



Application of ICT in Language Teaching with Special Reference to Language Learning Apps

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Abstract: ICT stands for Information Communication and Technology and can be defined as the all the devices, tools, internet, hardware, software, content, resources, cell phones, interactive digital content, internet, satellite communication devices, radio and television series use to create, store and help user and provider to interact whenever necessary. Now ICT as a teaching medium is becoming acknowledged by both students and teachers day by day because of the portability it offers. Laptops, mobiles, and the internet are some of the examples of ICT which make the process of teaching and learning possible anywhere anytime. We also remember how the Covid-19 pandemic has impacted a lot of sectors including education, large enterprises, health, economy, labor markets, etc. This impact caused due to many restrictions that came with the pandemic that hindered the normal workflow that was followed pre-pandemic, this restrictions included maintaining social distancing, travel restrictions, lockdowns that lasted for months, and many more. So, in order to get the work done while abiding by the restrictions that were imposed along with the pandemic. ICT platforms were introduced to ensure the maintenance of social links, provide services remotely, continue to fulfil business requirements and also for virtual education. Also, various telecom players like Jio, airtel, Vodafone, have brought an internet revolution in India by introducing internet at very cheap rates, because of this the students are getting smarter day by day due to the huge flow of information and knowledge which was not possible before because of the expensive internet plans available in India. So, in order to fulfil this gap between teaching and learning, the use of ICT is necessary for the classroom.

Keywords: Covid- 19, Globalization, restrictions, lockdowns, pre pandemic, ICT platforms, Paradigm, virtual education.

I. INTRODUCTION

The use of ICT for teaching and learning has always been subjected to mixed opinions. Some support learning in the online medium and some are reserved for the same idea. ICT tools help to engage the learners in all the possible way by listening, watching, and interacting online and create multisensory teaching and increase the retention in the learning there are any difficult topic, subjects or concepts, it can be animated and presented in a way that is helpful for learners and also easy for the teacher to teach by using animation in smart classes. Learning language has always been a physical process where one need to be associated with a physical classroom with a teacher and books. This process was first broken with the introduction of language teaching software like Rosetta Stones first CD- ROM collection in mid-90s. Since then the developers have been adapting their products to meet the latest technology available and also to meet the customer expectations. Many online-language learning apps were developed at first as websites and later with time its services were transferred to its mobile-app format. It is expected that the online language learning market will grow at a CAGR 18.7% and will reach a valuation of \$21.2 billion by 2027. This market will register this unprecedented growth due to various driven reasons.

● **Impact of COVID-19:** The pandemic brought along many restrictions along with the closure of various educational institutes. According to UNESCO, the nation-wide closure of educational institutes has affected over 60% of the total student population. All the companies were also shut down because of this pandemic and had to allow work from home to its employees. Due to this the working professions were interested to learn new language to enhance and include new skills to their working profile. The online language learning apps saw this as an opportunity and introduced their classes for free which attracted a huge customer base irrespective of their designation, age or qualification and later many free users got converted to paid subscribers.

● **Globalization demands communication across borders:** Globalization has connected people irrespective of their country, culture and language. But companies in order to maintain their global presence overcomes the language barrier in a survey it is found that 60 % of the online consumer avoids but from the foreign online market place and 72.4 % of the online consumer prefers to buy products where the information is given in their native language.



● **Rising spending in the education sector:** Survey has found that two-thirds of school students in low-income countries will not even learn the basic primary skills by 2030. So, in order to fight the global education crisis, the respective governments are announcing huge packages. For e.g., India in February, 2020 announced \$13.4 billion for the education sector, and also there has been made huge changes and addition in the New Education Policy. These initiatives ensure the growth and adoption of ICT-based educational solutions and hence helping online language learning apps to grow.

● **Language and culture in entertainment:** The English language has made the movies by Hollywood, English songs, and series popular among Indians. Also, Korean songs like PSY's Gagman Style have been a hit and this led to the formation K-POP fan base in India. This trend has encouraged Indians to explore Korean culture deeply. Survey has shown that there has been a 370% increase in consumption of Korean series during the lockdown. This really motivates people to learn foreign languages like Korean to understand their culture and this is where online language learning apps get their user base.

