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BRIDGING THE GAP BETWEEN LANGUAGE LEARNING, TECHNOLOGY &
COMMUNITY

THE IMPORTANCE AND VIABILITY OF A LANGUAGE LEARNING MOBILE
APPLICATION THAT WILL CONNECT USERS TO EACH OTHER BASED ON
LOCATION TO THE ENGLISH AS A SECOND LANGUAGE COMMUNITY

by

Parinaz Kassemi

A dissertation submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of MA in
Tesol.

Hamline University

Saint Paul, Minnesota

August 2021

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DEDICATION

To my friends and family for your never-ending support in all the endeavors I take on. I'd also like to thank my Capstone Committee for their valuable feedback and patience as I navigated a new area of study.

“Courage, hard work, self-mastery, and intelligent effort are all essential to a successful life”.

- Theodore Roosevelt

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Special thanks to Survey Swap for allowing me to use their users to gain valuable insight for the surveys in my research.

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CHAPTER ONE

Introduction

Introduction

A few years ago, I began utilizing an app on my iPad known as Duolingo in an effort to learn how to speak French. I had made wonderful progress on my language acquisition, but I knew it was time to take my education to the next level and begin speaking the language with others in my community. I knew that the best way to learn a language is by stepping into the country and completely immersing myself into the experience and the culture. Unfortunately, moving to France was not an option for me at the time, so I began brainstorming other ways to learn the language. I had joined a number of groups, but many of the group members were very advanced French speakers, which left me feeling intimidated and shy, keeping me quiet. I had considered taking classes in person, but they were expensive, and I didn't want to make the investment. I had also considered auditing college courses, but unfortunately the schedule didn't work well with me. I began to think to myself, "how can I give people the experience of speaking a new language without actually living in the country?" I imagined that there was no way I could be the only person who was in a situation like this. There had to be other people around me who were in the same position I was, just desperately waiting to make friends with other French speakers, but maybe not as proficient enough to attend a large group of very fluent French speakers. As I did some more reflecting and research on this question, I finally came up with an answer: I could create an app that would connect users with other community members. I had heard about online dating mobile

applications, and I wondered if it was possible to somehow combine that one-on-one experience, minus the dating part, and tie it in with language learning. That way, a user could actually write in their specific level of language knowledge, and match with other community members that they could become friends with and practice speaking a new language with that person. In my mind, this was a wonderful solution to all of my problems: I wouldn't have to worry about meeting up with group members who were much more proficient than I was, I wouldn't have to pay for classes, and I would be able to choose my schedule, in consideration to what my language learning partner's availability was. Added bonus, I would make a new friend who I could potentially speak French with for years.

So, the question behind my research is,

“Will a mobile application that invites users to connect with other community members be beneficial to language learning students?”

Rationale

I want to learn the value behind having a mobile app such as this, knowing first if community members would even be interested in such an app, and if so, would it be beneficial for language learners to immerse themselves into speaking another language. I have always been under the impression that the best way to learn a language is by getting involved in the community and speaking as much as possible, in an effort to work on the pronunciations that come with learning a new language. The topic of my research will dive deeper into this question to see if this is in fact the best way to learn

As I continued to grow on this journey of bringing this vision to fruition, I created a website for the app that I named Connect with Zaban. Zaban means 'language' in my native language of Farsi, so it implies that users are connecting with each other through language. I have not yet created this mobile application, but the way I would like for it to function is by inviting users to make an account which will consist of their name, age, gender, general location, and a password to ensure that their privacy is protected. Once their profile is set up, the user can then choose which language they want to learn and their proficiency level. The user can even personalize their profile, adding a profile photo, and writing a piece about themselves on their personal page.

After initial setup, the app will automatically connect them with a user that is nearby to them that matches their general demographics. The user will have the capability to go into the settings of the app and determine the preferences of who they want to meet with depending on gender, age and distance. Once the user has found a match, they will be able to communicate with each other through the chat feature. The chat feature will have both text and video capabilities, so they will not have to share any personal information (such as phone number/address) and still be able to communicate and set up a virtual session with their match. From that point on, if the user feels safe and comfortable, they may then exchange personal information, and begin a relationship in person or online if they prefer. Their account will be open as long as they would like it to be open, so if they choose to never exchange personal information and only communicate through the app, they are welcome to do so.

Aim

My hope is that this encourages people to get together with others one-on-one and be able to practice their language speaking skills in a context that is less intimidating than group hangouts. For the ESL student, I think this is a great opportunity, because it takes the pressure off of the student having to speak in front of the class. They are able to speak with another community member one-on-one and will not have to worry about the anxiety that comes with speaking in front of groups.

I am also hopeful that this will be beneficial for ESL teachers as well. It can sometimes be a challenge to get ESL learners to practice speaking when they are not in class, or maybe even if they have family members who all speak their native language. I believe this would be a great opportunity for ESL learners in situations such as this, because it encourages them to socialize with people who don't speak their native language. My hope is that this will give the teacher another opportunity to give homework to the student and can also provide inspiration and motivation for the student as well. I believe that Connect with Zaban could be a great tool for ESL teachers to use in conjunction with a learning plan. I also think this would be a great opportunity for online ESL teachers especially, to encourage their students to practice language outside of class time.

I have many friends and family who speak different languages, but unfortunately aren't exposed to everyday language speaking. This was also a big driving factor behind my idea of Connect with Zaban. It is a shame for someone to go through learning an entire language and eventually lose their skills because they are no longer exposed to the language. It is also very shocking how quickly a person does lose their language if they

are not constantly practicing and keeping up with it. I am hoping that through my research and interviews, I can see if my friends, family & colleagues would be open to using an app such as Connect with Zaban in an effort to continue speaking & practicing their language skills. Additionally, I hope that Connect with Zaban will inspire close connections with community members and encourage lifelong friendships so users will always be able to keep up with their language skills.

One of the most important topics I needed to research when coming up with this idea was definitely what other mobile apps were accessible to users. In the Literature Review, I have provided extensive information on many of the other mobile apps that are popular for language learners, as well as many technologies that teachers like to use for students as well. Throughout this research, I have found that there are many language apps that are very useful when it comes to teaching students how to speak another language that would be a wonderful supplement to any language learning plan. However, from my findings, there are no other mobile apps that are targeted towards connecting language learners to other language learners within a particular community. There are certainly programs that will connect tutors with students, but I have no findings of such a laid back, friendly way of connecting and using language which is why I believe this app would be very valuable to language learners and ESL teachers as well.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed the reasoning behind the creation of the app as well as given a little background information on the app, in addition to the rationale behind the app and what the aim is. As we move into the literature review, I will be

diving into some more details, providing background information on what a mobile application is, why they are important, how fast they are growing, and a little bit of background on how they are created. Additionally, I will discuss the many language learning apps that are available to language learners. I will discuss their benefits and setbacks, and how they are different from Connect with Zaban. Then I will talk about the significance of technology to the language learning community, as well as how teachers feel about using some of these technologies, or even promoting the use of them. Finally, I will discuss the predicted future of technology in the language learning world.

CHAPTER TWO

Literature Review

Introduction

As society continues to transition into a period of heavy online learning, it is important to analyze both the benefits and setbacks of this kind of learning. With this period of heavy growth and transition, I ask, *Will a mobile application that invites users to connect with other community members be beneficial to language learning students?* I, personally, believe that while being able to learn online is a wonderful resource, language is something that needs to be learned in community. It is rather difficult to properly learn a language if a learner is not constantly utilizing their education. The best way for students to effectively get a well-rounded language education, therefore, is by finding

others in their community that will encourage and motivate them to continue to practice their skills in addition to their education.

Other Mobile Applications

I have done extensive research in the realm of mobile applications for language learning which I will discuss in the following pages, and none of the applications add the element of community in the way that I felt fitting. This is why I have created my own mobile application called Connect with Zaban. With Connect with Zaban, users are able to plug-in their language learning levels and connect with other nearby community members who are at a similar level as them. The great thing about connecting users who are nearby is that the learner is able to meet up with this person in their community to actually go out and speak with them. I believe that adding this element keeps language learning more motivating and engages the user even further, forcing them to speak, which sometimes can be uncomfortable and cause anxiety for the student, making them keep quiet and therefore, not working on important things like pronunciation. Because both of the speakers will be paired together at similar language learning, I believe this will take out the element of shy-ness because both of the learners may not be as experienced.

What is a mobile app?

A mobile application, also known as a mobile app, is an application used on a smartphone, tablet or computer. What makes it different from a standard computer software system is that it is a lot simpler and doesn't provide multi-functionality. A mobile app is typically limited to a particular function such as a game. An app takes the

complexity of a software or website and presents it in a way that's easier to navigate for the user. However, as we have progressed with technology, mobile apps have become much more sophisticated than they once were, allowing creators to add in many more functions to set their app apart from others on the app market. Typically, apps are located on either the Apple App Store or the Google Play Store. The Apple App Store is the marketplace for apps for users who use Apple products such as the iPhone, iPad, or MacBook. The Google Play Store is the marketplace for users who use the Android mobile system which is found on the Samsung or Google Phone. Generally, if it is not produced by Apple, the device uses the Google Play Store.

