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Exploring the Role of Teaching Experience in Language Teachers' Academic Optimism in Online Teaching of Listening

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Abstract

Despite the increased research on various aspects of academic optimism (AO) in general education, this line of inquiry has not received adequate empirical attention in English language teacher education. The present mixed-methods study aimed to explore the role of AO in MALL-oriented listening instruction among Iranian EFL teachers, with a focus on variations in their experience ranges. A total of 168 teachers participated in the study and completed the study scales, and 15 teachers with higher levels of perceived AO were further interviewed to gather qualitative data. Descriptive and inferential statistics were used to examine the quantitative data, while thematic analysis was conducted to analyze the qualitative data. The quantitative results indicated significant differences between novice, experienced, and highly experienced language teachers, with the latter holding more positive beliefs about AO and MALL in relation to listening. Additionally, a significant correlation was found between AO and MALL. The qualitative findings complemented the quantitative results by highlighting the pivotal role of academic optimism in driving teachers' motivation, the positive impact of teachers' optimistic attitudes on student engagement and motivation, and the pedagogical strategies employed by optimistic teachers to effectively incorporate MALL in their instructional practices. These findings provide implications for teachers and teacher educators, emphasizing the importance of integrating AO principles in MALL-related professional development courses to positively contribute to teachers' professional growth. The study contributes to the limited empirical research on AO within the context of English language teacher education and provides valuable insights into the complex interplay between academic optimism, MALL-oriented listening instruction, and teacher-student interactions.

Keywords: Academic optimism, experienced teacher, mobile-assisted language learning, novice teacher, listening comprehension

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1. Introduction

Initially developed by Hoy et al. (2006), the term academic optimism (AO) as a multidimensional construct has been conceptualized based on three components, including the academic emphasis (or focus) of the schools, shared efficacy of the administration and faculty members, and faculty trust and confidence in parents and students. The first element, namely academic emphasis relates to the extent to which a given school aims to achieve success and is driven by a systematic focus on maintaining excellence. Collective (or shared) efficacy is primarily concerned with the faculty's beliefs concerning their personal capacities (and agencies) to shape, organize, and execute the policies and practices essential for attaining institutionally defined goals. The third element, namely faculty trust denotes a collective school property which is similar to the second element, nevertheless, it highlights the crucial role of trust as perceived vulnerability in terms of the belief and assumptions that all parties (students, parents, and teachers) will act on their best interests. These components are considered significantly important in enhancing student achievements even for those school settings that are functioning under difficult socioeconomic circumstances and conditions (e.g., Galindo & Sanders, 2021; Horner et al., 2019; Hoy et al., 2006). Research in this line of inquiry aims to understand how collective efforts such as AO define the achievements of students under a range of social and contextual considerations. Accordingly, Hoy et al. (2006) believed that the school context in general and teachers in particular play a very defining role in students' learning trajectories and their impact might be realized differently as the students gain more proficiency across various skills.

Over the past two decades, significant developments and proliferations in educational technologies provided the schools and their faculties with new affordances to scaffold students' academic achievements. Among such developments, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) attracted increased and substantial recognition, and online learning through mobile devices has become one of the widely employed interventions to address the needs of students who learn English as a foreign language (EFL) (Iravi & Malmir, 2023; Khosravi et al., 2021; Lin & Lin, 2019; Xodabande et al., 2022; Xodabande & Atai, 2020; Zakian et al., 2022). Transforming traditional conceptions of education as being bonded to physical and temporal spaces, MALL has redefined the methodology and the learning content delivered to EFL students and equipped them with learning affordances that are personalized and tailored based on the specific learning contexts (e.g., Colpaert, 2020; Nazari & Xodabande, 2020, 2021).

Within the growing body of knowledge in MALL, augmenting EFL learners' listening comprehension attracted a lot of scholarly attention (e.g., Elahifar et al., 2022; Ghorbanpour et al., 2021; Jalilifar & Ansrai, 2010; Marashi & Khaksar, 2013; Najafi Sarem & Marashi, 2020; Shabani et al., 2018), and with more popularity of online language learning environments, researchers examined listening instruction delivered via mobile technologies (e.g., Faramarzi et al., 2019; Wise & Hsiao, 2019). Despite much MALL and EFL listening instruction research, exploring teachers'

AO in mobile-based language learning remained neglected. More specifically, it is not clear how AO is perceived among novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers in mobile-assisted listening instruction. Research in this area is significant as understanding how teaching experience defines teachers' AO perceptions concerning listening. Teacher education programs can employ strategies and interventions to identify the sources that negatively impact AO. Moreover, it has been argued that AO is contingent upon contextual factors; in this regard, research on teachers' perceptions of AO in relation to their instruction is gaining prominence as it helps them and their students develop effective language learning skills. Motivated by such considerations, the current study investigated Iranian EFL teachers' AO in the context of MALL and in relation to their listening instruction. In this regard, the following research questions guided the current study:

1. Do novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers differ in their academic optimism in the context of MALL-oriented listening instruction?
2. Is there any significant and noticeable relationship between Iranian EFL teachers' AO and their attitudes towards MALL?
3. How do teachers perceive AO in relation to MALL-oriented listening instruction?

