabulary of their textbooks in the classroom using the traditional methods used to teach English. The researcher observes that WhatsApp plays a significant role in vocabulary learning. Similar studies reflect similar results in the works of (Fattah, 2015) and (Flores, 2015), respectively.

Hulse (2018) inspected smartphones as a tool in the EFL classroom. One hundred one first-year learners from Fukuoka Jo Gakuin University in Japan joined this study. All the students in this study owned personal smartphones. When asked how smartphones motivated learning English, the learners noted that their motivation is enhanced because using a smartphone is enjoyable. These results are mostly positive, representing that many students have a positive attitude towards using smartphones in learning English. Some feel comfortable using smartphones. Because class time is typically short, providing space for language and interactions is challenging. Therefore, the smartphone plays an alternative method for learners to interact in a practical situation to improve their English skills.

Smartphone knowledge quickly fascinates new manipulators. This impact allows new contexts for learning. The incorporation of such knowledge into learning and teaching has been more regular. Educationalists need to understand how they can be successfully used to support various kinds of learning. Smartphones can play a vital role in pupils' growth. They are convenient and relatively cheap, and their mobility allows ongoing learning beyond the limits of the class. Many instructive apps could be installed on mobiles, engaging the pupils and improving their language, analytical skills, desire, and creativity. With the return of mobile characteristics that contain animation, audio, interactive scenes of images, and projection, learning can be manipulated in various methods that will make it more fun, engaging, and successful for pupils. (Ni & Yu, 2015)

Most significantly, interesting activities in learning a language can help eliminate learning anxiety in pupils. The correct method for reducing anxiety, stress, and fear in language usage among pupils will be helpful in numerous ways. The enthusiasm for sharing in games will always encourage mindful and unconscious care for pupils to learn the language. Henceforth, it is

significant for educationalists to invent meaningful and helpful activities to support pupils in learning the language. (Ongoro & Mwangoka, 2014; Virvou & Papadimitriou, 2014)

Numerous studies have examined the profits of SALL. These studies showed that SALL offers constructive results in the classrooms. Other studies investigated using SALL in learning and teaching the four English skills. The studies stated that SALL improves learners' four language skills. SALL provides flexibility and availability where learning is not limited to the four walls of the classroom. It also provides affordability and accessibility, where it has become a must-own gadget. SALL provides interactivity where educationalists and students can interact with one another despite the location. It also offers genuineness of the material where exposure to authentic materials will be improved. It leads to cultural gratefulness, where the idea to inject cultural values into materials development will help learners advance their English and inspire cultural, historical, and literary appreciation of the world. (Liao & Lin, 2016), (Ahmad et al., 2013), (Hayati et al., 2013; Sari, 2013), (Flowers, 2015), (Ducate & Lomicka, 2013), (Brown, 2014)

Melero et al. (2015) argued that smartphones play a pivotal role in developing the learning and teaching processes because the tools are cheap compared to other ICTs tools used for teaching and learning. According to them, there are some restrictions on teaching or traditional teaching. There is not enough communication with students in the classroom. Teachers often talk for an hour without knowing students' replies and feedback. The material presented is only based on lecturer notes and textbooks. More importance is given to theory without any practical and real-life situations.

Many studies have been conducted globally to inspect teachers' inclinations toward the application of SALL in their classrooms. For example, a study by Nariyati and Pratiwi (2020) examined EFL pre-service teachers' views concerning the SALL application. The participants expressed constructive opinions and believed that mobile technology could enrich the language learning process. Due to such positive beliefs, the EFL teachers preferred the SALL application in teaching English skills. A similar idea is shared by Nuraeni (2021), who found that teachers had a constructive opinion toward the SALL application as a tool for supporting classroom activities in teaching English language skills during the COVID-19 pandemic. The teachers stated that SALL was a good learning strategy to help their teaching process, noticing it as a beneficial tool. They also hoped that EFL teachers would continue to apply SALL in EFL teaching and learning. However, other research (Oz, 2015) proved that considerable variances occurred among Turkish EFL instructors regarding their view toward the SALL application. This study also highlighted how female teachers expressed more positive views and insights regarding SALL use in EFL lessons as they thought they could achieve increasingly acceptable consequences with smartphones. They believed it removed space and time limits and gave further chances for practicing and improving English language skills. Baek et al. (2017) stated that female EFL teachers were more positive than male ones regarding their opinions. Owing to those positive attitudes, the EFL instructors gave a preference for SALL usage in the teaching of English skills. Similarly, Nuraeni (2021) stated that most instructors held a positive attitude toward SALL usage to enhance classroom activities in learning and teaching the English language during the COVID-19 pandemic.

