

LINGO ZING-THE LANGUAGE LEARNING MOBILE APP: A REVIEW

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ABSTRACT

Knowledge of another language other than the first is now a universal phenomenon and is synonymous with prestige in social circles as it particularizes an individual from the rest of the community and can ensure acceleration on the professional front by providing more job opportunities. Language learning classes have boomed up as a very profitable business in the last decade or so and with the advent of expansion in technology, it's easily available through recent technologies such as MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) and language learning applications software (apps). There has been a corraliry among App developers to design the most efficient apps to facilitate consequential language learning by focusing on oral production and auditory reception to increase language learners' communicative competence. And imagine all these features are combined with the fun of reading a comic book that too audio enabled. Sounds fun and turned into a reality. Through the present paper, the investigator has tried to review a mobile application for language learning named LingoZing, a type of comic audiobook, which is one of a kind mobile application for learning a foreign language in a leisable fun way.

Keywords: language, MALL, technologies, language learning applications, LingoZing

1. Introduction:

Language can be regarded as the best invention of all time in human history, as it enhanced our chances of survival. Cleopatra knew nine languages to fulfill her strategic duties as a successful queen in ancient times. Spies in the Bond movies are often portrayed as polyglots. Language learning and acquisition have always been considered as a trait of excellence. Language is an important ingredient of our social organization. The stable communities are bound by language and written and spoken words bind us as individuals. The most agreed technique behind the evolution of language is not known but few linguists think that onomatopoeia (words like snap or boom that phonetically mimic the sounds they describe) may have been crucial in accelerating the process as humans have sought a way to communicate the natural sounds they heard. Whatever may have caused the origin of languages, one thing that we can all agree upon unanimously is that language learning is a very important aspect of our daily lives in general and professional lives in particular. And with the advent of technology language learning has become comparatively easier. One such revolutionary approach towards language learning has been the introduction of mobile technology. Especially in the post covid scenario, the education sector has changed dramatically, with the distinctive rise of e-learning, whereby teaching and learning are undertaken remotely and on digital platforms. The very large-scale use of smartphones and different portable, Wi-Fi-enabled gadgets have accelerated the traditional teaching and learning process. (Kukulska-Hulme, 2009). This enhanced usage of mobile devices has resulted in the availability of mobile applications for English language learning. With easy internet access, Language learners can download numerous applications for language learning. People embraced the suitability of mobile internet access as soon as it was offered and mobile app usage will only become more and more prominent with time. In January 2021, over half of all online traffic came

from mobile devices excluding tablets as the mobile user statistics show. Recent reports show that 91% of all internet users worldwide are mobile internet users and around 55% of all website views in January 2021 came from mobile devices (Source: Statista). Learning materials can be accessed easily due to the portability and accessibility of mobile devices. But the issue is that there are galaxies of different language applications to choose from and a learner can get easily confused about which is the best one to choose. Hence this paper reviews one such language-learning mobile application named LingoZing. The selection of the application was based on the personal suggestion of a well-known cognitive scientist and comic theorist Neil Cohn who thinks that the brain comprehends comics using similar neural mechanisms for both images and language and the investigator's empirical observation.

Stephen Krashen's Second Language Acquisition Theory: Comics in a Mobile Phone Justified

Stephen Krashen in his Input Hypothesis which is part of second language acquisition theory explains the important role of giving comprehensible input to the learners. It states that language learners improve in a language when they are given language input that is slightly more advanced than their current level. Language inputs are things that you hear (podcast, radio, conversations, etc) as well as things you read like books, articles, etc. Krashen is careful to specify that you cannot just read or listen to anything and improve your language, one has to read or listen to things one can understand. Krashen further suggests that input should not only be comprehensible but also compelling means it should be interesting to the learner. And what better way to arouse interest than a comic book with audio. Krashen argues that exposure to comprehensible input is important. But if the learner is not interested in that input, they won't pay attention to it. And attention is an essential component of the learning process. Hence a comic audiobook like LingoZing that is too available on a mobile device or portable notepads, fulfills all the criteria of being a good and fun language learning platform for students across age groups.

2. The Objectives :

1. To review the language learning mobile application based on the following categories: age appropriateness, user-friendliness, authentic language content, personalized learning, motivate learning interest, edutainment.
2. To aid the language learners with adequate information about the selected mobile application.

3.The Concept of M-Learning:

In the phrase, M-learning 'M' denotes mobile, which is any handheld, a transportable device like a smartphone or a tablet to obtain learning materials via mobile apps, social interaction, and online educational hubs. It is flexible allowing students access to education anywhere and anytime. Mobile learning refers to the implementation of mobile devices in various branches of study. The essential feature of mobile technology like information navigability and agility plays an important role in the enhancement of language learning and teaching (El-Hussein & Cronje,2010). The main characteristic of M-Learning is the discretion of the learner. The power of selection of pace, place, and time of language learning lies in the hands of the learner (Kukulska-Hulme,2012). Mobile learning can be defined as the internet-aided self-paced, accessible learning (anywhere, anytime) done on portable and personal devices like smartphones, personal digital assistants (PDA), or tablets. It can be categorized under the following categories:

- Mobility of technology
- Mobility of Learner
- Mobility of Learning (Ramya, G., & Madhumathi, P., 2016)

According to Hui Guo "Mobile learning increases the mobility of learners. With portable and personal mobile devices, learners could be engaged in more flexible, accessible and personalized learning practices without constraint on places". Mobile learning enhances the mobility of the learning process without time constraints.