In an article by Karch (2010), we get a deeper understanding of what defines a mobile app. There are three main types of apps (which is short for application): desktop, mobile, and web. Desktop apps are usually much fuller than mobile apps and consist of all the features of a program, whereas the mobile equivalent is a simpler and easier-to-use version. This makes sense when you consider that most desktop and web apps are built to be used with a mouse and keyboard along with a large display, but mobile apps are accessed with a finger or stylus on a small screen. Web apps might be full of features too, but they have to leverage the capabilities of the internet connection and web browser program, so while some are heavy-duty and can perform well like mobile or desktop programs, most web apps are lightweight for a reason. If an app is a mix between a web app and a desktop app, it might be called a hybrid app. These are apps that have an offline desktop interface and direct access to hardware and other connected devices, but also an always-on connection to the internet for quick updates and access to internet resources. An example is Microsoft Word. It's available for computers in its most

advanced form but also on the web, by subscription, and via a mobile app. You can also get to your Gmail messages through the official Gmail.com website and Gmail mobile app, but there isn't a desktop program from Google that lets you access your mail. In this case, Gmail is both a mobile and web app but not a desktop app. You can add it or remove it as desired. In the context of mobile apps, almost every platform has a repository where its users can download both free and paid apps. These are normally accessible through the device itself or a website so that the app can be queued up for download the next time the user is on the device. For example, the Google Play Store and Amazon's Amazon App Store are two places where Android users can download mobile apps. iPhones, iPod Touch devices, and iPads can get apps through the App Store, straight from their devices. I thought this information would be relevant and helpful to explain a bit of background with what a mobile app is and what makes it so useful and unique in technology. I think it's important to give a bit of background information on apps in general in order to dive into my specific app with more clarity.

An article by Mroczkowska (2020), defines the basics of what a mobile application is and why it is useful to users. "A mobile application (also called a mobile app) is a type of application designed to run on a mobile device, which can be a smartphone or tablet computer. Even if apps are usually small software units with limited function, they still manage to provide users with quality services and experiences." This article focuses a lot on what makes a mobile app unique to a computer software system. The reason an app is unique is because of the simplicity that it has compared to the complicated systems of a software. Because of this, there are a number of apps on the market because there are many people who are able to participate in the creation of an

app. In addition to the ease of creating an app, there is also the ability to easily incorporate appealing graphic design into the app as well compared to software systems. A key term that I didn't know about is a Native app. These are apps that are built for a single mobile operating system. This means that the app is exclusive to that particular software, so it cannot be downloaded on a different software system. An example of this would be Apple Maps. Apple Maps is a Native App on the iPhone, but an Android user would not be able to download this app. To build, support, and maintain an app for Android and iOS you need two development teams which would not be very cost effective. The article also talks about Web Apps which are software applications that work on mobile devices. The article also talks about some stats and I want to highlight some important ones. The average mobile app user in the US has over 100 apps installed on their device. 79% of users will abandon a digital product after only one day of use. Mobile apps today account for more than 57% of all digital media usage. By 2021, almost 7 billion people worldwide will be using mobile devices. By 2022, the mobile app downloads number or year will reach 258 million. In 2017 this number was 168 million. App store consumer spending will increase by 92% by 2022 reaching \$157 billion. The article also notes the three main ways to build a mobile app. First, you can build an in-house development team. Second, you can hire specialized software development agencies or third you can rely on the expertise of freelancers. The first and second option could become very expensive due to software licenses, etc....The most cost-effective option would be to hire a freelancer, which certainly comes with its own problems. This was very similar to the "What is A Mobile App?" article that I discussed above, but I felt that the numbers were very valuable, and that it actually spoke to oppose apps and their

value quite a bit. While App spending is certainly projected to increase quite a lot by 2022, I think this article really brings about a good point to consider which is that an app's life isn't always a very long one. I think this really reminded me that Connect with Zaban will have to always be changing and growing to keep up with this ever-changing app market.

During the creation of a mobile application, developers design their app for both apple and play store compatibility. There are many different types of apps on the market including, but not limited to, gaming apps, business or productivity apps, education apps, lifestyle apps, m-commerce apps, entertainment apps, utility apps, and travel apps. Some are free to the user from the marketplace, while others require a purchase before download. Many times, the app will allow for a free trial for the user to experience the app before purchasing. There are also times when certain features of an app are free, but there is the option to pay for an upgraded version with better features or purchasing an ad free experience from an app as well (Mroczkowska, 2020).

What other language apps are available?

There are many language apps that are currently on the market. Most notably, Duolingo is very popular with over 300 million users. Duolingo has taken the language education market by storm for many reasons. It has a very large range of languages it offers users to learn, 38 to be exact. Another notable reason Duolingo is so popular is because of the way it presents its courses, dividing lessons up into small sections that can be done in as little as five minutes. It's the perfect way to encourage people to learn a new language as conveniently and time effectively as possible. They also offer their

courses for free until the user makes a certain number of mistakes. Once a user makes too many mistakes, they can no longer use the app until the following day unless they purchase the unlimited version, which is also ad free. This is a huge incentive for users who are more serious about their language learning, but also allows flexibility for the users who are still getting familiar with the app. Duolingo also encourages a streak system for users, meaning, if they practice a certain amount of minutes per day, they can keep their streak going. Once they skip a day, they lose their streak, and miss out on the awards which are usually given as virtual badges. In order to keep users active and ensure that they continue on their streak, Duolingo sends push notifications to the user's phone or tablet, reminding them to continue using the app.

Another very popular app for language learning is Babbel. Babbel is very similar to Duolingo, but from user reviews, it seems that the information is presented in a more educational way, focusing a lot less on rewards and quick lessons. Some other notable language apps to mention: Mondly, Tandem, Memrise, Busuu, and many others (Hill & Beaton, 2020).

Some apps are better for learning a particular language than others. When learning a different alphabet than what one is familiar with, (languages such as Arabic, Japanese, etc....) apps such as Memrise (ranked #1) and LinguaLift (ranked #2) were more helpful than others because of their use of photos and memes specifically for Memrise. Also, it is helpful to learn which apps are more for the serious learner and which are more for a casual learner and how these apps differ from each other. LinguaLift is for a more serious learner because they have a customizable study plan, where Duolingo is for the more casual learner. LinguaLift also includes all languages

when signing up for a subscription, while others do not have that feature. One app I was able to learn about that I was very curious about is HelloTalk. HelloTalk allows users to actually speak with others through a chat feature, which is very similar to Connect with Zaban. By having conversations with other speakers, it starts to become like a mini tutoring session. HelloTalk however doesn't allow the opportunity of meeting those users in person. This research was very relevant to me and my study because it proves that even the highest ranked language learning apps do not provide users with the ability to connect with another language speaker live. While these are great apps that will help users as they are learning a new language by keeping them motivated and continuing their education, none of the 11 apps listed will help the user get the 1-on-1 experience that Connect With Zaban could give them with another community member who speaks the same language *10 Best Language Learning Apps (2020)*.

In an article by Hill (2020), we have another list of popular language learning apps in 2020. They were ranked as follows: "Duolingo," "Mondly," "Babbel," "Tandem," "Memrise," "Busuu." It is unclear if these are ranked in order, but very similar to another article that I had listed above. I wanted to be sure to add multiple up to date sources on what the most popular apps are for language learning communities at the moment, and they seem to be very consistent. This is valuable to my topic because it reiterates the fact that there still isn't another app that is getting a lot of attention in the language learning community that has the same value as Connect with Zaban, so it continues to prove the necessity of adding this app to the language learning community.

According to an article by Eric Ravenscraft, there are many benefits to educating yourself through an app such as Duolingo, Babbel, etc... But these apps are limited to

understanding basic phrases. The author explains that it is impossible to develop fluency through these apps alone. He explains a C2 speaker as the highest level of speaker fluency and lists the expectations of this level as a learner who is able to “Understand with ease virtually everything heard or read.” Ravenscraft explains how these language apps cannot get you “anywhere close” to a level C2 speaker because the apps don’t show you how to have complex conversations about specific areas of your expertise and through education on an app, you will not be communicating with another person. He assumes that due to this, a speaker will more than likely never get to a level B2 through app education alone. He also explains how grammar is not something that is touched on very heavily in language learning apps. There are also “unspoken aspects” that a student will not understand through an app alone. He gives the example of Japanese and how there are distinct levels of formality and politeness that should be used in different situations. He suggests that because of all these factors, in order to truly learn a new language, a language learning app should only be a starting point. After making it through a language learning app such as Duolingo, he suggests upgrading to an in-person class or finding a native speaker to actively practice with (Ravenscraft, 2019).

Significance

An article by Mullamaa (2010), discusses how e-learning has benefited students, especially with motivation and group learning, on terminology development of the English language. It's really amazing to read about how e-learning has continued to keep students motivated and engaged as they continue to learn a new language. This article was beneficial to my research because it continues to reiterate the benefits of apps for

student success in language learning through keeping them constantly engaged and motivated which continues helping them with their growth and hopefully pronunciation as they keep learning.

In a report by Fernandez (2007) we learn about the benefits of language learning specific to Australian learners. The article talks about the benefits that EU students have in knowing multiple languages and argues that Australian students will be stronger learners if they follow the same principles. The article uses studies of bilingual students specifically in Canada who have exposure to French but less exposure to English compared to their peers who have actually outperformed their peers in English skills. The claim is that this is due to knowing another language in general. The study focuses on researching if the bilingual opportunity was offered to children, if that would help with reading acquisition for these students. A study was done for two groups of 1st grade children. The first group was in a part-time Italian program learning one-hour per week and the second was not exposed to a second language at all. The students were all taken from comparable communities and socio-economic backgrounds. The study concludes that the bilingual children performed better than the monolingual children. This research is beneficial to my thesis because it continues to show the versatility of Connect with Zaban. Due to the benefits of learning a second language, educators are clearly noticing these bilingual student achievements, and therefore, we are seeing an increase of educators encouraging second language learning even in the regular school system. This is helpful to my research, because the educators could potentially encourage students to use Connect with Zaban to pair up with maybe a tutor or someone who has a bit more language experience to help the students. I am not entirely sure of the logistics behind

this and will certainly have to give it a bit more thought, but as the need for language learning continues to grow, it is possible for Connect with Zaban to be more flexible to include many different language learners in many different contexts.