2. Review of Literature

2.1. Teachers' Beliefs and Academic Optimism in Education

Academic optimism (AO) is a socio-cognitive approach to learning motivation that aims to enhance student achievement. By its focus on the core and essential constructs of academic emphasis, shared and collective efficacy, and faculty confidence and trust in students and their parents, AO aims to provide a rich understanding of how organizational and pedagogical approaches can account for student learning outcomes (Smith & Hoy, 2007). In the present study, AO is theoretically explored in regard to its pedagogical outcomes as related to teachers' experience in teaching listening online. Moreover, according to Hoy et al. (2005), AO aims to integrate the understandings of a wide range of educational stakeholders in that (1) shared and collective efficacy highlights the belief systems and thought processes beyond the individual level, (2) trust and confidence of faculty and school administration on students and their parents is associated with an affective dimension which is crucial for success of educational programs, and (3) academic focus and emphasis entails the actual implementation of shared efficacy and trust in teaching students. Along this line of thinking, research on different dimensions of AO has grown in terms of capturing how various individuals (e.g., parents, students, teachers, and policymakers) perceive the role of this construct in school effectiveness and student achievement. One such line of research has focused on teachers' perceptions and experiences of AO.

For example, Beard et al. (2010) attempted to conceptualize and operationalize AO among teachers by modeling structural equations to validate the concept. The study was guided by the hypothesis that teachers' collective and shared efficacy, academic focus and emphasis in the

educational settings, and trust and confidence in students/parents form a concept form an individually rooted sense of academic optimism. The study sample included 72 teachers of elementary school. Five measures were used to collect data including teachers' sense of shared efficacy scale, teachers' confidence in parents/students, academic emphasis, dispositional optimism for learning, and the empowering school scale were administered to the teachers. The analysis of the data provided empirical evidence supporting the reliability and validity of the AO construct at both individual and institutional levels.

Eren (2012) explored the role of AO among teachers by focusing on identifying mediating factors between their professional plans and future goals for teaching and time perspective. Data were collected from 396 prospective Turkish teachers. Research instruments involved the scale for teacher sense of AO, the career development visions and professional engagement scale, and the future time perspective scale. After running three confirmatory factor analyses, correlation analysis between the variables and regression analyses were performed to check the contribution of AO in the teachers' professional plans and future time perspective. Data analyses revealed that future time perspective, teachers' professional development goals and plans, and their persistence were significantly related to and moderated by AO. Additionally, the findings indicated that the leadership aspirations and future time perspective had no effect on teachers' AO.

Ngidi (2012) explored 280 South African teachers' beliefs about AO, as selected from 16 schools in different districts of the country. The study scales involved the teacher sense of efficacy scale, Omnibus T-Scale, organizational climax scale, pupil control ideology, teacher belief survey, organizational citizenship behavior scale, and life orientation test. The analyses revealed that there was no low AO respondent among the teacher participants. Moreover, it was found that the teachers varied in their AO beliefs. Furthermore, student-centered teaching was found to play a key role in the teachers' AO. Collectively and in relation to the study scales, Ngidi found that teaching beliefs that are mostly student-directed, teachers' dispositional feelings and optimism, and their citizenship culture and behavior were the most significant predictors of AO. Although these studies have developed the literature of AO, this research line is limited in scope within the field of applied linguistics especially in online contexts. This study explores this issue among novice and experienced teachers with a focus on online teaching of listening.

2.2. MALL and Teacher Beliefs about Listening

Over the past decades, digital and mobile-based technologies have attracted considerable empirical attention across various educational settings. Such a growth of attention has been inspired by the emergence of movements that promote increased integration of mobile devices into mainstream education (O'Bannon & Thomas, 2014). Accordingly, as the most recent development in the evolving field of educational technology, MALL has been consistently defined as using digital and portable tools and technologies (such as laptops, tablet devices, and smartphones) for language

learning or teaching purposes (Hsu, 2016). Moreover, MALL has been researched in particular concerning teachers and how they see the role of such technological advancements in their professional work. For example, in a review of existing research and scholarship on using mobile devices in teacher training and preparation, Baran (2014) found that there is generally a growing interest and global appeal in the implementation of mobile devices and related technologies in teacher training programs. Although there are generally two affordance-based and pedagogy-based perspectives on MALL (Jeong, 2022), in this study the latter perspective is followed with regard to exploring teachers' AO in teaching listening.

Motivated by this growth of research attention, research on different aspects of MALL and teachers' cognition and experiences has grown. For example, Nazari and Xodabande (2020) explored the experiences of five Iranian EFL teachers in a MALL setting situated in a professional development course structured around using mobiles. The study was motivated by the theoretical framework of sociocultural theory. The study findings revealed that the teachers developed their cognitions about mobile phone usage through dialogic participation in the course. However, change in practice was not observed in all of the teachers. It was concluded that "if teachers choose to employ mobile phones, both they and their learners can benefit from the outcomes" (p. 25).

Moreover, Liu et al. (2017) explored the perceptions of Chinese language teachers and students towards MALL. This study employed a number of data collection instruments such as self-report surveys and semi-structured qualitative interviews. The findings of the study showed that nearly all of the study participants use mobile devices to augment their language learning and teaching. Similarly, Van Praag and Sanchez (2015) investigated the perceptions towards MALL and associated teaching practices of three language teachers in the UK in relation to using mobile devices. The findings of the study showed that the use of mobile devices by teachers was limited to a large extent, pointing to the fact that their pedagogical value was not realized even though teachers had free and easy access to them in the classroom. Parallel with these developments, research on teachers' experiences with specific skills in digital settings has also grown. Conceptually speaking, Norris and Kukulska-Hulme (2017) proposed a four-sided framework of teachers' experiences in mobile settings including the components of wisdom, features of the device, mobility of learners, and dynamics of language.

