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Comparison of Language Learning Applications

Various language learning services were reviewed as part of this study, based on experience of the authors and user feedback. The platforms were categorized in comparison to one another, that displayed their advantages and disadvantages. The application areas were determined for each piece of software. Graphic visualization of information was created for readers.

Keywords: innovation; self-education; learning methods; educational software; foreign languages.

Language learning is as popular as ever nowadays, owing to the vast variety of tools available on the World Wide Web. This fact begs the question: are all of the platforms equally viable? The purpose of this publication is to review and compare numerous applications and services that provide users with material necessary to study. At the time of writing of this work, several articles covering this topic had already been released. For example: «10 Of The Best Language Learning Apps For Every Learning Style» by Dave Johnson [1] or «The 6 Best Free Language Learning Apps of 2021» by Stacy Fisher [2]. However, such publishings usually focus on a small number of resources, thus not painting a complete picture of the language learning market. Therefore, this study also aims to contrast platforms that are hardly ever held up to each other in existing works. The services will be compared based on the following criteria: efficiency of learning method, user engagement, affordability, user-friendliness and the depth of learning.

The first application on the list is called Memrise. First and foremost, it offers a free plan, which lets users try out the program for themselves. Moving to details, above average amount of languages is available at different proficiency levels, allowing for personalized courses. The learning process itself is quite unusual, as the words and phrases are introduced to a student through a video, recorded by a native speaker. Moreover, there is a feature that permits creation of associative cards tied to words to aid in memorization. This results in a rather engaging and productive learning method. The last upsides are the wide availability of the service on different devices and operating systems and straight-forward user interface. Moving to shortcomings, the lessons are more oriented towards casual setting, resulting in reduction of quality of grammar. Tests include video recordings of short scenes, which tend to confuse begin-

ners with limited vocabulary and low level of language comprehension, proving to be a detriment. Finally, the largest part of the content is locked behind a paywall.

Next up is the HelloTalk. What strikes users the most about this platform is the secondary role of actual language courses. The main educational aspect is instead the direct, personal communication with the natives or people with good knowledge of language. To be more precise, the whole experience is very similar to one of a social network with addition of useful functions dealing with vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation and several others things into the messenger. Therefore, the platform usage is quite easy and comfortable, since there is no need to turn to third-party software. However, this application does restrict tools of a non-premium user, which proves to be a significant detriment to educational affair. Furthermore, having depleted free options for the day, student is left with basically a glorified social media platform, which is quite redundant. The previously mentioned additional courses are limited, as they play complementary part. As the final thought, the whole concept of learning through unrestricted dialogue with native speakers is somewhat inconsistent. Such conversations are a necessary language goal, but probably are too much for beginners.

The third review subject is Beelinguapp. This free application teaches languages through text and audio using the so-called «Side by Side reading» and «Karaoke reading» methods. The former splits the screen in half and displays both target language text and its translation for the comfortable experience. The latter plays voiceover while showing the part being read, like karaoke lyrics. Of course, it is always possible to turn off the screen and just enjoy the audiobook at peace. Interface is friendly enough for users in addition to fairly unique and quite effective language learning methods, allowing students to grasp complex grammar structures and to enrich their vocabulary. Although the software is free, subscription is necessary to access the majority of the content. Furthermore, there could be inconsistencies in translations due to the sheer amount of literary information. Lastly, the studying process may be hindered by performance issues.

Another application is QLango. The free version of the service restricts almost every useful feature like custom game modes, complete and unlimited statistics, unrestricted lesson repetition and others. In fact, it forces regular users to watch an annoying amount of advertisements. The service teaches students in a playful way with various tasks, which manages to keep users engaged for a long time. For example, choosing the correct answer, sentence building and translations exercises, all composed with different learning effects in mind. Still, the main goal of this method is to form a good vocabulary, while also maintaining some level of audio comprehension. However, there is

a concerning lack of attention to speaking and reading skills. In the end, it may be noted that technical realization is pretty underwhelming, making the studying process less than smooth.

The fifth application is RossetaStone. Its basic version allows users to study fundamentals of language and memorize some useful words and phrases, which would be quite helpful for the travelers. The premium one unlocks a large part of exercises and also personal educational plan. Nevertheless, that seems to be all the main differences between the variants, though the free content would not be enough to obtain exhaustive knowledge. The service learning method is simple: for every task, whether it is grammar, vocabulary or pronunciation training, it will show the picture tied to the given text. Moreover, it is possible to skip forward to any themed lesson. Finally, if students have some spare money, they can spend it on the extended course, which includes online sessions with native certified coaches. However, the software has some technical issues, especially with speech recognition.

Finally, the last contender is called Lingvist. The main feature that makes the service stand out is the ability to create custom mini-courses. That is a great point in favor of the engagement of the application, as users may augment their learning experience to fit their specific interests, mostly by choosing the topics that interest them the most. Therefore, the whole experience is as efficient and deep as one may want it to be. Expanding on the advantages, the learning exercises have a good degree of variation, keeping the student's attention and diversifying the skills. Moreover, the user interface is simplistic and not overloaded with dozens upon dozens of buttons, granting the ease of navigation. As for drawbacks, the software is not actually free, following the modern trend for subscription-based business model. Nevertheless, the 30-day trial period makes the experience accessible to everyone and allows users to decide whether or not they require such a learning tool.

Overall, every reviewed platform has shown some kind of specialization in its learning methods and focuses, so not one of them is directly superior over the other in that regard. Thus, all of the applications scored highly in learning efficiency. Beelinguapp and HelloTalk seemed a bit lacking in user engagement aspect and ranked lower than the others, but it may be attributed to the way those services teach – through not systematic practice. As for affordability, Memrise, Lingvist and RossetaStone can be categorized as basically premium services, as the free content is not sufficient, placing them at the bottom of the list. All the others make their subscriptions more a matter of comfort, than a progression cap, so they earned a better standing. User-friendliness as a whole is at a high level, as expected of commercial products, however RossetaStone, Qlango and Beelinguapp do suffer some technical issues, leading to a lower rank. Finally, Memrise, Beelinguapp and Qlango showed the lowest

level of depth of knowledge given to students because they leave out one language aspect or the other. All of the others make a great point of diversifying the skills of the student, earning the top position. Here is the summary of the rating represented in a table format. The «high level» means that the service has shown itself in a good way in a category while «low level» signifies that some problems exist in said department.

Table 1

The variety of applications and its usage

Application / Criteria	Efficiency of learning method	User engagement	Affordability	User-friendliness	Depth of learning
Memrise	High level	High level	Low level	High level	Low level
HelloTalk	High level	Low level	High level	High level	High level
Beelinguapp	High level	Low level	High level	Low level	Low level
Qlango	High level	High level	High level	Low level	Low level
RossetaStone	High level	High level	Low level	Low level	High level
Lingvist	High level	High level	Low level	High level	High level

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