In an article by Gangaiamaran (2017) we learn about Mobile Assisted Language Learning (MALL), focusing on the classification of mobile apps based on primary, secondary and tertiary learners. Mobile learning can be divided into "mobility of technology," "mobility of learner," and "mobility of learning." Mobility of technology refers to mobile devices with Wi-Fi capacities and Wireless Application Protocol (WAP) that deliver information and learning materials through the internet. 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. For the sake of my research, I will focus on the section for tertiary learners which include college students and adults' groups of learners. According to the relevant research, Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) can not only enhance students' English ability but also increase students' learning motivation. Seemingly, it is helpful and efficient for college students using mobile devices to learn English by themselves. The rapid development of app technologies has made it so these English learning apps have the capability to integrate different media, for example, text, picture, animation, audio and video can be integrated in order to create a multimedia instructional material, as well as prompt students' interest in studying. There are a lot of apps referring to learning English for college students who have easy access to these resources and materials. But the reality is that the App market is like a jungle. There is too much software for college students to choose and use. Obviously, there is a lack of

recommendations about relevant apps and suggestions about how effectively to use them to learn English. In a study by Ornprapat and Wiwat in 2015, they chose 80 college students to introduce M-learning into their vocabulary acquisition. They divided the first-year students into two groups (control and experimental group) which had 40 students each. The experimental group indulged in various exercises given to them on the basis of vocabulary acquisition whereas the control group performed paper-based exercises. "The mean score of the experimental group ($M = 33.25$, $SD = 5.67$) significantly varied from the control group ($M = 29.70$, $SD = 5.57$). This difference in the score proves the positive result in the development of vocabulary among the students in the experimental group. According to Huang and Sun, "listening exercises are the first step for English language learning". They focused on the listening skill development in mobile learning background by providing repeated exercises on listening. The finding suggests that the undergraduates are willing to use apps to learn English with a self-regulated learning approach instead of a traditional learning approach."

They also analyzed which online resource is better for the students to improve their speaking, reading and listening skills. The primary data were gathered from the interviews and experiments conducted by the authors. Out of five interviewees three of them considered that online resources were very helpful, and they were willing to do it. The tertiary learners generally include the students at the college level for whom technology is nothing new. They know how to handle these tools by themselves since it has become a part of their daily activity. They interact with others especially through their Smartphones which are portable for them to carry anywhere with them. They may not face any difficulty in their exposure to the new method of learning which has

incorporated mobile technology. The aforementioned studies have proved that M-Learning can enhance language learning among tertiary learners. The article goes on to list many helpful apps and online resources for tertiary users which I will list: "Sounds Right," "WordBook XL -- English Dictionary & Thesaurus for iPad," "Speech Tutor," "English Podcast for Learners," "Voxy," English Listening and Speaking," "Exam Vocabulary Builder," "Learn English with busuu.com!," "Sentence Builder for iPad," "Learn English, Speak English - Conversation Course." The content from this article was incredibly helpful and relevant to my research. It helped me understand many other valuable apps that may be helpful, but it really reiterated the importance of mobile apps for language learners, especially in the Adult ESL or college setting. I feel very strongly after reading this article, that there would be a wonderful place for Connect with Zaban to thrive in the ESL world and be a huge success for many language learners.

In an article by Al-Zahrani (2015), we learned about different possibilities on how we can integrate mobile technologies in language learning, to provide students with additional language learning activities to support traditional classroom activities, as well as exploring the role of collaboration among English language learners' listening and speaking skills in MALL environments along with how mobile applications could be used in language learning classrooms in addition to course activities that go beyond face-to-face classroom interactions. The study aims to view English learners who are studying English as a second or foreign language. "The participants in this study were ten students that study English at a language learning institute at a Mid-Western university. A WhatsApp group, MALL environment, was designed to include the participants in the study. The data collection methods were interview, survey, WhatsApp group chat log and

observation. This qualitative case study research is motivated by two research questions: (1) how mobile devices, such as smartphones, are used for learning English? and (2) what elements of the mobile-assisted language learning environment, if any, were identified as being most useful or distracting in enhancing listening and speaking skills?”

The research shows that in addition to benefits and advantages to smartphone usage for language learning, there are also many drawbacks and obstacles to using smartphones in the efforts to enhance language learning skills, mainly listening and speaking. Some of these drawbacks include small screen size, limited presentation of graphics, and dependence on networks that may not always provide very high transmission capacity and may interfere with student learning by being disruptive by losing connection. However, mobile devices can also be very effective tools for language learning in education.

Mobile applications also allow learners to learn wherever they are personally located and so that the learning is relevant to them. Learners also have the ability to be in complete control of their learning process, determining their speed and going at their own pace, which can be very constructive for a motivated student. “One central part of mobile learning that cannot be overlooked is learner-learner interaction across multiple contexts. The three areas that the researcher plans to address in his future study are technology integration, student and teacher perceptions of mobile technology integration, and MALL. Therefore, the literature shows that contextual knowledge can play a role in collaborative learning.”

In an article by Hani (2014) a group of students in Jordan were surveyed on how beneficial they felt that computer-assisted language learning was for them. One piece of information I found valuable in this article is that it did discuss many of the repercussions and hesitance that educators may have towards technology. "There may be a de facto consensus that exists among most methodologists that the computer can only be a teaching tool and may never replace the teacher. However, utilizing the computer requires establishing effective instructional programs. It is believed that the lack of efficient and authentic programs is frequently cited by teachers as a reason for their reluctance to incorporate computer-based learning techniques in their own classroom practice. The researcher displays certain skepticism in teachers' inclination or ability to improve teaching. Consequently, the computer may be considered one of the visual aids that can be used to enhance students' learning and achievement in English." It is worth noting that there may be a long tradition of using visual aids such as videos, projectors and language labs in the classroom to supplement and amplify teaching abilities and the computer can be deemed as the latest addition to this range of tools. "The prominence of the computer makes it essential to acquire basic computer skills other than computer programming. In order to use computers for teaching, there are important apparatus that must exist in the classroom. Hardware and software are considered the most indispensable. The supply of hardware and software to schools is now sufficient for educational needs." I certainly need to keep in mind that the reality of the world is that many users do not have access to these technologies, so that is something that I will continue to consider.

An article by Koba (2000), discusses the importance of community language learning in order to ease student's language learning anxieties. According to this article, many students really feel a sense of anxiety having to speak another language in front of their classmates and fear being laughed at for miscommunication. "Community Language Learning appears different from traditional language learning in many ways. One of the most significant issues is that it has many techniques to reduce anxiety. First, the form of the class, that is, the conversation circle itself, provides security. The desirable size of the conversation circle is less than ten. Second, understanding between the teacher and learners produces a sense of security, which reduces anxiety. Finally, a sense of security is woven into each activity of a typical CLL cycle." I felt that this article was valuable to my research because it shows the value that one on one language speaking can have on a student's classroom participation. If students are feeling high levels of anxiety having to speak in a class, then certainly the teacher should be encouraging other methods for the student to practice speaking and pronunciation. Of course, Community Language Learning can be one of those ways--encouraging students to get into small groups but Connect with Zaban could also be a great opportunity to ease the anxiety of students, while still speaking and practicing the language.

An article by Loucky (2007), studies how a group of Chinese students benefited from having access to online dictionaries on their computer/phone. I did find a little value in knowing that this dictionary use continues to encourage students to spend more time on their phone, utilizing apps and technology in the language learning setting. I think it could be a great gateway for Japanese students to break into technology even further with language learning, which I am sure that they have already done.

Openness to Technology in Education

In an article by Camilleri, we see how educators feel about adding technology, most notably mobile applications, into their classroom. The article discusses both the advantages and disadvantages of doing so. The premise of the article is the methodology of the 'technology acceptance model.' The authors stressed the importance of teachers being able to feel comfortable with technology as we continue to become more accustomed to it as a society, because it is such a huge part of life for most/nearly all young people. Children spend many hours on their phone/tablet/computer, and as they continue to grow on their level of technology, it is important for teachers to be able to keep up with that in an effort to keep students motivated and stay up to date on the latest trends. In fact, the article shows that based on a teacher's personal perception of mobile learning, the student could fall behind immensely if they are not introduced to a technological friendly method of education. Teachers were asked to participate in a survey study to find out their level of acceptance to technology in education. They were asked to rank on a scale of 1-5 their feelings towards accepting technology in education with 1 being strongly disagree and 5 being strongly agreeing. The mean score was 4.05, indicating that many teachers felt very accepting of inviting new technology in the form of mobile apps into their educational settings. This is relevant to my research because it proves that an app like Connect with Zaban would continue to be encouraged by educators, since they do understand the value of technology, especially with younger students (2017).

An article by Steel (2012), follows 134 students as they use mobile apps to increase their language learning while they are not in the classroom. This article also focuses on how busy students can be now and how much language learning apps can benefit them as they try to juggle all of their social obligations and activities while also continuing to educate themselves outside of school. The article really focuses on the university students having these apps as a way to be productive and also talks about how it encourages discipline. A study was also done to see what languages people use language learning apps to learn. The result was mostly French, Japanese and Spanish, with German and Chinese next. This was found from an online study with 2,114 language students. The students were also asked to talk about their top learning methods. 56% of students said they used mobile apps in addition to their learning at school and 23% ranked mobile applications as their top three technologies. The most profound results that the students discussed was that mobile apps were very helpful in addition to their university learning because of the opportunity to carry it around with them. The students were able to utilize various moments when they had some free time to practice their language because of the convenience of the mobile app.

