Verbal.

Practice any language at your convenience

What is Verbal?

Verbal is an interactive way to learn a new language by connecting with native speakers around the world!

- Learn a language with video, text, chat, and more.
- Join a global community of coaches and speakers.
- Practice the topics of your choice with natives.
- Test your conversational skills with fun games.

Our Design Process

Our product design process consists of three stages: user research, UX design, and usability testing.

USER RESEARCH

Frame the opportunity and understand customers, their context, and pain points.

UX DESIGN

Explore ideas/options and design concepts based upon our research.

USABILITY TESTING

Determine how easy a product is to use and learn and make changes to it.

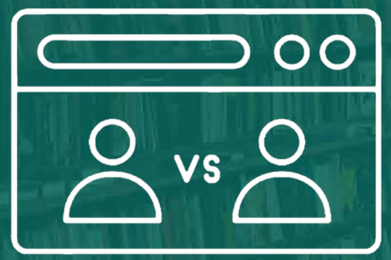
Verbal.

User Research

Understand customers, competition, and the opportunity

Our Research Methods

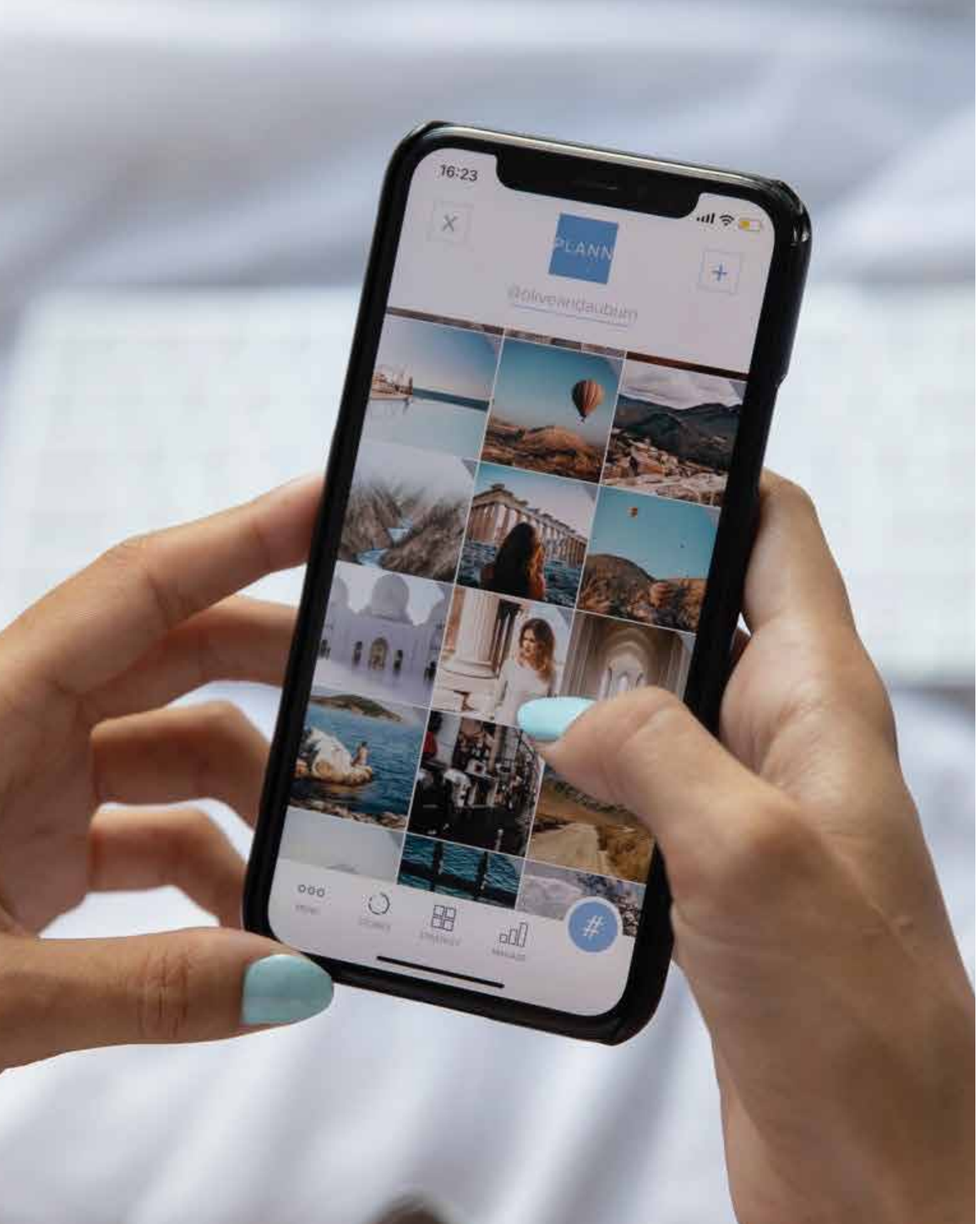
Our research identified key pain points for our users and discovered competitor gaps.