Furthermore, more experienced teachers expressed more constructive views of smartphone learning than those who were less experienced. However, Dehkordi (2018) found no significant differences between male and female perceptions. Both expressed positive attitudes toward using SALL in the EFL learning process. It is vital to understand teachers' viewpoints concerning using

SALL in EFL classrooms, mainly regarding their efficacy in improving SALL activities in EFL learning.

Khan et al. (2018) found that most Saudi university teachers need more skills and knowledge to use SALL activities. Most applicants stated that applying mobile devices can facilitate EFL learning, but some stated that mobile phones could not help EFL teaching. Many EFL teachers noted inadequacies among students using mobile phones for learning purposes; some of these challenges are; unstable Internet connectivity and small screen sizes. In Dashtestani's (2013) study, EFL instructors stated that they needed to improve their skills to develop SALL activities. These results also propose that they met some difficulties with SALL use, which might explain the non-use of mobile for EFL learning and teaching. These difficulties include using mobiles for non-academic purposes, pupils' lack of knowledge on how to apply the mobile device for educational purposes, coping with the high cost of Internet connections, and slow Internet speeds. (Nazari & Xodabande, 2020).

The literature review indicates that few studies have examined SALL use from Saudi EFL teachers' viewpoints. This study tried to fill the gap in the study mentioned above by inspecting EFL teachers' and learners' facility of SALL use, its implementation, and challenges.

## Methods

To answer the current study's questions and gather essential information about EFL teachers' and learners' perceptions of smartphone use, this research used a quantitative design for the data collection, data analysis, and interpretation of the findings.

### Instruments

The current study used two questionnaires; a teacher's survey and a student survey. The researchers, with the help of the pre-existing literature, compiled them. The questionnaires were valid, as they were judged by five EFL experts in the Saudi context and university staff. Proper modifications were made due to their comments. Some changes were applied in the survey to suit the Saudi EFL setting.

The teachers' survey included 4 parts and 25 items. The first part focused on EFL teachers' demographics, gender, teaching experience, and whether they had professional development training for smartphones. The second part involved teachers' attitudes concerning smartphone applications. The third part included questions about EFL teachers' perceptions regarding their efficacy in using smartphones and their ability to develop SALL activities. The last part focused on EFL teachers' perceptions of the challenges of implying smartphones in their teaching. All ordinal variables in the questionnaire were prepared on a 5-point Likert Scale, starting from strongly disagree to strongly agree. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha scores for the three sections were 0.79, 0.83, and 0.87, respectively. The students' survey included 18 items and consisted of three parts; the first part focused on EFL learners' demographics, gender, and studying level. The second part involved learners' attitudes and perceptions concerning smartphone applications. It included 10 items. The last part focused on EFL learners' perceptions of the challenges of implying smartphones in their learning. In the current study, Cronbach's alpha scores for the three sections were 0.72, 0.85, and 0.83, respectively.

### Data collection and analysis

The two questionnaires were uploaded to Google Forms and sent to the EFL teachers and learners through social media. The data were collected in the second semester of 2022 and

imported into SPSS (Version 20) for analysis. In the first survey, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed (for the four parts of the questionnaires) to examine EFL teachers' attitudes, perceptions of their facility of implying smartphones in teaching EFL, and the challenges in applying SALL. A one-way ANOVA (MANOVA) was used for the fourth question to inspect the difference between EFL teachers' attitudes and perceptions regarding their proficiency in the SALL application based on their gender, teaching experience, or professional development, independent variables. As for the students' survey, descriptive statistics (mean and standard deviation) were computed (for the three parts of the questionnaires) to examine EFL learners' attitudes, perceptions of their facility of implying smartphones in learning EFL, and the challenges in applying SALL. For the third question, a one-way ANOVA (MANOVA) was used to inspect the difference between EFL learners' attitudes and perceptions regarding their proficiency in the SALL application based on their levels of studying English, which were independent variables. The students all belonged to the B.A. program in English, starting from level 1 to level 8. The dependent variables were learners' attitudes toward smartphones and perceptions of their facility with smartphones application. (Table 1)

### Participants

The sample in this study consisted of EFL (45) teachers and (68) learners at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University in Saudi Arabia. Random sampling was done for the choice of the members in this research. Most teachers and students reported that they had not received any training for SALL (Tables 1 and 2).