Future of Mobile Apps

In an article by Goldwin-Jones (2011), we see how far the language learning classroom has come in the last twenty years, paying special attention to the use of iPads in recent years, especially regarding language learning apps. It also talks about how the apps are developed. There is a lot of technical talk in this article describing app development using HTML and CSS to enhance Web display which I will not dive to

deeply into due to a very beginner understanding of app development/coding and a lack of relevance to proving the value of my specific mobile app to the ESL community, however, I did feel that this article was necessary and helpful to gain a better understanding of some of the logistics that go on behind the scenes of app development as well as focusing on the rapid growth of technology in such a short amount of time showing just how quickly apps are continuing to be produced at rates that we can't even imagine. Pretty soon, there will be such a saturated market. This proves that Connect with Zaban is something that could truly stick around, as it is certainly the right time to be developing and sending out an app such as this into the app store for users to utilize and could really make a large impact in the ESL community for both students and teachers. The article also gets into the details of the App store and the Android store, claiming that Android apps will soon surpass those for Apple devices. This shows the value of creating an app that is compatible with both the App Store and the Play Store.

In an article by Ally & Prieto-Blazquez (2014), we get a deeper understanding of how the future may look with using both technologies, and more specifically, mobile applications in education. The article discusses benefits to both students and educators and what we can look for in the future of education, most specifically for higher education. As technology continues to change and grow, I believe it is very important for teachers to begin utilizing and keeping up to date on various technologies that help students learn in different ways; enriching their overall learning experience and in-turn becoming better language learners. This article is valuable to my research because it proves that even back in 2014, mobile applications in education were still a buzz topic, so it is absolutely relevant to the language learning community. I believe it could be a huge

advantage to teachers as well, because with an app like Connect with Zaban, teachers will be able to encourage students to continue practicing their speaking even outside of the classroom in an enjoyable way and can continue the language growth of that student to perform better in the future and learn the language quicker and more effectively.

The fact of the matter is that technology is changing very quickly and it is while it is very important for teachers to stay up to date with these new changes to properly utilize new technologies, it is also important that we don't lose the aspect of community with language learning, as it is one of the most important parts of learning a language. If a student does not have the ability to practice their speech outside of the classroom, it will be very difficult for them to practice proper pronunciation, providing even further setbacks in their future. As Coronavirus has come along and increased technology use to levels that we have never seen as well, we still need to put a very heavy emphasis on encouraging students to find people they can speak with in real life.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed what a mobile app is, what other language learning apps there are, and what the significance of this language learning app could be to the ESL community. I've also brushed on how receptive and open teachers have been to language learning apps in the past and what needs, if any, there are for teachers to incorporate an app such as Connect with Zaban to their classroom activities. In the following chapter, I will discuss the methodology behind the need for an app like this.

CHAPTER THREE

Methods

Introduction

Connect with Zaban will be a mobile application to connect users to other community members who want to learn or continue to learn the same language. In this chapter, I will walk you through how exactly the app will work, the intended audience for the app, how we will measure app success, and a thorough explanation of the research methods I have decided to use in order to answer my research question: *Will a mobile application that enables users to connect with other community members be beneficial to language learning students?* In the research and tools section, I will discuss the research paradigm I have chosen and the details of the study I will conduct, including participants and sample interview questions. This study will help in determining the potential use and benefits of the application being developed.

The Application's Intended Audience

This app can only work for users who have access to mobile devices that are connected to the internet and can access the Google Play Store or Apple App Store. Due to this, we expect that our main target audience will be an age group of 18-50, most notably college-age students or young adults. Due to the nature of the app being

technologically forward, this is the group we project to target. However, we are certainly not limited to this specific age group.

I also envision that this app will be best fit for high school/college students who are visiting as foreign exchange students, or young adults who have moved to the United States for work or college. What I hope is that this app can serve as a tool for ESL teachers to recommend to their students as a way to continue their education outside of the classroom.

Application Security

Another topic I wanted to discuss about the app is security. I spoke a little about how to keep the community safe from catfishing. I certainly want users to feel confident that their information will be safe and that we will not share their information with any other users. The app will have a username and password for each of the members that will be connected to their phone number and email address. They will be sent a verification code to their phone number or email to ensure that they are the only ones with access to their personal information. To keep the identity of the users safe, we will not release last names of any of the users. The only information that will be seen to other users is the person's name, age, profile photo, description (whatever they choose to write), languages spoken and fluency of each of these languages.

Since the app is based on location, users will have a general idea of where other users are located, because they are in a certain radius of each other. The location radar will detect users up to 100 miles away from each other, but no exact location will be

shared with other users. In order for the app to work, however, the user will have to share their location with the app.

As far as safety between members, Connect with Zaban will have specific rules that cannot be broken. If these rules are broken (listed below), that could lead to the suspension of an account. We will encourage users to block any users who are not following the guidelines, and we will review any users who have been blocked to determine whether or not we should terminate their account. Once a user connects with another user, they are able to chat with each other through the chat feature within the app.

We will advise users not to share any information that they don't feel comfortable sharing. As an app, I believe all we can do is provide users with suggestions on how to maintain their safety and make users aware of what our guidelines are—the rest is at the user's discretion. For any users who do not follow the guidelines listed below, they will receive a warning. If they choose to ignore the warning, they will lose their account.

The guidelines that we will have are listed below and are based on the United States Department of Health and Human Services' Research-based web design & usability guidelines:

- Upload only your own photo
- Respect all users
- Don't pretend you're someone you're not
- Don't do anything illegal on the site
- No soliciting
- No users under 18 -- 18+ only
- Photo Guidelines:
 - No photos of children
 - No photos in swimwear/little to no clothing
 - No pornographic material
 - Face must be clearly visible in all photos
 - No graphic hunting photos
 - No guns

The target audience for the website is anyone who is hoping to get access to *Connect with Zaban*. The overall outcome of the website is to create an account for any user who wants to be part of the app.

Measuring Application Success

Connect with Zaban is an app in the making. Unfortunately, due to the pandemic COVID-19, all development has been postponed until further notice. Due to the nature of the app, inviting community users to connect with each other in person, beta testing will not be held at this time.

Once the app is developed, there are two main points to measuring app success: reach and profit. I hope for Connect with Zaban to be a nationally used app and for it to reach the entire nation of members who want to learn or continue learning a language with other community members. Because the app doesn't actually provide the user with education on a language but matches them with others who already know a language, we are able to provide multiple languages with very little work on our part. We only need to have one user who is interested in a particular language, and we may offer that language to our users. There is really no limit on how many languages we can offer. The app will start testing in the Minneapolis area, and if it does well here, we will launch the app on the app store for it to be used nationwide.

Additionally, I'd like to provide some sort of a subscription service for the user in order for Connect with Zaban to make a profit. I would provide each individual user with a 2-week free trial where they are able to test out all of the features for free. After that, they will be charged \$20 every 3 months if they'd like to continue. I would also like to

offer a group package specifically for ESL teachers, or schools which would be a yearly payment of \$300 with unlimited use for all of their students.

To answer the question, “*Will a mobile application that invites users to connect with other community members be beneficial to language learning students?*” I have conducted a study, which I will discuss in more detail below, that will help guide me to answer my thesis question. In order to better understand the impact and need that a community language mobile application could have on a community, I have formulated a number of interview questions that I will ask six people to answer.

In the remainder of this chapter, I will first discuss two major points related to a thorough understanding of the value of another language. I will follow this with a discussion on the methodology behind the interviews I have conducted and the rationale behind the questions I have come up with.

My research paradigm selected is mixed methods which is defined as a middle area between quantitative and qualitative research according to an article by Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004). This is due to the fact that I am both interviewing a group of six individuals which counts as qualitative research, but additionally am collecting quantitative data from each of these individuals.

In order to answer my thesis question, there are two main questions that need to be addressed.

1. Do community members perceive an advantage to speaking with other community members that cannot be fulfilled through everyday language education on an app or in class? Earlier, I had analyzed the research from Ravenscraft and how it is important for learners to use different resources

apart from only online learning in order to fully learn a language (i.e., meeting in person). This question seeks to find how community members specifically view their own perceived advantages to speaking in person, in addition to other methods of learning.

2. How willing are community members to engage in meeting with others for the purpose of language acquisition?

Question 1

Research by Ravenscraft and Ally & Prieto-Blazquez (2014) suggest that there may be clear advantages to speaking with other community members that cannot be fulfilled through everyday language learning education. I wanted to see what the perception is of community members and how likely they are to use Connect with Zaban as an alternate method of language learning to get that well-rounded education that was suggested by Ravenscraft. Let us now move on to the second topic: How willing are community members to engage in meeting with others for the purpose of language acquisition?

Question 2

When formulating the questions, I wanted to collect data on app/digital comfortability so I could better understand the demographic my app would most be targeted towards. This will help me in the future when I begin marketing the app. It also gives me an opportunity to think about how I can make the idea more friendly for people who don't feel as comfortable navigating the app/play store and prefer using a computer.

Research Methods

The way I was able to gather information was through a Google Survey that I conducted and then shared out to a website called SurveySwap, where I was able to specifically tailor each of my participants and their specific experiences (age, gender, etc.). I was able to post my Google Survey onto the SurveySwap website, and eventually was able to get all six of the participants that I was looking for. I was given an e-mail notification as soon as each participant submitted their survey, and was able to use that information on my Google Drive to compare and contrast each of their answers to the questions that I have listed below.

Participants

I chose the six participants based on a mix of ages because I wanted to compare which age groups felt a level of confidence and comfort with utilizing a mobile application/computer in order to meet with strangers. I also wanted to have a mix of languages and a mix of people with English as a second language and English as a first. Many of the participants I interviewed speak Farsi, which is certainly not a widely spoken language in Minnesota, but there are also many who speak Spanish as well which is much more popular in Minnesota.

The participants all have knowledge of a second language besides English. The participants' age ranges between 18-75, and they all have intermediate fluency in a second language. There are three men and three women participating in the study and they all have access to a cell phone, tablet or computer. This is important, since the app will only be accessible to users with the proper technology.

