Make Me Fluent: A System Designed for Learning Enlgish

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ABSTRACT

Make Me Fluent is an APP for tablet that help those non-native English speaker who have not spoken English for more than 5 years to learn Enlgish. The goal of our design is to help our target audience improve their Engflish skills in a relaxed and flexiable environment.

INTRODUCTION

Basically, the system is divided into three main functions which are reading, writing, speaking and linstening. Each of them focus on different topcis to help varity of people conquer their own weakness. Although there are many ways to learn English like the English school, online tutorial or educational DVDs, most of people especially for those who have jobs do not have enough time for learning. As a result, the protable devices like tablet could easily solve these problems. Our design is trying to maximize the advantages of portable device to help people improve their Enlgish skills.

PHASE 1

Background

Many people around the world learn a second language. English is the most popular second language to learn with around 1.5 million to 1.8 million non-native speakers learning it. However, todays programs for learning languages provide an environment to learn English, but do not follow up on that learning over the course of several years. There are courses in a more traditional setting done in classrooms or online tutorials. Many of these programs to learn a language are often meant to be used in the span of 6 months to a year to quickly grasp the basics of a language.

Target audience

Our target audience is non-native speakers who have been living in an English-speaking environment for at least 5 years, but have yet to fully understand all the nuances of English and might still have difficulties in some aspects of the language. Some examples of our target audience include new immigrants, students studying abroad, international students and many others. These groups of individuals will likely have been affected by the problem space of learning how to use English in a social environment.

PHASE 2

Research Plan

Our research plan includes a questionnaire, an interview, and observation. To be eligible, participants must have lived in an English-speaking environment for at least five years, and yet still have difficulties with some aspect of English. This is also the target audience for our final product. To recruit participants, first we will ask friends and family members who we know fit the criteria. They will be offered either an online version or a print version of the questionnaire, depending on their preference. To further recruit more participants, we will go to community centers and ask passersby if they have lived in Canada or in another English-speaking place for at five years, if they still have difficulties with English, and if they have the time to participate in a questionnaire. To motivate and thank participants for their cooperation, we will offer a Timbit to people who complete the questionnaire. If participants are willing to further contribute, we will ask them to leave a phone number or email address. After the answers to the questions are evaluated, these participants might be contacted for further participation in the more in-depth interview and observation.

Research Instruments

The questionnaire includes basic questions about the participants and how they have learned English. Through this questionnaire, we would like to get a basic idea of what kinds of common difficulties our target audience has with learning English, and their preferences for how theyd like to learn English.

The interview will be flexible and the interviewer is free to ask follow-up questions or ask participants to expand upon interesting answers. We hope to get a more in-depth understanding of how our target audience learns and uses English through this interview. The questions are similar to the ones in the questionnaire except that they allow for more shades of subtlety due the participants having more time to think about and give their answers.

While the scripted interview is being conducted, participants will also be observed for their use of English and any errors they make. This means that two researchers will be present at the interview: one to ask the interview questions and take notes on the content of the answers, and one to take notes on the participants English and how the answers are given.

PHASE 3

Research Results
From the collective of the research conducted, it is found that most users tend to find their writing, reading and listening to others to be their biggest strengths, while speaking is their biggest weakness. While not all users claim that these are also their strengths and weaknesses, the focus seems to be on speaking, with some attention to other areas of English as well.

The users tend to find watching and listening to TV, movies, or videos in general to be most helpful. Reading English books and novels are also most helpful to the users. What users found least helpful is learning English in non-English speaking countries where their English speaking proficiency is not that great.

With many of the users being comfortable with learning English online or on their devices, most of them are not too comfortable with speaking with another person while learning English. This directly correlates to the reason as to why many of the users are finding speech to be their biggest weakness, and we must find a way to fix or improve on this.

Stakeholders Descriptions
The target audience itself is a large stakeholder in this system. People who have been living in an English-speaking environment for at least 5 years and feel they would still like to improve their English will benefit the most from our product.

Other stakeholders include educators: not only English language educators but educators in general, since a solid grasp of English is essential to communicating and performing well in school.

Another possible stakeholder is anyone involved with immigration services and thus involved with people who have recently moved permanently to an English-speaking environment.

Primary Personas:
English-user Edna is 22 and started learning English twelve years ago in school in Hong Kong. She moved to Canada with her family six years ago when she was 16 and is currently in university. She feels that although she had been learning English for an hour each day since she was 10, the classroom learning experience did not fully prepare her for interacting with real English speakers in everyday life.

She is mostly fluent in English, except for when communicating topics shes not familiar with; she sometimes gets nervous and feels her English worsens in these situations. She sometimes feels frustrated that her English is just a little off from that of her peers, and wishes she was more confident.

She is the most comfortable with her reading skills, but feels her speaking and writing need some work.

Design Principles And Objective
According to our researches, most of our users have problems in speaking while learning English due to the lack of practices as well as confidence. Moreover, there exists a large quantity of users that dont have enough time going to language school since the restriction of jobs and school works. However, most of them are using Internet every day. As a result, we are going to use a visual and voiced device which can be connected to Internet to help them study English. Help users improve their English proficiency and possibly fix any problems they are having. These could include speaking, writing, reading, or understanding depending on their needs.

PHASE 4

Interaction Sequences
1. A user wants to improve her speaking. The user will click on reading materials, and then reading the he or she wants to read. After completing the reading, he or she will do some evaluations to test her reading comprehension.

2. A user wants to practice her speaking. The user will click on Speaking & Listening and then select whether to interact with an AI or a human. The user clicks on interacting with a human and then will begin with the conversation after being paired up with a native English speaker. After 5 minutes are up, the user will rate his or her conversation partner and have the option of continuing the conversation or starting a new one.

Prototype

Usability Testing Plans
The purpose of our research is to understand how people interact with our application as well as how well our application is designed to solve the problems they have with their English. Also, we want to know if our application needs improvements in areas to help our intended users have a better experience. A brief description of our design concept is: to help people acquire new English skills that they didn't know, benefit them during study and help them integrate the native society as well as culture. We will brief the participants about the purpose of the study, explain the consent form to them, and ensure that they sign the consent form. We will then engage the participants by asking them to use our application prototype. Next after interacting with the application, we will them to fill in the questionnaires, take a semi-structured interview which will be no more than half an hour. We will also

with their permission make observations as follows: observing how they interact with application and how quickly they can get themselves started on the application without requiring many instructions from us.

Results of Evaluation

1. The prototype requires instructions to guide new users. However, a video walkthrough was considered unnecessary since it was simple to manipulate.

2. Some buttons, like the difficulty bar, was not clear and the tests and reading materials dont have abvious link. The suggestion was to put the difficulties in the test which could be chosen directly.

3.

CONCLUSION

ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

REFERENCES FORMAT

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