Table 1. Teachers' characteristics

Characteristics	Item	Percentage
Gender	Male	75%
	Female	25%
Years of Experience	0-5	14.4%
	6-10	35.8%
	11-15	39.8%
	16 and above	10%
Training on MALL	Yes	22%
	No	78%

Table 2. Learners' characteristics

Characteristic	Item	Percentage
Gender	Male	61%
	Female	39%
Level of study	1	14 %
	2	16 %
	3	15 %
	4	13 %
	5	9 %
	6	10 %
	7	12 %
	8	12 %
Training on MALL	Yes	17 %
	No	83 %

## Findings

Investigating the attitudes of EFL teachers toward applying SALL

The first question in the study was designed to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward applying mobile-assisted language learning to facilitate EFL teaching. A high score indicated a positive attitude toward applying SALL, while a low score indicated a negative attitude. As shown in table 3, the total mean for EFL teachers' attitudes was (4.29). Most of the EFL teachers also expressed good attitude. The findings also showed that variable no. 2. elicited the highest rating, with a mean of (4.76). At the same time, variable no. 24, had the lowest rating, with a mean of (2.45).

EFL teachers' perceptions concerning their facility in developing SALL activities

The second question was designed in the study to investigate teachers' perceptions regarding their facility in developing SALL activities. In Table 3, variable no. 17 showed that the total mean for the teachers' perceptions concerning their facility to advance and apply SALL activities was high, with a mean of (4.44). It indicates that most EFL teachers needed a higher facility in using SALL and needed the required skills and abilities to advance SALL activities. The findings also showed that variable no. 14 elicited the highest rating from respondents, with a mean of (4.64). The lowest-rated variable, no.16, had a mean of (3.40) (Table 3).

Perceptions of EFL teachers on the challenges of applying SALL

The third question was designed to investigate teachers' perceptions of the challenges of Implying SALL. The results showed that variable 23, had the highest rating, with a mean of (4.80); the lowest-rated variable was no 24, with a mean of (2.45), (Table 3). EFL teachers agreed on most of the difficulties of SALL application in EFL teaching. The following challenges were mentioned: the non-use of mobile phones for academic purposes, the lack of skills/knowledge to use smartphones for educational purposes from the side of the students, the internet connectivity problems, the small screen size, the slow internet speed, and the lack of activities and the software tools.

Table 3. Learners' perspectives toward SALL

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. Smartphone usage facilitates the language learning process in EFL classes	3.96	.978
2. Portability is a key feature of smartphones.	4.76	.436
3. Mobile phone usage can create collaborative learning environments.	4.20	1.000
4. Multimedia attributes of mobile phones are helpful for EFL teaching and learning.	4.32	.802
5. Smartphones can provide scaffolding for each learner.	4.32	.900
6. Smartphones can be used to teach different language skills	4.24	1.012
7. Smartphones integration is cost-effective in EFL teaching	4.00	1.190
8. Smartphones usage for language teaching is time-efficient	4.20	.913
9. Smartphones can be connected to the internet at any time	4.52	.770

10. Smartphone learning provides opportunities to teach without place and time constraints.	4.52	.586
11. Many applications and software in mobile devices are beneficial for learning activities.	4.44	.583
12. Teachers can directly share material and the feedback of students through smartphones.	4.46	.658
13. Smartphone learning helps teachers to reach authentic English language learning material.	4.36	.860
14. Teachers should be efficient enough to design and create mobile-assisted language learning (SALL) activities	4.64	.569
15. Teachers should have the ability to adapt teaching styles to SALL	4.52	.770
16. Teachers should have the ability to select and evaluate SALL software tools	3.40	.764
17. Teachers should have the ICT (Information and Communication Technology) knowledge to use mobile phones for EFL	4.44	.651
18. Students face problems with the small screen size of mobile phones	3.56	1.083
19. Students face issues with the internet or data speed with mobile phones.	3.36	1.114
20. Students often get distracted and lose attention while using mobile phones in class.	3.68	1.249
21. Some students face problems with the price of smartphones	3.12	1.054
22. Some students might find internet charges to be very high	3.24	1.165
23. Some students suffer from a lack of skills to use smartphones for academic purposes.	4.80	1.225
24. Some Smartphones are incompatible with some special software.	2.45	1.155
25. There is a lack of Smartphone-based language-learning software	3.08	1.222

#### Investigating the attitudes of EFL learners toward applying SALL

The fourth question in this research was designed to investigate EFL learners' attitudes toward using mobile-assisted language learning to facilitate EFL learning. A high score indicated a satisfying attitude toward using SALL, while a low score showed a negative attitude toward the implication of SALL. The findings showed that variable no. 3 showed the highest rating, with a mean of (4.55). In contrast, variable no. 16 elicited the lowest rating, with a mean of (3.08).