Materials

Although I do believe that until the app is running, it will be difficult to completely understand if participants will utilize the app. I felt that the best way to move forward with acquiring the answers to my questions is by providing an interview style questionnaire for community members in Minneapolis who are familiar with a second language. I have formulated eight questions to ask my participants which all will help me understand more about the target audience's perception about the app's usefulness, in addition to how willing participants are to use the app to get plugged into the language learning community.

How Will the App Work?

To answer how the app will work, I will walk you through the step-by-step instructions of what a typical user will go through as they experience the app. The most common intended way of use is through downloading the mobile app on a mobile device, so I will focus on that form. Before getting started, the user will need to have a mobile device with accessibility to either the Google Play Store or the Apple App Store. The user will then use their app store of choice to search and download Connect with Zaban. Once the app has been downloaded, the user will click the icon for Connect with Zaban and will be welcomed to the launch screen. This screen will have various options on how the user can create an account. There will be three options for the user to choose from: Connect their Google account, connect their Facebook account, or create a new account with their email.

Once the user has selected a way to log in, they will be taken to the next page, which will require basic setup information. On this page, the user will type in their first and last name, zip code, language they want to learn (or want to continue learning) as well as their self-determined proficiency level in that language (age and gender: optional). Once that form has been filled out, the user may proceed to the next page.

On the next page, the user can choose their preferences for who they'd like to match with. They can choose how far the location of the user is (between 1-100 miles), gender, age, and language proficiency level. Once they have selected all of those categories, they can move on to the next page.

On the next page of the app, there will be a form describing safety measures and what is expected behavior on the app. More information on safety measures, based on Chandler's 2016 research, is provided below. Once the user has read over the safety measures and accepted the terms of the app, they may proceed to the last page which is setting up their profile. This is where the user can personalize their page by listing a few photos and a description of who they are and what they hope to gain from the experience. It is not required to set up a photo, but it is certainly recommended. If the user chooses to upload photos, they will additionally have to verify their photos. The photos will be verified by having the user snap a photo of them in a unique pose. This is not a requirement, but it ensures safety in the Connect with Zaban community. This photo will only be shared to the Connect with Zaban team, and we can identify the user's face with the rest of their photos to make sure they are not *catfishing* other users. Catfishing is defined as a "deceptive activity where a person creates a sock puppet presence or fake

identity on a social networking service, usually targeting a specific victim for abuse or fraud (Chandler, 2016).

Finally, after the user has completed reading through the safety and set up their profile, they can get started with the app. There will be a variety of tabs for the user to choose from. The first tab will be their personal information, where they can go to change their settings and their preferences. The second tab will have their matches listed. Users can start scrolling through their prospects and they can choose whether to “next” a member or “save” a member based on the information they have provided. I wanted to include this feature so that users can review the proficiency level of each of their prospects and can make a decision based on that as well as the description provided in each of their “about me” pages. If both users “save” each other, then they may proceed to the third tab: chat box and can begin a conversation with each other.

Interview Questions

1. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree), how interested or willing are you to learn another language?
2. Would you be interested in connecting with speakers of two or more other languages, Yes or no? How many languages are you interested in? List all below
3. Are there any specific skills that you would like to practice with a community member such as pronunciation, recreational speaking, etc? List all below.
4. Please list any ways you engage in currently for the purpose of language learning (i.e. books, TV shows, news, etc).

5. How comfortable would you feel to meet a person to practice language with who you connected with through the internet? Use Likert 1-5
6. How far would you be willing to travel to meet with another person?
7. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree), how comfortable are you operating a cell phone, tablet or computer?
8. What other considerations would you like to pay attention to in developing a language app?
9. Do you want to use the app for educational or recreational purposes?

Interview Drawbacks

The biggest drawbacks of the interview are whether an interviewer feels comfortable operating a cell phone, tablet, or computer and if they would not feel comfortable meeting someone on the internet. Through the research I have done, it seems likely that after a certain age, people may not feel as comfortable meeting strangers off an app, or that they aren't comfortable navigating their way through the app store. I think this is especially true for a user that may be an older foreigner in the United States. This is one of the main reasons that our target audience will be the younger adult and college age students. If that does happen to be a common answer however, I would focus on encouraging ESL teachers to promote Connect with Zaban in their classrooms and show students how to use the app in order to settle any anxieties that the students may have. From the research I have provided in my Literature Review, there is resounding evidence

that ESL teachers would heavily benefit from promoting an app such as Connect with Zaban, so I feel this would be a fitting solution.

If the interviewees respond positively to the interview questions, I would feel confident to move forward with the development of the app. In order to ensure the interviewees are protected and their information is private, there will be no names or additional information provided that could give away the identity of the interviewer.

Human Subject Review Process

To meet the requirements of the Human Subjects Research Review Board, I will have each interviewer sign a form letting them know that if at any time they feel uncomfortable with any of the questions, they are able to skip or opt out of the interview. There will be no physical threats to the interviewees. At this time, interviews will be conducted through the “Google Survey” platform.

Due to the nature of the research being specifically focused on interview questions, the risks are quite low, but there is still a potential that any of the interview questions could cause emotional distress for the interviewee. They can opt out at any time and will be encouraged to do so if they experience any emotional distress from the interview questions.

Summary

In this chapter, I have discussed and addressed the two points that need to be determined in order to properly decide if the app will be successful, the contents of the app, security, and how I will measure app success, I have explained the methods I will be

using to answer my thesis, and have described the demographics of the participants of my questionnaire. Lastly, I have touched on potential results of the interview questions and how I will respond to them as well as any potential risks the interviewer may face during Human Subject Research. In the following chapter, I will break down the questions from my questionnaire even further.

CHAPTER FOUR

Results

Introduction

In this chapter, I will share the results of each of the nine questions that I asked the participants to find the answer to my initial question, *What is the importance and viability of a language learning mobile application that will connect users to each other based on location to the English as a Second Language Community?*

It also gives me a little more insight into my two supplemental questions of seeing how community members feel about using an app such as Connect with Zaban as an alternate method of learning or a supplemental method and seeing the comfortability of the overall population with technology and using an app for language connection. In the following sections, I will break down each of the questions and list the results.

Results

Question One

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree), how interested or willing are you to learn another language?

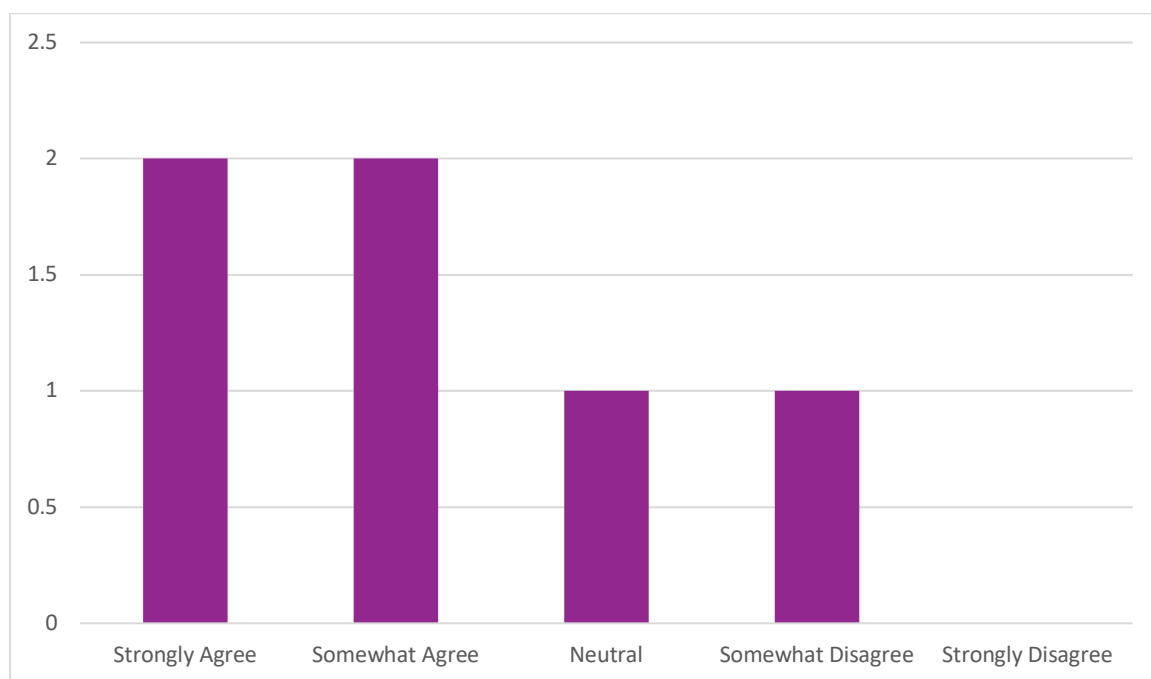


Figure 1: Participants' Interest or willingness to learn another language

From the Figure 1 above, we can see that most respondents are at a four or a five on the Likert scale of their interest or willingness to learn another language. There are no participants who are not open to it at all, one participant who somewhat disagrees, and one participant who is neutral. Overall, two thirds of the participants are potential users, while one third may not be.

Question Four

Please list any ways you engage in currently for the purpose of language learning (i.e. books, TV shows, news, etc).

None
 None
 None
 Netflix, Duolingo, Books

Music
Duolingo

Figure 2: Ways participants currently engage in for the purpose of language

learning

Out of the six participants, half of them do not currently use any ways to practice language. Two use Duolingo, a mobile application, one uses Netflix and books, and one uses music to learn language (see figure 3 below).