As it concerns the purposes of this study, one such specific skill that has attracted relatively little empirical attention in the expanding body of research on teacher cognition is listening. Teacher cognition has been defined as the unobservable (and sometimes hidden) aspects of language teachers' professional mentalities which involve knowledge, beliefs, and thought processes (Borg, 2003, 2015). One such research on language teachers' beliefs in relation to listening instruction is Graham et al. (2014) in which the researchers investigated the listening beliefs of 115 teachers in England using questionnaires and self-reported practices. The findings revealed mismatches between the beliefs and practices. Continuing the same line of research, Karimi and Nazari (2017) investigated Iranian EFL teachers' listening-related beliefs and practices.

Eighty-five teachers were first given a listening beliefs questionnaire and then 12 teachers were interviewed and their classroom instruction was observed. The findings of the study uncovered incongruities and differences between the teachers' beliefs and their pedagogical practices in teaching listening. Despite these developments, research focusing on language teachers' listening beliefs and associated practices in MALL contexts is lacking, which is the purpose of this study. Although MALL has significantly grown in relation to teachers' perceptions about different aspects of their careers, this research line has not explored the role of teaching experience in teachers' perceptions of AO and in how specific skills could be interpreted in relation to their professional practices.

2.3. Novice and Experienced Teachers

A variable that has persistently been of concern to teacher education researchers has been teaching experience. In this regard, Tsui (2005) distinguished expert performance from expertise and argued that while the former needs many years of experience and a considerable amount of practice, the latter involves a complicated process that distinguishes the expert teachers' superior performance. Similarly, Widdowson (2003, p. 2) argued that experience does not teach anything to the teachers directly, but they mostly learn from it through a process of discovering which involves abstracting general rules from contextual particularities. From this perspective, novice and experienced teachers have been argued to have several differences. Tsui (2005) argued that novices' cognitions and performances are highly experienced by their teacher education experiences (see Borg, 2003 for a similar discussion) and they need time to integrate different aspects of their work. However, the performance of more experienced teachers is often associated with the state of efficiency, some degrees of automaticity, fluidity and effortless teaching practices (Tsui, 2009).

Motivated by the same arguments, research focusing on novice and experienced English language teachers has grown significantly over the past decades (Fallah & Nazari, 2019; Burkhauser & Lesaux, 2015; Li & Zou, 2017; Karimi & Norouzi, 2019; Nazari & Alizadeh Oghyanous, 2021; Salehizadeh et al., 2020). For example, Karimi and Norouzi (2018) explored how novice, mid-experienced, and highly experienced teachers differ in their cognitive ageing. The findings indicated that the expert language teachers were more capable of handling the difficulties associated with teaching and were abler to regulate their classroom practices effectively. Similarly, Nazari and Alizadeh Oghyanous (2021) explored the combined contribution of language learning grit, occupational and job-related stress, general sense of well-being, and turnover intentions among 325 Iranian teachers with different degrees of teaching experience. The findings revealed that novice language teachers had more turnover intentions, and experienced more job-related and occupational working stress. This study found a significant correlation between psychological well-

being and turnover intentions. Moreover, it was found that various institutional, personal, and socioeconomic factors contributed to the above constructs in the teachers' professional practice.

2.4. Purpose of the Study

The above literature shows that AO is a significant variable influencing the teaching/learning process. As Beard et al. (2010) argued, AO should be explored in other contexts and related to different dimensions of teachers' careers. However, such a focus has been little explored in the related empirical literature for language teacher education. More specifically, given the widespread use of mobile devices in today's digital world, exploring their potential for supporting learning is necessary. Relatedly, despite the huge growth of research on MALL and different skills, listening comprehension is a neglected area in this regard. This is while listening is one of the most significant skills that learners need for their international and collaborative purposes (Aryadoust, 2022; Goh, 2008; Vandergrift, 2012). Nonetheless, how teachers view AO in relation to listening in MALL settings is underexplored and it merits further attention to provide implications for teacher educators to provide professional development courses that positively contribute to student learning outcomes in such settings. Motivated by this background, the present study explored Iranian EFL teachers' AO in relation to listening in the context of MALL. Furthermore, the study took a step further and explored how novice, experienced and highly experienced teachers' AO in relation to the above constructs is a totally new perspective of expertise in online settings.

Thus, the study is conceptually informed by the three abovementioned principles of AO, which are actualized in this study in relation to novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers ' teaching of listening comprehension in online settings. Such a perspective helps explore how the teachers' experience mediates their perceptions about listening-driven AO and how such experience features in their online instruction of listening.

3. Method

3.1. Participants

The study participants were 168 Iranian teachers who were selected based on their availability in the context of the study through the convenience sampling procedure. Thus, the participants were selected based on convenience sampling. The mean age of the participants was 31. With respect to educational backgrounds, 56.5% of the language teachers had M.A. in the field of teaching English as a foreign language (TEFL), 31.5% had Ph.D. in TEFL, and around 12% had B.A. in TEFL or English literature and translation studies. With respect to language teaching experience, about 43% of the teachers reported teaching English for less than 5 years. Additionally, 28% had 5 to 10, and 29% had more than 10 years of teaching experience. Out of these 168 participants, a subgroup of 15 teachers was selected for qualitative data collection through semi-

structured interviews. The selection of these 15 teachers was based on factors such as their experience with MALL-oriented listening instruction, their high level of AO, and their willingness to participate in the interviews. The participating teachers provided their informed consent to the researchers and the study followed ethical guidelines in educational research involving human subjects by protecting the anonymity of the participants and using collected data for research purposes only.