Some famous online language learning apps are Duolingo, Babel, Rosetta Stone, Busuu, and many more. Among all these apps Duolingo has the largest number of downloads among all the other language learning apps. It has over 500 million registered users. This goal is achieved by them because of Duolingo's free services like they offer game-like learning solutions for over 35 different services and all this for no cost has hooked millions of users across the world and its way they grew into a very successful business. The below figure shows the total downloads of all the leading language learning apps available in the market. In which we can observe Duolingo is far ahead of its competition with 61% of total downloads among others.

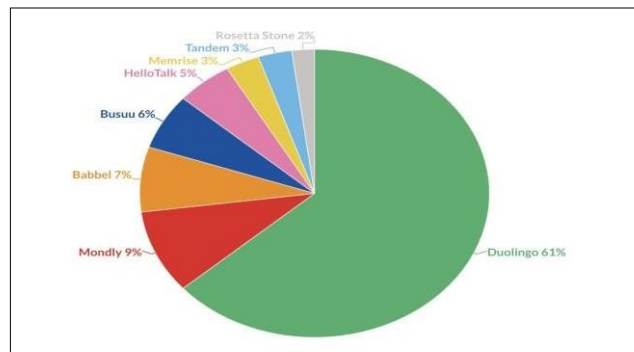


Fig. 1 Total downloads of all the leading language learning apps

How do these online language learning apps make money?

Famous language learning apps like Duolingo, Babbel, and cake app show ads to its user who is using the app for free or rather availing of the free services of the apps. It is found that 17% of Duolingo's revenue comes from displaying advertisements in their apps. Those users who are tired of ads are given the option to join their no advertisement version at a monthly or yearly subscription, for e.g., Duolingo offers a plan known as Duolingo plus which offers the user advertisement free services and also Duolingo plus brought 74% of their revenue in Q2 of 2020.

This language learning app also conducts fluency certification tests as there are many users who learn new languages for employment or entry into a university. Duolingo charges \$49 for its fluency test which registered 9% of its revenue in 2020. Lastly, these online learning apps sell virtual items, user can earn points by engaging with the apps or can directly buy these points using money. Duolingo has a similar model where user gets gems if they engage with the apps or can buy out these gems. Duolingo accounts for 2.4% of their revenue using this in Q2 of 2020. In the below graph we can see that Babbel has higher revenue than Duolingo, but it is expected that Duolingo will surpass Babbel by 2021.

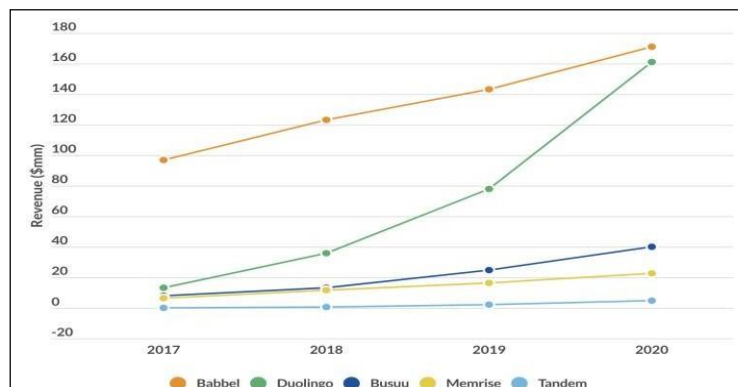




Fig. 2 Comparative Revenue of the different language learning apps

How long does it take to learn German in an offline classroom environment?

The answer is very much subjective and varies from student to student. Generally, if one attends classes twice a week and is highly motivated to learn the language then he/she can learn up to B1 level in a span of 6 months.

This B1 is a scale in CEFR. CEFR stands for Common European Framework of Reference, this is an international standard which rates one's language speaking skills, the ratings are given in a six pointscale, where a beginner in a particular language is considered to be A1 level, an intermediate is considered to be B1 level and an expert is considered to be C1 level. So we can say that one needs atleast 6 months in classroom environment to be at an intermediate level in learning a language like German.

How long does it take to learn German in an online learning language like Duoling?

Online learning apps like Duo lingo has their language learning course structured like a tree, if one wants to complete the tree as soon as possible then it will even take a day to complete, the course tree is considered to be a B1 level and currently the Duo lingo course tree for German consists of 123 topics and these topics consist of total 454 lessons.

As number of lessons and topics are huge so duo lingo divides them into checkpoints where the first checkpoint is after 11 topics and 36 lessons, second checkpoint is after 7 topics and 20 lessons, third checkpoint is after 12 topics and 36 lessons, fourth checkpoint is after 19 topics and 62 lessons, fifth checkpoint is after 17 topics and 72 lessons, sixth checkpoint consists of 17 topics and 68 lessons, seventh checkpoint consists of 20 topics and 76 lessons now finally eighth checkpoint consists of 20 topics and 84 lessons. So in total there are 123 topics and 454 lessons thus completing this German tree is equivalent to learn 2500 words.