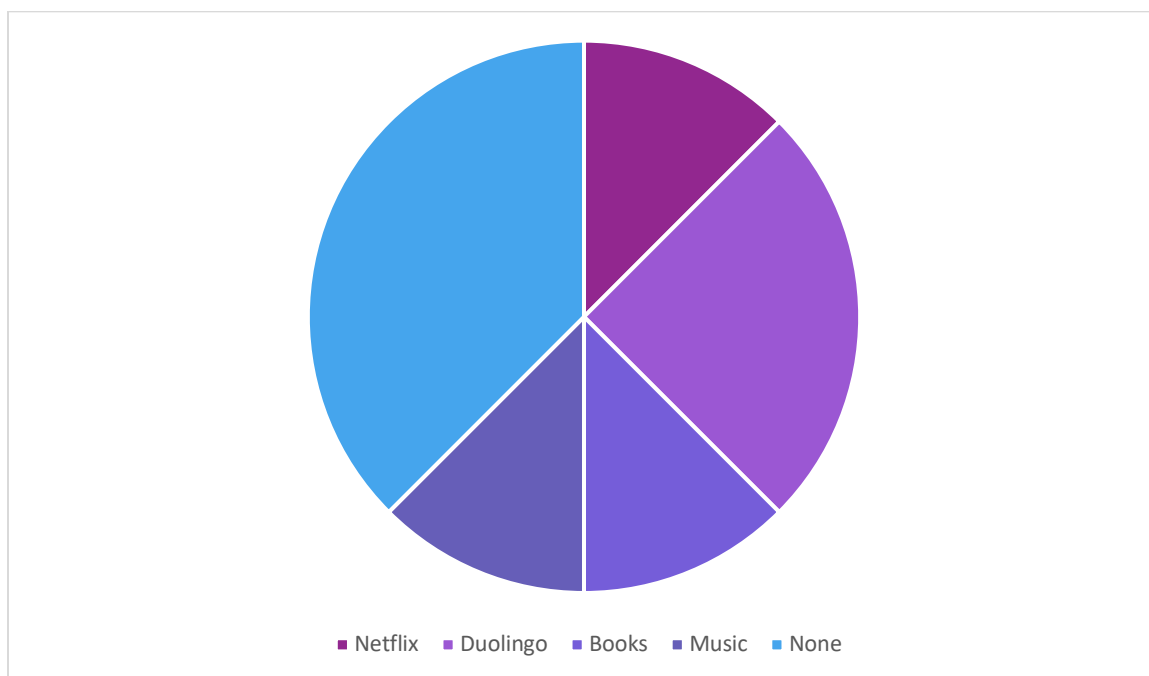


Figure 3: Tools participants currently use to work on language learning

Question Three:

Would you be interested in connecting with speakers of two or more other languages,

Yes, or no? How many languages are you interested in? List all below

Sure
Yes, Armenian, Kurdish, Spanish, Japanese

No
 Yes, German
 Maybe. Spanish & French
 Yes. 2: French, Spanish

Figure 4: Participants' survey answers to question three

Out of the respondents for the second question, all but one has answered that they are or are maybe interested in connecting with other language speakers (see Figure 4 above). The participant who chose “no” was the same participant who was not interested in using a language learning app.

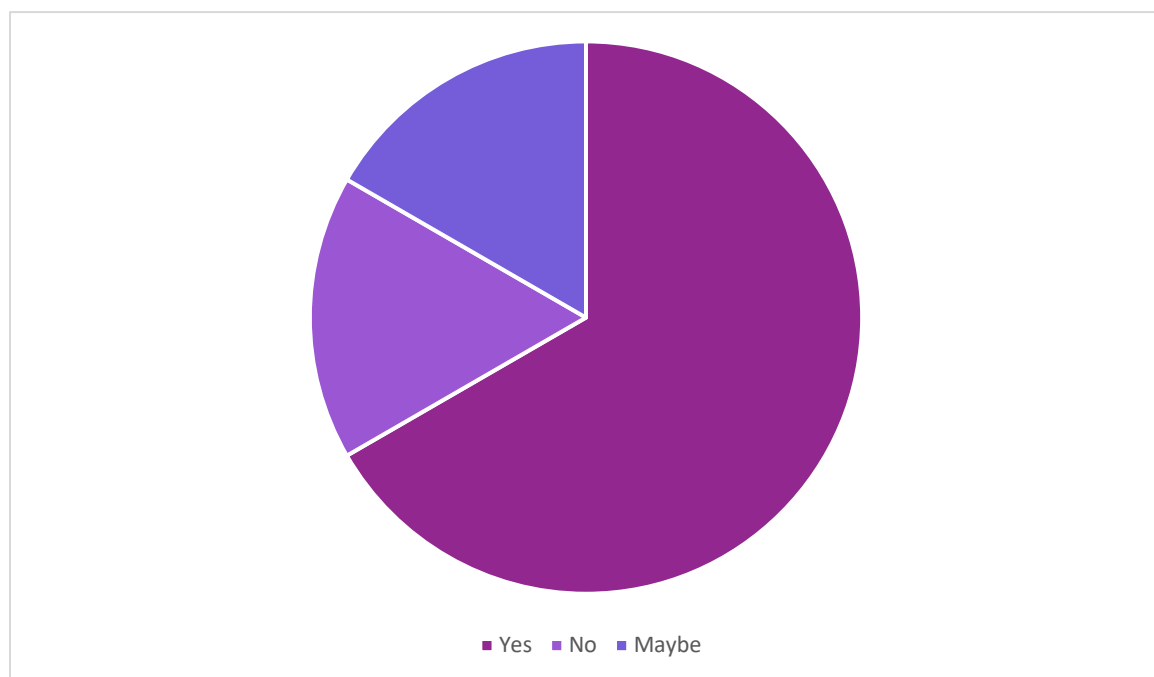


Figure 5: Participants' interest in connecting with language learners

As can be seen in Figure 6 below, three respondents were interested in learning Spanish, two were interested in learning French, one was interested in German, and one was interested in Armenian, Kurdish and Japanese.

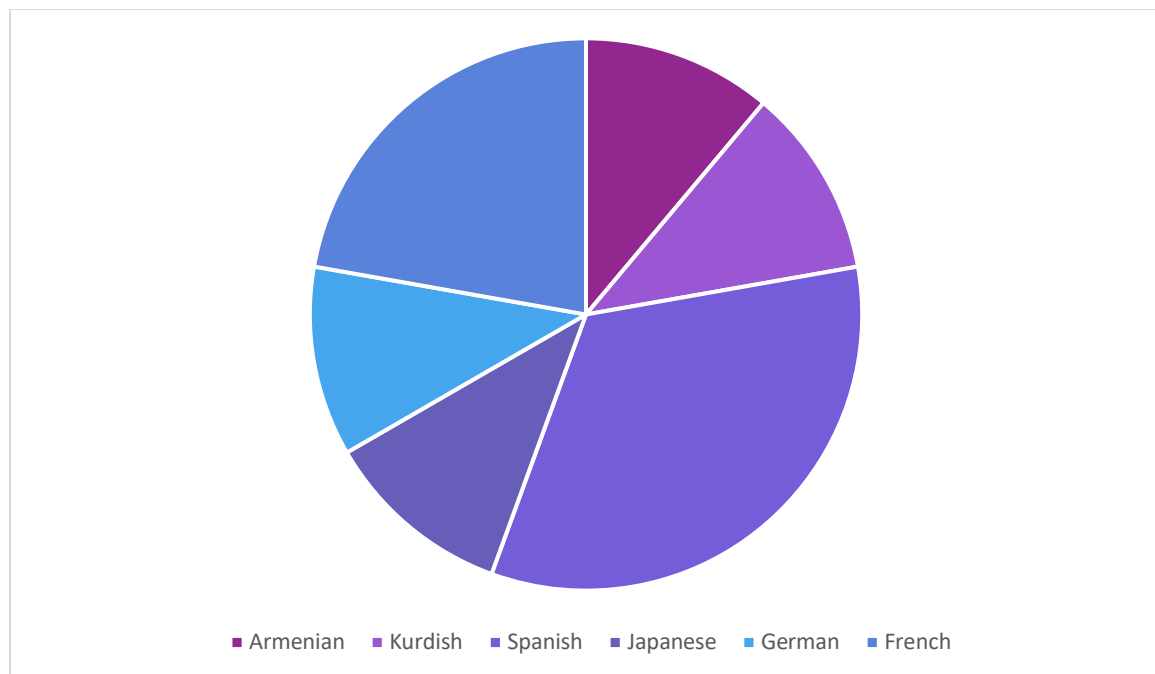


Figure 6: Languages participants are interested in learning

Question Two:

Are there any specific skills that you would like to practice with a community member such as pronunciation, recreational speaking, etc.? List all below.

Recreational Speaking
 Recreational Speaking
 No
 Pronunciation
 Slang/colloquial speech
 Recreational speaking

Figure 7: Specific skills participants would like to practice with community

members

Out of the respondents for the third question, all but one was interested in learning specific skills with community members (see Figure 7 above). The participant who answered no is the same participant who was not interested in the language learning. Three were interested in practicing their recreational speaking, one was interested in learning slang/colloquial speech and one was interested in learning pronunciation.