3.2. Instruments

For collecting the data from language teachers, two questionnaires were employed for assessing their AO beliefs and their perceptions towards using mobile devices for language teaching. The scales were adopted from earlier studies (Azli et al., 2018; Dashtestani, 2012; Hamedinasab & Asgari, 2020; Hejāzi & Amini Pour, 2014; Hoy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013), and the following steps were taken to ensure their validity and reliability. First, after translating the scales into Persian, in order to verify the face validity of the instruments, five Applied Linguistics instructors with extensive experience in the field read and commented on the questionnaires. This step resulted in further modifications in the instrument in terms of rewording a number of questions to enhance the clarity, and also discarding some items based on their similarity and redundancy.

Additionally, two phases of Exploratory Factor Analysis and Confirmatory Factor Analysis (EFA and CFA) on a sample of 150 teachers were performed to examine the construct validity of the questionnaires. In this regard, the AO and MALL scales were analyzed using principal component analysis (PCA) to identify the presence of factors. Prior to PCA, the suitability of the data was assessed by inspecting the correlation matrixes, which showed many coefficients of 0.3 and above. The Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin values were 0.74 and 0.81 for two scales, exceeding the recommended value of 0.6. Bartlett's Test of Sphericity reached statistical significance ($p \leq 0.001$ for both scales), supporting the factorability of the correlation matrix. As for the AO scale, PCA revealed the presence of six components, with eigenvalues exceeding 1, explaining 23.2%, 17.8%, 14.1%, 12.3%, 10.23%, and 9.86% of the variance, respectively. The six-component solution explained 87.49% of the variance. Oblimin rotation was performed to aid in interpreting the six components, and the rotated solution revealed the presence of a simple structure, with six components showing strong loadings. The interpretation of the six components was consistent with previous research on the AO scale (Hoy et al., 2006; Tschannen-Moran et al., 2013). Concerning the MALL scale, PCA yielded nine components with eigenvalues exceeding 1, which accounted for 18.88%, 17.62%, 10.56%, 9.55%, 7.54%, 6.81%, 6.15%, 4.64%, and 3.82% of the variance, respectively. The nine-component solution accounted for 85.59% of the variance. Oblimin rotation was utilized to help interpret these nine components, and the rotated solution exhibited a simple structure, with all nine components demonstrating substantial loadings. The final instruments

(developed based on the two scales mentioned above) contained 30 items for assessing AO and 38 items to investigate EFL teachers' attitudes toward mobile-assisted listening (the instruments are accessible through https://survey.porsline.ir/s/LRLawWt).

For qualitative data collection, semi-structured interviews were conducted with 15 teachers to understand their AO- and listening-related perceptions. The interviews were conducted in Persian (the participants' L1) through WhatsApp, where one of the researchers asked the questions, and the participants provided their responses. The interview questions (Appendix A) were based on the questionnaire components, including the AO elements (academic emphasis, collective efficacy, and faculty trust) and listening comprehension. The researchers also asked relevant follow-up questions to understand the details of their answers. The interviews lasted, on average, 45 minutes per participant.

3.3. Procedures

For collecting the quantitative data, the two instruments (i.e., AO and MALL perceptions) were administered online to Iranian EFL teachers. Accordingly, the invitation to participate in the research was sent to around 320 individuals via a locally popular social media network, and after further and additional reminders around 168 respondents completed and returned the questionnaires. The 52.5% rate for returned responses is acceptable in online surveys (Dörnyei & Taguchi, 2009). The responses obtained were saved into a Microsoft spreadsheet document by the online survey software and were used in data analysis. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with a subgroup of 15 teachers selected from the larger sample. These teachers were chosen based on their experience with MALL-oriented listening instruction and their voluntary participation. The interviews aimed to explore the teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in relation to MALL-oriented listening instruction. The interviews were conducted in-person or through video conferencing, recorded, and transcribed for data analysis.

3.4. Data Analysis

The quantitative data collected for the study was analyzed based on descriptive and inferential statistical procedures using IBM SPSS software, version 25. Accordingly, group statistics in terms of mean values (scores), standard deviations and errors of the mean were calculated for scores on the AO and MALL perception scales. In order to explore the data for any significant differences, one-way repeated measures of ANOVA were used to compare the teachers with respect to their attitudes towards AO and their perceptions of mobile-assisted language learning. Additionally, to explore the possible relationship between academic optimism and teachers' MALL perceptions, the Pearson correlation coefficient was calculated for the two variables.

Thematic analysis was employed to analyze the qualitative data obtained from the semi-structured interviews. The recorded interviews were transcribed, and the transcripts were carefully

examined to identify recurring themes and patterns related to teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in the context of MALL-oriented listening instruction. The analysis aimed to gain insights and develop a comprehensive understanding of the qualitative data.