COMPETITOR ANALYSIS

USER INTERVIEWS & PERSONAS

USER JOURNEY MAP



Marketplace Scan

Language learning is either in the classroom or online with an app. This leaves open opportunities for speaking practice and grammar lessons in person.

Most Popular Apps

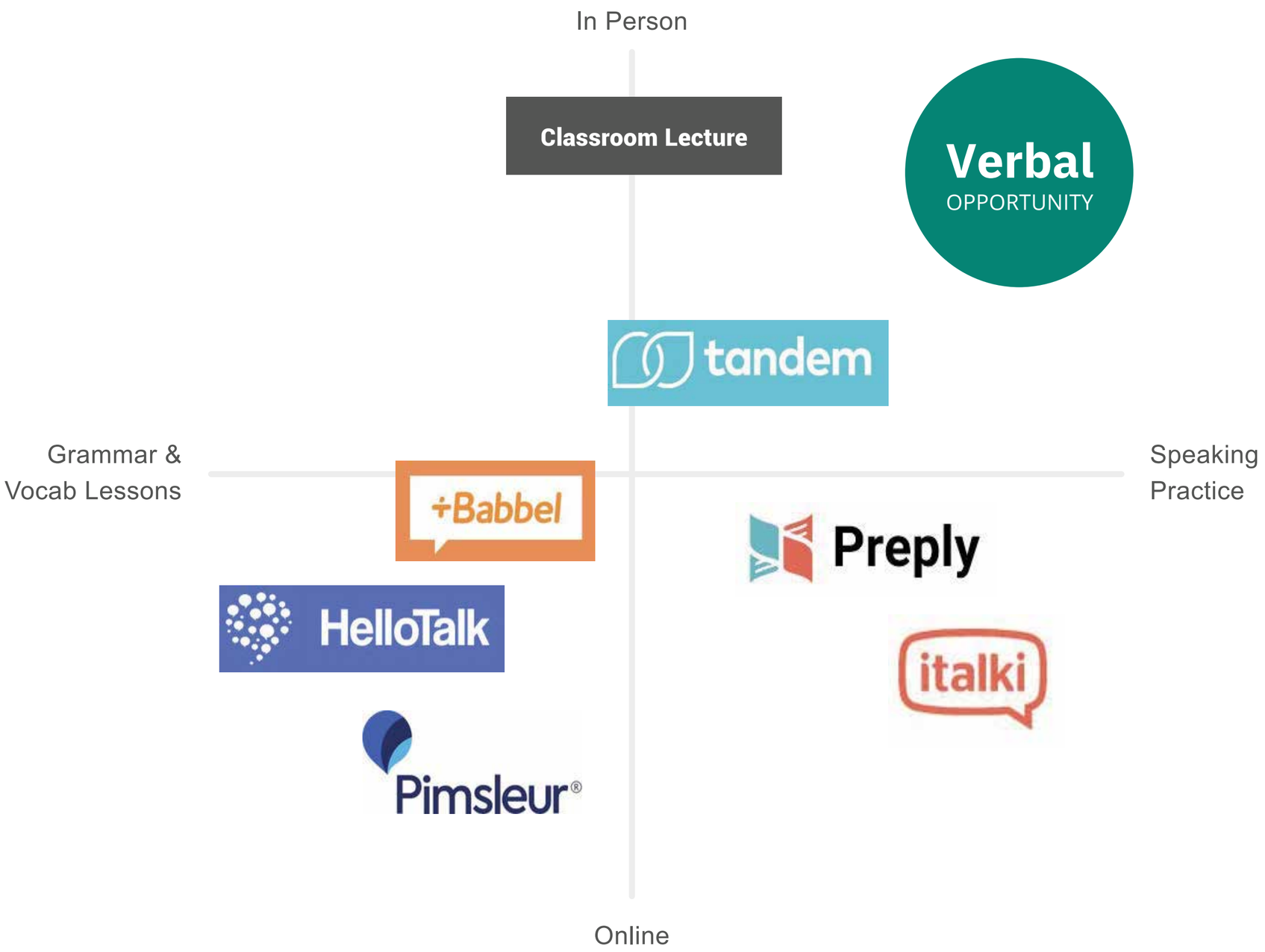
tandem, +Babbel, HelloTalk, Pimsleur®, Preply, lingbe, italki