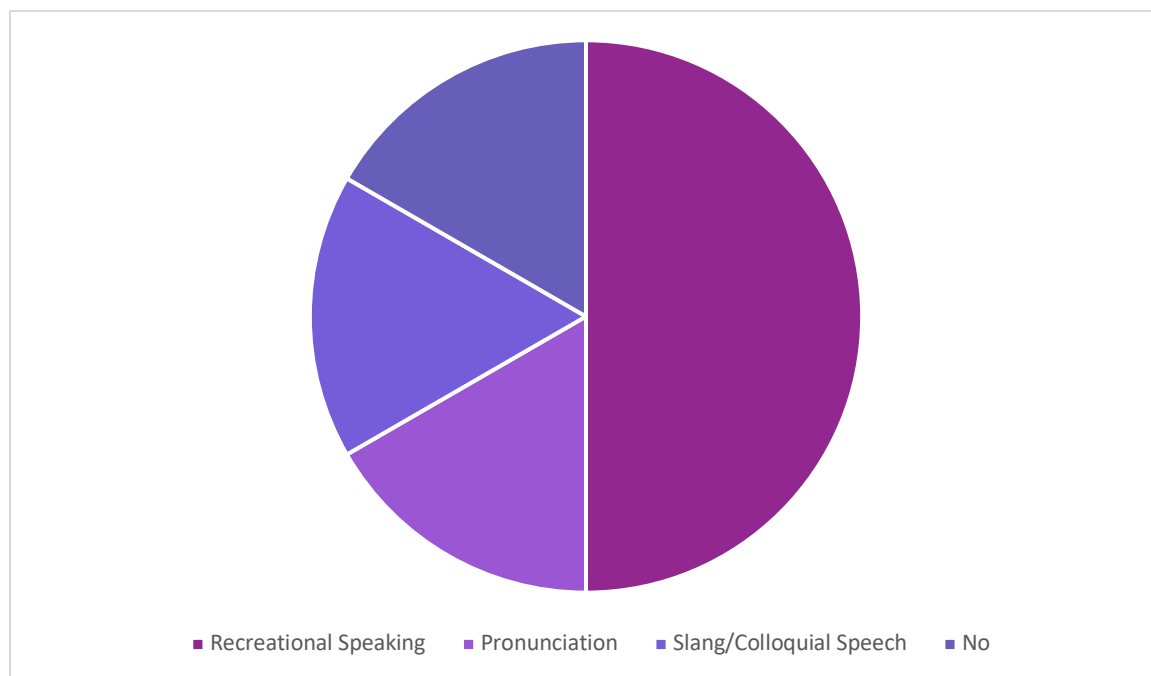


Figure 8: Specific focus area the participant wants to work on with another language learner.

Question Five:

How comfortable would you feel to meet a person to practice language with who you connected with through the internet? Out of the six participants, all but one is neutral with the comfortability of meeting a person they connected with on the internet to practice language learning with (see Figure 9 below). One participant mentioned that they would be somewhat comfortable connecting with someone they connected with on the internet.

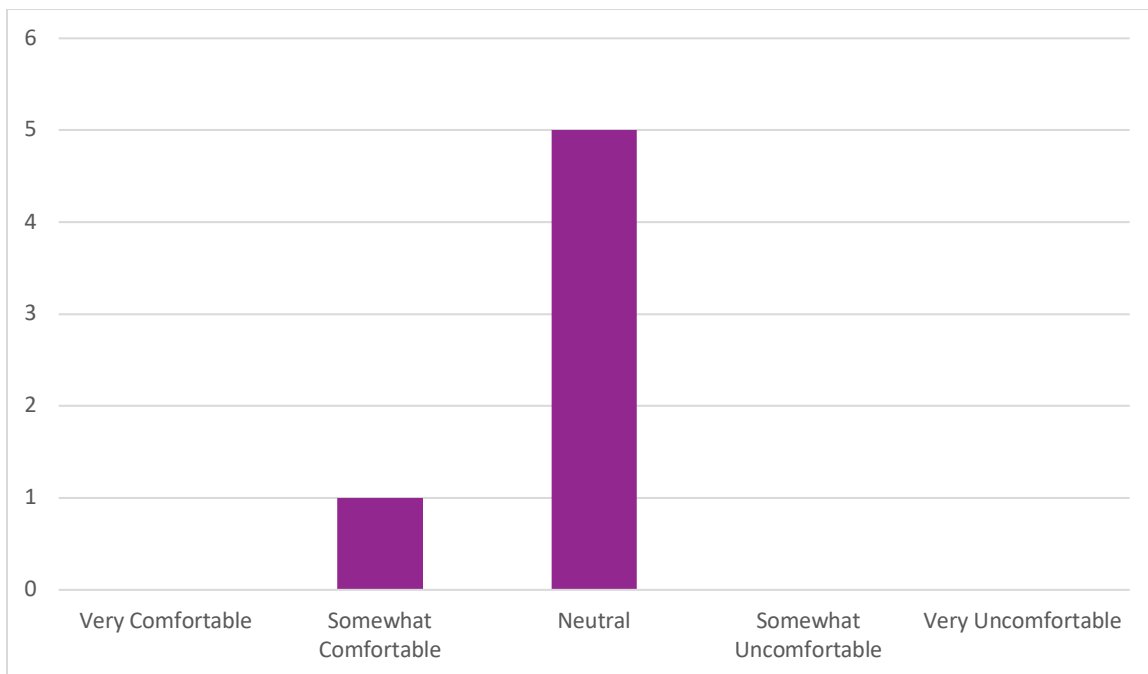


Figure 9: Participants' willingness and comfortability meeting someone they met online

Question Six:

How far would you be willing to travel to meet with another person?

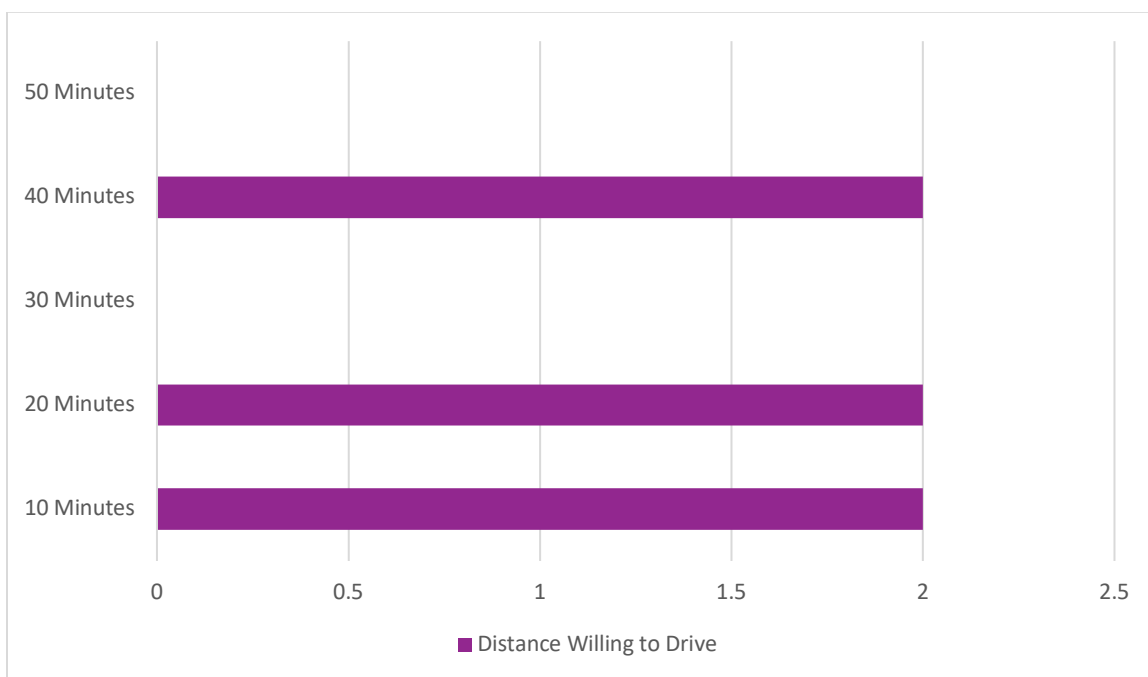


Figure 10: Participants' distance they are willing to drive to meet another language learner

Out of the six participants, two would not be willing to travel more than ten minutes, two would not be willing to travel more than 20 minutes, one would not be willing to travel more than 30 minutes, and two would surprisingly be willing to travel up to 40 minutes to meet with another person to practice their language skills.

Question Seven:

On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 strongly disagree and 5 strongly agree), how comfortable are you operating a cell phone, tablet or computer?

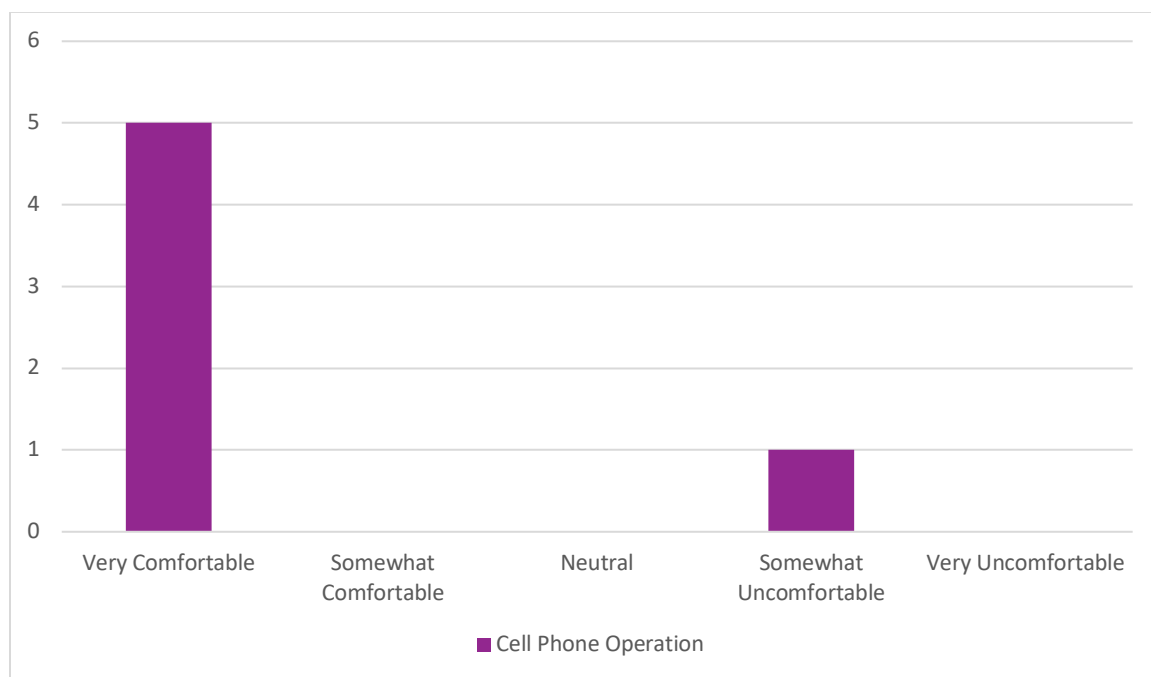


Figure 11: Participants' comfortability level with operating a cell phone

Out of all six participants, all but one feel very comfortable operating a cell phone, tablet or computer. One participant felt somewhat uncomfortable operating a cell phone, tablet or computer. The one participant who felt somewhat uncomfortable

operating a cell phone, tablet or computer was the one who was not interested in language learning.