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) :

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning can be considered as a sub-segment of both M-Learning and computer-assisted learning (CAL). Computer-assisted learning can be defined as the use of electronic devices /computers to aid learning or instructions to fulfill educational objectives. In neoteric times the widespread use of mobile devices led to the abbreviation MALL which "differs from CAL in its use of personal, portable devices that enable new ways of learning, emphasizing continuity or spontaneity of access across different contexts of use" (Kukulska-Hulme &Shields, 2008). Few research studies have suggested that CAL has some limitations like lack of in-depth communication, false observation, disturbed learning process, the burden of work, educators' lack of computer knowledge(Garrett, 2009; Golonka, Bowles, Frank, Richardson, & Freynik, 2012; Warschauer, 2004).

Kukulska-Humle(2009) proposed that these shortcomings of CAL can be overcome by MALL. The most noteworthy attributes of a mobile device are

- Transportability and agility
- Connectivity (personal and professional)
- Context awareness
- Idiosyncratic

The absence of these features on a desktop has made mobile learning more acceptable amongst the academic and learning communities.

Mobile Applications and Language Learning With the emergence of technology and its effect on almost all aspects of our lives, it is clear the education sector cannot be aloof from its influence. Consequently, technology and more specifically smartphone-assisted language learning. And the addition of the latest features on mobile phones has triggered the interest of many stakeholders of education for applying this new technology in learning. The iPhones, iPad, handheld gadgets are fuelling the mobile application zone (Godwin-Jones,2011) Mobile applications are the software applications downloaded from the mobile marketplaces (App store) such as Google Play Store, Apple Store(iPhone users), etc. There were 218 billion app downloads in 2020 and 184 billion apps are estimated to be downloaded by 2024 (Source: Statista). Mobile apps are software application which is intended to run on iPhones, tablets, and other mobile devices. Some of the apps are free to download and some others are paid. Mobile apps categories include gaming, entertainment, and education. (Ramya, G., & Madhumathi, P., 2016). Learning a new language always accelerates some social prestige maybe not but it's proven important throughout history, distinguishing an individual from the rest of the community while providing more job opportunities. Nowadays, language classes are easily available through the expansion of recent technologies such as MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) and language learning software applications (apps) both paid and free. There has been a lot of corralviry among App developers to design the most efficient apps to facilitate meaningful language learning by focusing on oral production and auditory reception to increase language learners' communicative competence. The current review intends to present a detailed description of the important features of the LingoZing app.

IV.Description:

To use the app learners must download it from Google Play/iTunes and install it on their Android/IOS devices. English speaking learners can choose from a list of 6 languages French, Spanish, Portuguese, Italian, German, and English. Speakers of other languages do not have many options. However, compared to similar language learning apps on the market, such as Duo lingo and Bussu there is a wide variety of options of language given to the learners to choose from. Under my Profile segment of the app, the option for parental control is given to ensure age appropriated content exposure. The learner is asked to register with a user name and other relevant details and enter his/her primary language and pick up the language to be learned. There are 4 categories in the app namely,

Level - Elementary, intermediate, upper-intermediate, and advanced

Age -The age categories are given as Under the age of 7;7 and older;13 and older

Genre -Variety of genres are given to choose from such as comedy, history, superhero, sci-fi, here and now, family, thriller.

Creator - Book details with a brief preview of each book are given along with the details of publishers, creator, genres, release date, number of pages, and characters.

Each page of the selected comic has clickable buttons at the bottom with special features like slowing down the speed of the audio for better understanding of the pronunciation followed by the clickable symbol of repeat, which can be used by the learner to listen to the audio again and again followed by the speaker option to enable the learner to record their voice in the language to be learned and this feature also has a reward. Lastly, each page has the option of language switch which enables the learner to switch between the primary and language selected for learning.

The most striking feature of the app is the polychromatic visuals along with the text which can be zoomed in and out and even each panel pops up differently surrounded by white light to highlight it, every time the learner clicks it. This gives a feel of the motion picture but with a controlled pace that eases the understanding of the learner.



Figure 1: The screenshot of the mobile application showcasing the categories of the app and a few options of the genres.

It must be noted that LingoZing does not provide any grammatical explanations. It only immerses the learner in the target language by offering reading and listening tasks along with the additional option of recording their voice and listening to it. To learn grammar learners must deduce the principles of grammar on their own and through trial and error.