#### Perceptions of EFL learners on the challenges of implying SALL

The fifth question was designed to investigate learners' perceptions of the difficulties of Implying SALL. The participants agreed on most of the challenges of SALL implication in EFL learning. For example, the non-use of mobile phones for academic purposes, lack of skills/knowledge to use smartphones for academic purposes from the side of the students, internet connectivity problems, small screen size, slow internet speed, and the lack of activities and



software tools. The results showed that variable no. 13 had the highest rating with a mean of (3.58); the lowest-rated variable no. 16 had a mean of (3.08) see (Table 4).

Table.4 Teachers' perspectives toward SALL

Item	Mean	Std. Deviation
1. am skilled in using the features of the Smartphone (Android/iOS) for learning purposes.	4.45	.795
2. I frequently access the internet at home and at university.	4.50	.762
3. I can use educational apps (e.g., dictionary) on my smartphone for learning purposes.	4.55	.760
4. I can take help with learning materials online (e.g., Google/YouTube) through my smartphone.	4.49	.804
5. I can use an audio recorder to record teachers' lectures with smartphones.	4.32	.973
6. I use a smartphone to practice English outside the classroom.	4.32	.884
7. My classrooms have wi-fi facilities	4.22	1.084
8. The features of smartphones compensate for the lack of authentic materials for English skills.	4.46	.767
9. When I use my smartphone, I feel more motivated to focus in the class	4.16	.958
10. I face problems with the small screen size of mobile phones	3.25	1.251
11. I face problems with the internet or data speed with mobile phones.	3.34	1.349
12. Sometimes there are problems with internet connectivity	3.28	1.233
13. I feel the price of smartphones is too high	3.58	1.156
14. I feel the data bundles or wi-fi charges are too high.	3.14	1.313
15. Some smartphones are incompatible with some soft wares	3.75	1.251
16. Using smartphones in class sometimes distracts me from focusing on the lectures.	3.08	1.339

## Discussion

The present research surveyed EFL teachers' and learners' facilities toward applying SALL and the challenges they encounter. Furthermore, the study examined whether any of these demographics (gender, teaching experience, and professional development) had any other effect on their utilization. The data showed that out of the 25 variables, 20 scored more than 3.5 and above on a 5-point Likert scale. Only 5 variables scored less than 3.5, as shown in tables 3 and 4. The rest of the 7 variables scored less than 3.5. It is to be mentioned that out of the 25 variables, only 1 variable scored less than 3. This showed that almost all the variables agreed with the responses.

The data revealed that the participants strongly agreed that smartphones are essential in language learning. It facilitates the learners and is user-friendly and always accessible because of its portability. It shows that EFL teachers prefer to use smartphones in their classes. It creates collaborative learning and scaffolding for learners. As it is cost-effective, it can be used to teach different language skills. It saves time and can be connected to the internet quickly. As it is portable, it can be carried and used anywhere. These results are similar to the (Dashtestani, 2013, and Khan et al., 2018) studies. Their studies show that various applications available on mobiles help learners to get access to materials quickly. Teachers can also provide quick feedback to learners. In the 21st century, most learners are expert users of mobile phones, so they can handle

the device without any trouble. Teachers can also select the SALL software tools for their classes. Since there is a growing rate of mobile-based language learning software, teachers can easily select the appropriate software according to the courses they teach.

However, there are some drawbacks to using smartphones for language learning. It is also the case that students get distracted while using mobile phones in class; sometimes, the high price of smartphones can create barriers. Moreover, the Internet charges might be high for some users. Another issue is that the size of the screens on mobiles are unlike the screens of laptops or desktop. Sometimes this creates a problem if the materials and information are too much. On the other side, some learners prefer paper-based books to digital ones. Other students reported eye pressure headaches, and some stated their reading pace slows down while reading on the smartphone. Smartphones have a lot of technological challenges, such as shortened battery life, limited storage, reduced speed, lack of wi-fi connectivity, small screens, and low resolution. The low resolution can harm the eyesight of the students. These results are similar to the studies of (Khan et al., 2018).

Some students may be addicted to the usage of smartphones. Occasionally texting, getting calls, and keeping eyes on the notification light cause no classroom interaction. Moreover, smartphones might create psychological problems for students, as their normal understanding of smartphones is to use them as entertainment rather than educational devices. (Stockwell, 2008; Hulse, 2018; Howarth & Bollen, 2019). However, due to the growing number of mobile-based language-learning software, learners feel that the advantages outweigh the drawbacks.