In order to complete the tree, duo lingo has certain features like daily streaks which motivated the user in this process. There are four different mode one can set goal to complete the tree, those are, Casual (10 XP per day), Regular (20 XP per day), Serious (30 XP per day) and Insane (50 XP per day). Now completing each lesson gives us 10 XP, and maintaining the insane streak every day will take us around 100 days in order to complete the whole tree.

But we must not forget that our brain tends to forget the previously taught things and the Duo lingo's algorithm is smart enough to drop down the strength of the topics forcing us to go back and revise the previous topics in order to increase the retention.

Now we can consider extra 80 days to in order to revise the old lessons so the total days adds up to 180 days which is 6 months. Hence we can say one will need 6 months in order to learn the language German from online language learning app like duo lingo.

Advantages of using ICT in language learning: As discussed above the working of duo lingo, one of the most famous app for learning language we can point out some advantages of this ICT base language learning solutions over regular offline courses.

- **Easily Accessible:** ICT tools like mobiles, laptops, digital readers can be accessed at any time as per the need of students hence students can learn as per the need.
- **Can be used remotely:** There is no need of attending any school physically for teachers as well as students both can interact and participate in the teaching and learning process. Village students or any interested children can learn in prestigious institutes via online class and distance learning program.
- **Interactive content:** We can use images, sounds, videos to make learning process easy and interactive for all the age groups and these also helps to clear the concept of any particular topic or subjects and can be used for all the subjects.
- **Enhance multisensory teaching:** ICT tools helps to engage the learners in all the possible way by listening, watching and interacting online and create multisensory teaching and increase the retention in the learning.
- **Time-Saving:** There is no need to attend the classroom or any formal institutes for learning and one can attend the class or learn as per one's need hence it saves time of travelling, getting ready and you can also fast forward the lecture that is impossible in real teaching.
- **Students are in lead positions:** Students can select the content, the teacher, devices and learn as per their convenience, affordability and needs.
- **Watch visualization or stimulation of difficult concept:** Any difficult topic, subjects or concepts can be animated and presented in a way that is helpful for learners and also easy for the teacher to teach by using animation of smart classes.
- **Useful for differently-abled children and individuals:** ICT tools are blessing for children with special needs as they enhance learning capacities for differently abled individuals and help in creating an inclusive classroom. ICT tools and devices like digital braille, voice to text converter, enhance audio system for hearing affected individuals, digital maps, online communities to help each other, etc.

Demerits of ICT based learning language solutions: Although there are many advantages for ICT based language learning



solutions but it has been found that many users found duo lingo to be really helpful for beginner and for a certain level after that one need to give their individual efforts like listening to podcasts, reading newspaper and speaking the language. Mastering the online language learning will not be enough. There are also other demerits discussed below.

- Students can engage in other tasks while learning on ICT devices, which means online contents maybe be sometimes distracting.
- There are so many language learning apps available which maybe be problematic for students and can keep them in a dilemma about where to study or learn from
- ICT devices are expensive to setup for students, teacher and schools as well, this hampers learning for lower income class children.
- For exams online mode of examination can be full of malpractices.
- We can't deny the fact that in this era where our data is being stored online and data is considered to be the new currency we are always on a verge of losing our data to hackers and scammers and while signing up for this online language learning apps we have to give some of our personal information and if there is some data leak in that company then our personal data can be used for malpractices.

II. CONCLUSION

As discussed above ICT has a lot of uses and has become an integral part of the education ecosystem in the post pandemic era. ICT with internet connection has also changed our daily lives drastically. ICT has connected people across the globe which enabled a better exchange of information, knowledge and culture, for this individuals has got a chance to improve their communication skills, meet new people and learn about new education opportunities. This is the reason why this online language learning app industry has got a great success. There is no doubt in saying that ICT based language learning solution has made us respect other's culture but we must not neglect the negative aspects of these language learning apps which is discussed above because internet is really huge and it is up to us whether we want to visit the bright side of ICT based solution or the dark side of it because when we cross the line of desire it becomes greed. Now if we use ICT based language learning solutions in a disciplined and controlled way then we can minimize most of the negative aspect of it.

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