Question Eight:

What other considerations would you like to pay attention to in developing a language app?

None
 None
 None
 None
 Living/traveling abroad for learning
 Having multiple features in one such as educational elements

Figure 12: Other considerations participants would pay attention to in developing a language app.

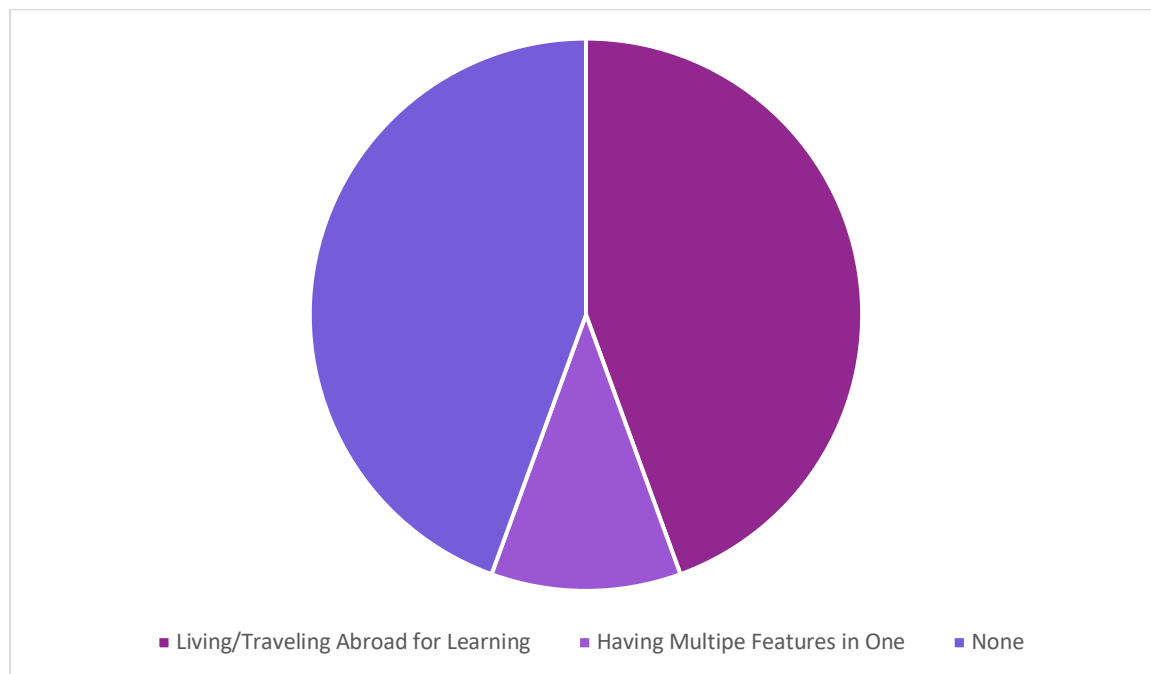


Figure 13: Visual representation of figure 12

Out of the six participants, four did not have any specific considerations to pay attention to during the development of the app. One participant was interested in having some way of incorporating living/traveling abroad for learning purposes, and one participant was interested in having multiple features in one app such as educational elements. The participant who answered none was the same who was less interested in using a language learning app.

Question Nine:

Do you want to use the app for educational or recreational purposes?

Do you want to use the app for educational or recreational purposes?
6 responses

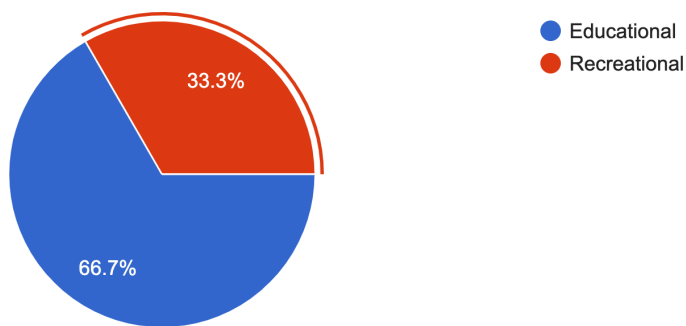


Figure 14: Number of participants who want to use app for recreational vs educational purposes.

Out of the six participants, 66.7% of them were interested in using the app for educational purposes, while 33.3% were interested in using the app for recreational purposes.

General Discussion

The findings of my research show that the development of a language learning mobile app is indeed of importance to the participants in the current study. The information from questions 1-4 that I gathered from my participants shows that all but one was interested in learning another language and all, but one was additionally interested in language learning through connecting with another language learner.

Additionally, findings also show that there may be viability of the app: all but one participant felt very comfortable using a phone, tablet, or computer, which shows me that they would also be comfortable navigating the Connect with Zaban app. Question 5 & 6 also indicated that most participants feel relatively neutral about potentially meeting people off of an online app, with one person feeling more likely to meet someone from an online platform and would also be willing to travel a good amount in order to do so.

However, our findings also suggest a continuing need to grow and learn as language learners using a well-rounded method, as Ravenscraft (2014) stated. Only three participants are currently using a form of language learning. This information suggests that there may be a need for community members to use Connect with Zaban, and it may also be beneficial to the ESL community if participants are truly willing to use an app as a supplemental way to learn language Ravenscraft (2014.)

Findings furthermore show that there may be an interest to focus on adding an app such as Connect with Zaban as a supplemental method to their education. To address the supplemental question on how community members feel about using an app such as Connect with Zaban as an alternate method of learning or a supplemental method, 66.7% of the participants were hoping to use an app that connects users to other language

learners specifically for educational purposes while 33.3% wanted to use it for recreational purposes.

Finally, our study also shows that all but one of the participants felt very comfortable using a cell phone, tablet, or computer which helped answer my hesitation about certain age groups not being comfortable with this concept.

To conclude my capstone, I do indeed feel that an app such as Connect with Zaban would be beneficial to the language learning community. It seems that users would be open and willing to use the app, and because of that, it would be beneficial to the ESL community by giving a supplemental way of language learning for the students and to give ESL teachers another source of language learning for their students.

Conclusion:

In this chapter, I have given a summary of each of the nine interview questions that I asked my six participants, giving a summary and breakdown of each of the questions, as well as a visual representation of each of their answers. In the following chapter, I will put all my information together and share the conclusion to the main question.

CHAPTER FIVE

Conclusion

Introduction:

In this chapter, I will discuss some of the limitations that I encountered during this study as well as any future research options and any ways that I can share the current

findings. I will then conclude the final thoughts after gathering all the information from the research findings.

Limitations

I found that many of the limitations of my study revolved around the fact that I did not actually have the app available for users to test. It was helpful to see that many of the people I interviewed were genuinely interested in the app, but due to them not actually using it, it was hard to understand how it could be beneficial to ESL teachers and actual students. This would be an excellent opportunity to design and develop the app, so I could test it and see how people would react to it. There was also a bit of difficulty with the test results with one of the participants who was un-interested in the Connect with Zaban app the entire time through, but it was helpful that the rest of my participants gave solid strong answers that really supported the future of the app.

Future Research

In the future, I would love the opportunity to create a mockup application for users to test and see if it is something that they are curious about and navigate whatever nuances they come across with that so I can make updates and get a better idea of my ideal target audience. Because one of the main things I wanted was for this app to be beneficial to ESL teachers in the classroom as a great supplement to their teaching, it would be helpful to test it out in a school setting as well to see how students and teachers react to it.

I additionally have some reservations about allowing minors onto the app, but it would be great to do some more research on how to make that a safe and sustainable

options for anyone under 18 to use as well and see how bringing it into a K-12 setting can make a difference to the app and to language learners.

Current Findings

What was interesting is that while I was going through this process of researching the app, I became very interested in this area of study and learned user experience design so that I was able to possess the skills to make wireframes and prototypes for apps and websites myself. This led to an entire career change, as I now work as a user experience designer in a corporation. I hope that with my experiences and new knowledge, I can revisit Connect with Zaban and be able to have that accessible to language learners. As a native Farsi speaker, and an increase of Afghan refugees coming to the United States after the Taliban takeover in 2021, it will be interesting to see how this app could help another group of people and connect them with other Farsi/Dari speakers in the United States and help them navigate this new country.

Summary

In this chapter, I included some of the limitations that I had in my current study, what I would like to do in the future as well as my current findings. To conclude my capstone, I do indeed feel that an app such as Connect with Zaban would be beneficial to the language learning community and my findings seem to agree with me as well. I also hope that with an increase of refugees over the upcoming years, there will be even more of a need for continued education even beyond my app—for others to come up with more ways to educate people on the English language, and ultimately, create a better experience for refugees who are trying to begin a new life.

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