Hence the data reveals that EFL teachers have a positive attitude toward using smartphones in their classes. These results regarding the study questions are in line with other studies (Nariyati et al., 2020; Nuraeni, 2021). The results also reveal that most teachers need to have adequate skills to advance SALL activities in EFL teaching and learning, which is in line with other studies (Dashtestani, 2013; Khan et al., 2018). Dashtestani (2013) emphasized that educational institutions should offer EFL instructors the ICT skills required to apply SALL appropriately. According to Kent and Giles (2016), instructors with low levels of self-efficiency and skills in applying new approaches such as ICT will be less motivated to use such devices in their classes.

EFL instructors' proficiency in using SALL in EFL teaching was low. They certainly faced some difficulties that affected the SALL application, such as pupils not using smartphones for academic purposes, the lack of skills in the use of smartphones for academic purposes among learners, Internet connectivity hindrances, and shortage of SALL activities besides software tools. These results are reliable to earlier studies (Khan et al., 2018), signifying that EFL teachers met some of these problems while applying SALL. Consequently, providing instructors with SALL training and the required professional development training is the key to SALL application proficiency in EFL teaching and learning. Consequently, placing greater importance on and working toward giving SALL training to EFL instructors could promote bigger self-efficacy in using SALL and the ability to overcome difficulties.

The findings confirmed no substantial gender-based differences between the applicants according to their attitudes toward SALL and their views concerning SALL proficiency. Male and female instructors positively perceived SALL application in EFL teaching and learning. This study was inconsistent with findings that gender affected instructors' attitudes and perceptions of SALL (Oz, 2015&Nuraeni, 2021). Female participants held positive perceptions concerning smartphones in EFL teaching and learning as they thought they possibly reached increasingly satisfactory findings through its application.

The present study's findings showed a greater difference among applicants' attitudes and perceptions toward SALL application based on professional development and teaching experience.

The EFL instructors who got SALL professional development training were more positive toward SALL than instructors who did not get it. This result is relatable to those of preceding research stating that getting training influences instructor perception, mainly concerning SALL application (Nazari & Xodabande, 2020). Consequently, regular SALL-related training workshops and conferences can effectively sustain instructors in SALL usage, which could lead to the most successful SALL application. These findings align with those of Baek et al.'s (2017) research that found EFL instructors with more than 15 years of teaching experience had higher positive perceptions concerning SALL usage than other less experienced teachers. Rosa (2016) stated that experienced EFL instructors prefer technology to beginner instructors and show much support concerning the advantages of using technology in language teaching and learning.

### **Conclusion and implication**

Nowadays, Smartphones are much more than mere phones, both in technical and social terms. Smartphones have become an essential part of the everyday life of school students. Buchegger (2020) gave some recommendations for productively and actively applying smartphones. The recommendation contains many subjects and zones to apply this expertise productively. Some instances of applying smartphones are as follow: using mobile video story, photo story, and Digital flicker books. SALL is the latest way to improve language teaching and learning and involves using applications to enhance learning, especially during the COVID-19 pandemic (Nuraeni, 2021) when schools and universities were asked to shift to online teaching.

Hence, curriculum designers and educationalists must take into account instructors' views when making changes to learning and teaching methods and techniques. As instructors have a vital role in implementing SALL in practice, it is crucial to respect their opinions on it. To apply SALL effectively, it is necessary to consider the context in which it works. According to Nazari and Xodabande (2020), theoretically and practically, EFL instructors must be trained in technology (such as SALL) in language learning and teaching. Therefore, EFL instructors should join practical and pedagogical training for designing and evaluating SALL activities. The educational institutions should plan a continued, successive, and practical SALL workshop to design and develop SALL tasks and activities. This would be a better method to inspire language instructors to share cooperative plans on the SALL application. Additionally, various SALL software programs should be accessible to EFL instructors.

Based on the literature review, the researchers concluded that there is a shortage of research on Saudi EFL teachers' perceptions of SALL implementation at the college level. Leading this research offered a big chance to determine the literature gaps in this issue and recommend probable future study instructions. In the future, some implications could be implied. The current research could be replicated using a big sample, but it could include teachers' perceptions of the SALL application at all school levels. An experimental study can be done in two groups, one using SALL and the other using the traditional way.

#### **Declaration of conflicting interest**

The authors declare no conflict of interest.

#### **Funding acknowledgment**

The authors extend their appreciation to the Deanship of Scientific Research at King Khalid University for funding this work through a large Group Research Project under grant number RGP2/331/44.

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