

ANALYSIS AND EVALUATION OF DIGITAL LANGUAGE LEARNING APPLICATIONS

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Since the launch of Duolingo in 2011, we have seen a critical mass of users and hundreds of millions of language learners using their mobile phones to learn languages. While Thornbury (2017) speaks of a post-method era in language learning, a new generation of language learners have grown up who are no longer used to the traditional teacher-led grammar explanation lessons. On the contrary, they expect language learning processes to take place in the online space that is familiar and comfortable for them. This has held true especially since the onset of the Covid-19 pandemic. This phenomenon has been recognised by many developers and thousands of language learning apps have appeared on the market over the last decade. Each of these apps claims to be revolutionary, innovative and effective, yet relatively few empirical studies have been carried out to investigate their impact. In our presentation, we will point out the few empirical studies that have investigated the impact of language learning apps in the past ten years (e.g. Vesselinov & Grego, 2019; Suwandi, 2020; Jiang et al., 2020; Zamzani, 2019; Liya Astarilla, 2019). The aim of our research was to compare the most widely used language learning apps and provide an academic-technical evaluation. In our presentation, we will describe and evaluate the top ten most popular language learning apps: (1) Duolingo, (2) Busuu, (3) Babbel, (4) Rosetta Stone, (5) Memrise, (6) Mondly, (7) Rocket Languages, (8) Xeropan, (9) Pimsleur and (10) FluentU. The listing of these ten apps was based on three main criteria: literature, professional consultation with developers and the consultation with digital language teaching experts. All 10 apps were used and tried by an expert group of five language teachers over a period of one month. After one month, consultation was held with the five language teachers and a joint judgement was passed on the quality of the application on a scale of 1 to 10, based on five criteria that are essential for the development of a language learning app: (1) the validity of the Nation model (Nation, 2001), (2) the possibility to practice productive skills (speaking and writing), (3) the logic and clarity of the digital learning content structure, (4) the diversity of tasks and (5) the user experience (called UX in the marketing discipline). Based on these five criteria, we came to a joint decision and evaluated the apps together. The methodology and results of this will be presented in the. In addition, we also included the opinions of independent foreign experts in the evaluation. Overall, we found that Babbel, Xeropan and Pimsleur are currently the three most effective apps. Besides classroom implications, we also look at the future of the field of digital language learning.