4. Results

4.1. Quantitative

The results obtained for analyzing the data for descriptive statistics in relation to the teachers ' academic optimism (AO) and MALL perceptions are summarized in Table 1. As shown below, novice teachers had the highest level of AO (M=103.44, SD=9.82) and perceived MALL more positively (M=142.26, SD=11.37). The experienced teachers had the lowest AO (M=94.17, SD=8.90); however, their perceptions towards MALL (M=136.46, SD=9.67) were more positive compared to highly experienced teachers (M=133.00, SD=7.52).

Table 1

Descriptive Statistics for Academic Optimism and MALL Perception

						95% Confidence Interval for Mean			
		N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error	Lower Bound	Upper Bound	Minimum	Maximum
AC Optimism	Novice	67	103.447	9.82002	1.19971	101.0525	105.8431	85.00	120.00
	Experienced	47	94.1702	8.90608	1.29908	91.5553	96.7851	81.00	112.00
	Highly experienced	39	100.743	11.50679	1.84256	97.0135	104.4737	79.00	114.00
	Total	153	99.9085	10.71728	.86644	98.1967	101.6203	79.00	120.00
MALL Perception	Novice	72	142.263	11.37577	1.34065	139.5907	144.9371	127.00	165.00
	Experienced	41	136.463	9.67238	1.51057	133.4104	139.5164	123.00	150.00
	Highly experienced	33	133.000	7.52496	1.30993	130.3318	135.6682	123.00	143.00
	Total	146	138.541	10.80557	.89428	136.7736	140.3086	123.00	165.00

Before analyzing the data for statistical differences, the results were tested for the homogeneity of variances (Table 2). The findings revealed that the sample was homogenous with respect to their scores on the AO scale, Levene statistics=1.96, p≤ 0.144; nonetheless, homogeneity of the variances was violated for MALL perception with a likeability of p<0.023. Accordingly, in conducting post-hoc comparisons, more robust tests were used, too.

Table 2

Test of Homogeneity of Variances

		Levene Statistic	df1	df 2	Sig.
AC Optimism	Based on Mean	1.961	2	150	.144
	Based on Median	.799	2	150	.452
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	.799	2	129.303	.452
	Based on trimmed mean	1.753	2	150	.177
MALL perception	Based on Mean	3.877	2	143	.023
	Based on Median	2.076	2	143	.129
	Based on Median and with adjusted df	2.076	2	135.900	.129
	Based on trimmed mean	3.494	2	143	.033

The results obtained for one-way ANOVA indicated that there are statistically significant differences among the novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers in their AO ($F(2, 150) = 12.035$, $p \leq 0.001$), and their perceptions of MALL ($F(2, 143) = 10.612$, $p \leq 0.001$). Although one-way ANOVA pointed to an overall difference among the teachers, it provides no information in relation to the exact differences among the groups.

Table 3

ANOVA Results

		Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
AC Optimism	Between Groups	2414.078	2	1207.039	12.035	.000
	Within Groups	15044.641	150	100.298		
	Total	17458.719	152			
MALL perception	Between Groups	2188.072	2	1094.036	10.612	.000
	Within Groups	14742.181	143	103.092		
	Total	16930.253	145			

The results obtained for multiple comparisons among groups are provided in Table 4. Considering the violation of variance in MALL perceptions, the post-hoc tests were conducted for equal (Bonferroni) and non-equal variances (Tamhabe). The findings showed that the observed differences between novice and experienced teachers in terms of their AO were statistically significant. Additionally, the differences in the AO of the experienced teachers were significantly different from novice and highly experienced teachers. As for the MALL perception, the observed differences between the scores obtained by novice teachers and experienced and highly experienced teachers were significant; however, the difference between experienced and highly experienced teachers was not statistically significant.

Table 4

Multiple Comparisons

Dependent Variable		(I)	(J)	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.	95% Confidence Interval	
							Lower Bound	Upper Bound
AC_OP	Bonferroni	1-5 year	5-10 year	9.27755*	1.90551	.000	4.6641	13.8910
			+ 10 year	2.70417	2.01711	.546	-2.1795	7.5878
		5-10 year	1-5 year	-9.27755*	1.90551	.000	-13.8910	-4.6641
			+ 10 year	-6.57338*	2.16927	.009	-11.8254	-1.3213
		+ 10 year	1-5 year	-2.70417	2.01711	.546	-7.5878	2.1795
			5-10 year	6.57338*	2.16927	.009	1.3213	11.8254
	Tamhane	1-5 year	5-10 year	9.27755*	1.76831	.000	4.9867	13.5683
			+ 10 year	2.70417	2.19871	.531	-2.6747	8.0830
		5-10 year	1-5 year	-9.27755*	1.76831	.000	-13.5683	-4.9867
			+ 10 year	-6.57338*	2.25447	.014	-12.0869	-1.0599
		+ 10 year	1-5 year	-2.70417	2.19871	.531	-8.0830	2.6747
			5-10 year	6.57338*	2.25447	.014	1.0599	12.0869
MALL	Bonferroni	1-5 year	5-10 year	5.80047*	1.98652	.012	.9882	10.6128
			+ 10 year	9.26389*	2.13444	.000	4.0933	14.4345
		5-10 year	1-5 year	-5.80047*	1.98652	.012	-10.6128	-.9882
			+ 10 year	3.46341	2.37454	.441	-2.2888	9.2157
		+ 10 year	1-5 year	-9.26389*	2.13444	.000	-14.4345	-4.0933
			5-10 year	-3.46341	2.37454	.441	-9.2157	2.2888
	Tamhane	1-5 year	5-10 year	5.80047*	2.01969	.015	.8912	10.7097
			+ 10 year	9.26389*	1.87437	.000	4.7034	13.8244
		5-10 year	1-5 year	-5.80047*	2.01969	.015	-10.7097	-.8912
			+ 10 year	3.46341	1.99943	.240	-1.4244	8.3512
		+ 10 year	1-5 year	-9.26389*	1.87437	.000	-13.8244	-4.7034
			5-10 year	-3.46341	1.99943	.240	-8.3512	1.4244

*. The mean difference is significant at the 0.05 level.