Table 1: Evaluation Criteria

Criteria	Evaluation
Age appropriateness	The category of age and level clarifies the age-appropriateness of the app. The option of parental controls enables instructors access control over age-appropriate content and settings.
User-friendliness	The audio comic books are extremely user-friendly with the availability of clickable icons for repeating and slowing down each textual material given. The option of recording the audio enables the user to listen and understand the pronunciation better. The option of language switching too gives the users to listen to both languages simultaneously ensuring a better understanding and enriched communication skills.
Authentic language content	The language presented is mainly in the form of conversations (speech bubbles) among the characters which ease the understanding of the learner because the main objective of any language is communication.
Personalized learning	There exist a huge scope of personalized learning firstly, it being a mobile app hence learner can learn at his/her own pace. Secondly, the option of note-taking is given which helps in understanding.
Edutainment	It utilizes the powerful context of comics and the combination of compelling content and captivating game elements that gives extra marks on the edutainment factor.
Motivate learning	The element of reward is added in the app in the form of an onomatopoeic medal named LZGram for the users to keep them motivated to learn. The learner can test himself on any dialogue or text box in a comic by tapping the microphone icon and after processing the audio and testing against the benchmarks like correct pronunciation and intonation award is given which can be saved and shared with friends.

V.Evaluation

The application is a paid one hence only a few audio comic books are free to use. At the elementary level, the very famous Garfield comic book was analyzed thoroughly. The front page of the book has all interesting images of the characters along with the relevant audios. Each page has

clickable options as mentioned before and once the learner clicks the text the audio can be heard with proper pitch, intonations, and emotions associated with the character. In the initial phase, it appears to be an ordinary one but as the learner opens the comic and proceeds with each page, panels pop up like a 2D motion picture, and this aids in focusing on each frame keeping in mind the limited small screen of a mobile device.

By making the learning gamified, the selected app can keep the learners engrossed and less distracted by the process of learning. Once a learner is accustomed to the interesting visuals and activities of this extremely user-friendly app, they are bound to spend time on it when they are bored. This one-of-a-kind app, aims at making language learning more fun and exciting and the following X Factor features of the app can be enumerated:

1. **Audio Comics:** All the textual elements come with professionally recorded audio dialogue for an enhanced comic experience

2. **Definition of each term:** by tapping on any word, the learner can get a complete definition, enabling a complete expansion of vocabulary.

3. **Language Switch:** Each page has the clickable option of switching between the primary and language to be learned which is a great add-on for the enhanced learning of the selected language.

4. **Self-paced learning:** Another clickable option for slowing down the audio dialogue on each page helps in perfecting the pronunciation.

5. **Self-Evaluation:** learners can test themselves with the option of recording their voice and get awarded accordingly and this promotes motivation too.

6. **Note-taking:** Learners can take and save notes within the comic on their mobile devices and can study them later.

Despite all the good features of the app, it has a few drawbacks like the very limited language option which is only 5 that limits its usage. Another downside of the application is the lack of exercises for learners. More exercises could have been added to the app which could have enhanced the learners' interest and learning.

VI.Conclusion:

Gregg Roberts, Father of the Bilingual Immersion system in the US remarks that LingoZing is a perfect tool for language learning across all age groups as it can be used as a key literacy tool for young students in dual language and immersion education programs; The app utilizes learner's metacognitive abilities and cognitive skills to acquire a new language. "This methodology of literacy immersion developed by LingoZING! maximizes success for language learning as it is fun, gamified, and enables the learner to gravitate towards subjects and characters of their choosing."

LingoZing uses the magic of audio in comic book format to teach language to the learner. It gives the learner a perfect platform for self-study along with the fun of reading comics and that too for learning a language which in a classroom is not possible. The app provides learners with a non-theoretical and coherent way to learn a new language on their own. It is a user-friendly app that can be used by learners of different ages, interests, and cultures. One thing that sets LingoZing set apart from other language learning applications is its methodology: teaching its users a foreign language via fun conversations with polychromatic visuals. The usage of comic strips in teaching foreign languages is a highly effective method because it communicates different topics in a pleasurable way and multiple mediums to students. It also gives learners a platform to gravitate their center of attention on visual images to link the meaning-making process and provide a clearer mental image of the lesson wherein they can use a particular phrase or word that is being taught to them.

National Education Policy 2020, lays importance on multilingualism and art integrated classrooms. In the present educational system, there exists a huge possibility of inclusion of this app into the classrooms as part of daily curriculum practice for language learning as this app has the power of comic books along with the audio which leverages over the ordinary textbooks used in classrooms. As educators, we all know that language learning in a classroom can be a monotonous task that can prove fatal for students learning hence a software application like LingoZing can be a savior for the learners by creating a pleasurable fun learning experience inside and outside the class. Teachers can include the app as a fun activity to be given daily or weekly and later assessment too can be done using the same. This way a rich learning and teaching environment can be created.

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