In order to explore the relationship between the teachers' AO and their MALL perceptions, the scores were compared using the Pearson correlation coefficient. The mean score of AO for the entire sample was 99.90 (SD=10.71). Additionally, the mean value for the MALL perception scores was 138.54 (SD=10.80). The results indicated that there is a significant medium and positive correlation between the two variables (r=0.30, n=153, p≤0.001), with high scores on AO generally associated with more positive perceptions towards MALL.

Table 5

Correlations

		AC Optimism	MALL perception
AC Optimism	Pearson Correlation	1	.300**
	Sig. (2-tailed)		.000
	N	153	136
MALL perception	Pearson Correlation	.300**	1
	Sig. (2-tailed)	.000	
	N	136	146

**. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

4.2. Qualitative

The qualitative findings from semi-structured interviews with 15 teachers shed light on the nuanced aspects of teachers' perceptions regarding academic optimism and its relationship with Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)-oriented listening instruction. These findings offer valuable insights that complement the quantitative results, uncovering themes such as the pivotal role of academic optimism in driving teachers' motivation to integrate MALL tools, the positive impact of teachers' optimistic attitudes on student engagement and motivation, and the pedagogical strategies employed by optimistic teachers to effectively incorporate MALL in their instructional practices. As for the first theme, teachers consistently expressed a strong belief in the potential of technology to enhance language-learning outcomes and foster student engagement. For instance, Participant 7 emphasized, "I truly believe that incorporating technology in my lessons opens up new avenues for students to actively engage with the language. It gives them a sense of empowerment and makes the learning process more interactive and enjoyable." The participants' optimistic mindset played a vital role in their motivation to explore innovative instructional approaches and experiment with a variety of digital resources. Participant 12 stated, "I approach MALL with an optimistic mindset, always eager to try out new apps and online platforms. It keeps my teaching dynamic and helps me cater to the diverse learning styles of my students." Participant 3 echoed this sentiment, adding, "Being optimistic about the potential of MALL motivates me to continuously seek new ways to integrate technology in my lessons. It sparks my creativity and encourages me to design activities that make the most of digital resources."

Importantly, the participants highlighted that their optimistic attitudes played a crucial role in overcoming challenges associated with technology integration. Participant 8 shared, "There have

been instances when technical glitches or compatibility issues arose during a lesson. However, my optimistic outlook helps me view such challenges as learning opportunities. I am motivated to find solutions, adapt my teaching strategies, and ensure a seamless MALL experience for my students." The qualitative data also underscored the role of academic optimism in teachers' ongoing professional development. Participant 5 reflected, "My positive belief in the effectiveness of MALL pushes me to continuously enhance my technological skills. I actively seek out workshops, online courses, and educational conferences to stay updated with the latest trends and best practices in technology integration." This commitment to professional growth aligned with the participants' overall optimistic outlook and their determination to provide engaging and effective language instruction through MALL. Overall, the qualitative findings demonstrated that the participants' academic optimism significantly influenced their motivation and willingness to integrate MALL tools in language teaching. Their positive beliefs about the benefits of technology empowered them to embrace innovative approaches, persist in the face of challenges, and actively pursue professional development opportunities. These findings underscore the importance of cultivating and nurturing academic optimism as a driving force behind successful MALL integration in language classrooms.

Concerning the second theme, the qualitative findings provided some evidence for the positive impact of teachers' optimistic attitudes on student engagement and motivation in Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL)-oriented listening activities. Participants consistently emphasized how their optimistic outlook influenced students' enthusiasm and willingness to actively participate in language learning. Participant 9 expressed, "When I approach MALL with optimism and convey my excitement about using technology, it resonates with my students. They become more motivated and engaged, eager to explore and learn through the digital tools we incorporate." This sentiment was echoed by Participant 14, who stated, "I believe that my positive attitude towards MALL creates a positive classroom environment. Students feel encouraged and empowered to take risks, participate actively, and contribute to discussions." The participants observed that their optimistic demeanor acted as a catalyst, fostering a positive classroom atmosphere that enhanced student motivation. Participant 6 noted, "I have noticed that when students sense my enthusiasm for MALL, it creates a ripple effect. They become more motivated to actively engage with the technology and are more willing to take ownership of their learning." Participant 10 supported this notion, explaining, "An optimistic attitude helps create a sense of trust and rapport with students. They feel comfortable asking questions, seeking clarification, and taking risks with technology, which ultimately leads to increased engagement and motivation."

Furthermore, the participants recognized the importance of providing students with meaningful and purposeful MALL activities to sustain their motivation. Participant 2 shared, "By framing MALL activities in a positive light and highlighting their relevance to real-world language use, I see students becoming more engaged. They understand the value and purpose behind the tasks, and this fuels their motivation to actively participate." Participant 13 added, "I believe that my optimism instills confidence in students to explore and experiment with technology. They

become more motivated to use the tools creatively and take ownership of their learning journey." Additionally, the qualitative data highlighted that students perceived their teachers' optimistic attitudes as contagious, influencing their own motivation and engagement. Participant 4 stated, "When students see that I am genuinely excited about using technology, it sparks their curiosity and desire to learn. They feed off my positive energy, and it creates a supportive learning environment where everyone is motivated to participate." Participant 11 concurred, explaining, "I have noticed that my optimistic approach to MALL positively impacts students' self-belief. They develop confidence in their ability to navigate technology and actively engage in language learning tasks." Overall, the participants' enthusiasm and belief in the benefits of technology created a positive classroom environment that fostered student motivation, engagement, and a sense of ownership in their language learning journey.

Finally, concerning the third theme, qualitative findings revealed that optimistic teachers employed various pedagogical strategies to effectively incorporate Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) in their instructional practices. These strategies highlighted their adaptability and resourcefulness in leveraging MALL tools to enhance language teaching and learning experiences. Participant 3 emphasized, "As an optimistic teacher, I actively seek out pedagogical approaches that align with MALL. I utilize a student-centered approach, providing opportunities for collaboration, critical thinking, and creativity." Participants consistently highlighted the importance of scaffolding and providing guidance to students when integrating MALL. Participant 7 shared, "I scaffold the use of MALL tools by providing step-by-step instructions and modeling how to navigate different applications. This support helps students build their confidence in using technology for language learning." Participant 12 echoed this sentiment, stating, "I ensure that students have a solid foundation in using MALL tools by incorporating hands-on activities and providing ample opportunities for practice and exploration."

The optimistic teachers also emphasized the need to align MALL activities with learning objectives and language proficiency goals. Participant 5 explained, "I design MALL tasks that directly address the language skills we are focusing on in class. By aligning the technology use with our learning goals, students see the relevance and purpose behind the MALL activities." Participant 10 added, "I incorporate MALL in a way that enhances the language learning experience. For example, I use digital resources to provide authentic language input and simulate real-life communicative situations." Moreover, the participants highlighted the importance of promoting active engagement and interactivity in MALL-oriented instruction. Participant 9 shared, "I design MALL activities that encourage students to actively engage with the content and each other. This includes interactive exercises, online discussions, and collaborative projects that foster communication and collaboration." Participant 14 supported this approach, stating, "I believe in the power of interaction in language learning. I incorporate MALL tools that facilitate student-student and student-teacher interactions, creating an immersive learning environment." Additionally, optimistic teachers recognized the importance of ongoing reflection and evaluation

of MALL integration. Participant 2 explained, "I regularly reflect on the effectiveness of the MALL activities and seek feedback from students. This allows me to make adjustments and improvements to ensure that the technology is supporting their language learning needs." Participant 13 added, "I embrace a growth mindset when integrating MALL. I continuously seek out new resources, attend workshops, and collaborate with colleagues to enhance my pedagogical practices."

5. Discussion and Conclusion

This study explored Iranian EFL teachers' AO and perceptions about listening in the context of MALL. The first research question was concerned with whether novice, experienced, and highly experienced teachers differ in their academic optimism in the context of MALL-oriented listening instruction. The data analysis results showed that novice teachers were more positive about AO and listening in the context of MALL than experienced and highly experienced teachers. This finding shows that experience does not necessarily add to teachers' criticality in viewing different aspects of their careers, a finding that aligns with Widdowson's (2003) regarding the importance of learning from experience rather than merely relying on it. Moreover, this finding is in line with Tsui's (2009) argument that expertise can be obtained at any stage of teachers' professionalism if they hold a critical vision toward different dimensions of their careers. However, this finding may have a reason related to teachers' age as well. That is, because novice teachers are younger than experienced and highly experienced teachers (which was the case in this study), they may be more technology-oriented, and thus, their perceptions may be more in line with how AO and listening could manifest in technology-related contexts (see Nazari & Xodabande, 2020).

Moreover, it was found that there were significant differences among the teacher groups across their AO and MALL perceptions. This finding is in line with Karimi and Norouzi (2018) and Fallah and Nazari (2019) regarding the superiority of experienced teachers in viewing the professional side of their careers. Moreover, this finding sheds new light on the discussion of AO by showing that experience functions as a key variable in how teachers perceive efficacy, emphasis, and trust (see Beard et al., 2010; Galindo & Sanders, 2021; Horner et al., 2019; Malmir & Vosooghi, 2023). Furthermore, this finding adds to the discussion of MALL and listening in that as teachers proceed in their careers and develop their experience, they are more likely to enhance their understanding of various aspects of their career, especially in technology-related settings in which they should update their knowledge over time to better respond to those efficacy, emphasis, and trust dimensions (for a discussion of technology, see Colpaert, 2020).

Relatedly, this finding aligns with Borg (2003) and Tsui (2005, 2009) in that experience serves as a lens that adds to teachers' knowledge base of teaching and learning. In this regard, the key variable was how much experience serves as important in teachers' efficacy, emphasis, and trust, as components of AO. Previous research has also shown that experience is key to teachers' efficiency beliefs (e.g., Burkhauser & Lesaux, 2015; Malmir & Mohammadi, 2018; Nazari & Alizadeh

Oghyanous, 2021). However, this study unpacked the other two dimensions of AO in that trust and emphasis also rely heavily on experience, which is a novel dimension of the study. Additionally, the same argument works for the teachers' MALL perceptions in that due to their accrued knowledge, experienced teachers are likely to develop more awareness of the range of issues related to their work, an argument that aligns with Tsui's (2009) statement regarding experienced teachers' more mastery over different pedagogical and institutional sides of their work. This finding adds to the theoretical discussion of teaching experience by showing novel dimensions of how novice and experienced teachers could differ in their AO-related perceptions based on their stage of professionalism. In particular, the findings reveal that teachers' career stage is a significant component of their ways of looking at professional constructs like AO, which is new in the theoretical discussion of the concepts.

The second research question dealt with relationships between Iranian EFL teachers' AO and their attitudes towards MALL. It was found that AO and MALL perceptions were significantly correlated. This finding is quite novel in language teachers' perceptions of both constructs. The major reason for such a significant, positive correlation may be the way teachers reinterpret their knowledge of AO components in relation to the technological context of teaching. That is, the teachers may associate academic emphasis, trust in parents and students, and efficacy with the technology context that is likely to form the major part of their professional career in today's educational setting, which, according to Colpaert (2020), is now a significant part of teachers' professional cognitions and practices. This finding, however, needs to be researched more extensively in future research to better illuminate the correlations between AO and MALL perceptions, especially how they influence students' learning outcomes. In particular, how both constructs contribute to specific skills (which here was listening) could be more focal in future research.

The findings pertaining to the third research question, exploring teachers' perceptions of academic optimism in relation to MALL-oriented listening instruction, shed light on the vital role that academic optimism plays in driving teachers' motivation and enthusiasm to effectively incorporate MALL tools. The qualitative data revealed that teachers recognized the significance of academic optimism in shaping their outlook and approach towards technology integration. These findings align with the socio-cognitive approach of academic optimism, which emphasizes the core constructs of academic emphasis, shared and collective efficacy, and faculty confidence and trust in students and their parents (Smith & Hoy, 2007). By embracing an optimistic mindset, teachers viewed MALL as an avenue for instructional innovation and as a means to enhance student engagement. The participants in the study demonstrated an optimistic outlook, perceiving MALL as an opportunity to revitalize their teaching practices and provide enriched language learning experiences. This aligns with the research by Hoy et al. (2005), which highlights the integrative nature of academic optimism, encompassing the beliefs and thought processes of various educational stakeholders. The participants' optimistic attitudes reflected their confidence in the

potential of MALL tools to contribute to student success and their trust in the efficacy of technology-enhanced language learning.

This finding is theoretically contributive to the literature because it shows the complex nature of AO, especially in relation to MALL contexts. In this regard, Jeong (2022) argued that perceptions about MALL should be intersectively examined as related to other conceptual variables that form their professional practice. With this in mind, it seems that AO is a significant theoretical construct that forms the teachers' MALL-related perceptions because the two constructs are closely associated. This finding provides novel ways of understanding both concepts because it shows how conceptually resonant the constructs are, which is a novel dimension of the conceptual links between the two constructs.

The study findings offer implications for the field of teacher education and for running professional development initiatives and courses that aim to enhance teachers' awareness of AO and the pedagogical values of MALL. Accordingly, one implication is that teacher educators in applied linguistics can familiarize teachers with the principles of AO in the specific areas of efficacy, emphasis, and trust. It would then become more helpful to anchor such courses into online settings, which could develop teachers' content knowledge (i.e., AO) and technology knowledge (i.e., MALL listening). The outcomes of such courses would then become beneficial for various institutional stakeholders, especially students in that the major purpose of AO, according to Hoy et al. (2006) is to positively contribute to students' learning outcomes.

The present study had limitations that could be explored in future research. First, the focus on listening could become more transparent in the study by qualitatively exploring the teachers' perceptions. Thus, future researchers could use qualitative research methods to explore the teachers' AO perceptions and practices. Second, it would become quite helpful to explore the teachers' practices in online settings and how they relate to listening instruction and further to AO principles. These limitations could be rich grounds for future research. Such a focus on these and other limitations could better illuminate the connection between AO and MALL across various contexts. This way, knowledge about how language teachers view these two important constructs will be obtained that can help teachers and teacher educators better understand the professionalism of these teachers.

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Appendix A:

Interview guide:

1. How do you perceive the concept of academic optimism in the context of MALL-oriented listening instruction?
2. In your experience, how does academic optimism influence your motivation to integrate MALL tools in language teaching?
3. Can you share any specific instances where your optimistic attitude played a significant role in driving your motivation to incorporate MALL in your instructional practices?
4. How do you believe academic optimism contributes to creating a positive classroom environment for MALL-oriented listening activities?
5. What strategies do you employ to maintain an optimistic mindset when faced with challenges or setbacks in implementing MALL?
6. How do you think your optimistic attitude impacts your students' engagement and motivation during MALL-oriented listening tasks? Can you provide any examples?
7. In your opinion, what are the key benefits that students derive from being taught by a teacher who exhibits academic optimism in MALL instruction?
8. What pedagogical strategies do you find most effective in leveraging MALL tools to enhance students' engagement and motivation?
9. How do you align your MALL activities with the language learning objectives and proficiency goals? How does academic optimism support this alignment?
10. Can you share any examples of student success or positive outcomes that you attribute to your optimistic approach to MALL-oriented listening instruction?

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