How We Reviewed Them

- Heuristic inspection to determine opportunities
- Feature-based analysis to identify gaps
- Comparison of learning style options in each app

Competitive Gaps

Most language apps focus on either providing content for language learners or providing a platform for language exchange. They fail to provide language learners with an app that will aid them in becoming fluent and tracking their progress.



Feature-Based Inspections

Verbal can differentiate itself from competitors by closing the gaps found in language apps and be the all-in-one tool people need to reach their fluency goals.

	tandem	lingbe	Pimsleur	+Babbel	HelloTalk	italki	Preply	Verbal.
Vocabulary and Grammar Building			★	★	★			★
Level Proficiency Test				★				★
1-on-1 Online Sessions	★	★		★	★	★	★	★
Dialogue Practice			★		★	★	★	★
Language Proficiency Certificates	★							★
Language Topic Selection		★	★		★			★
tutor Reviews	★					★	★	★
Local in-person sessions	★							★

Learning Styles (VARK)

We looked at secondary research to understand different learning styles or preferences and how to apply them to increase app engagement.

VISUAL

- Learns best with pictures, videos, & graphs
- Take in information best with strong visuals
- Prefers to draw ideas to explain themselves
- Color, shape, and aesthetics are very important to them

AUDITORY

- Learn best by hearing information
- Take in information best with lectures or deep discussions
- Explain their ideas by talking
- Needs to repeat information to remember

READING

- Learns best from information displayed as words or text
- Takes in information by note-taking and categorizing data
- Enjoys making lists and creating presentations
- Prefers learning from textbooks

KINESTHETIC

- Learns best by touching and doing
- Takes in information best with hands-on experiences
- Prefers application over theory
- Needs to take in information with all five senses

Accounting for Different Learning Styles (VARK)

We examined how current features cater to the needs of users' learning styles and how we could further enhance their learning experience and increase engagement.

	VISUAL	AUDITORY	READING	KINESTHETIC
Vocabulary and Grammar Building			★	
Level Proficiency Test			★	
1-on-1 Online Sessions	★	★		★
Dialogue Practice		★		★
Language Proficiency Certificates	★		★	
Language Topic Selection			★	
Instructor Reviews	★		★	
Local in-person sessions	★	★		★
MAKE THE EXPERIENCE BETTER WITH:	Videos	MP3 Notes	Descriptions & Notes	Games

Accounting for Neurodiversity in Learning

Our secondary research also included examining different neurotypes, and how our app could be optimized to account for how different minds process information when learning.

Autistic Spectrum Disorder

NEEDS

- Flexibility or customizability in their learning environment
- A controlled environment with little distractions
- Patience and empathy from instructor

Dyslexia

NEEDS

- Emphasis on auditory information and verbal discussions
- Critical information conveyed in several forms other than print

ADHD

NEEDS

- Topics of interest to help maintain their attention
- Unrestricted movement and freedom to fidget
- Consistent routine

Verbal.

SOLUTIONS

- Ability to customize sessions to student's desired needs
- Remote sessions so students have control of their learning environment
- In depth one-on-one instruction

Language Learning Stats

ONLINE LANGUAGE LEARNING MARKET IS WORTH ABOUT:

12 Billion USD

AND GROWING...

SET TO GROW TO

25 Billion USD

BY THE YEAR 2025

PEOPLE LEARNING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE RIGHT NOW

1 Billion

Verbal.

Language Fluency Has Various Meanings

Whether you are a serious or leisure learner, a frequent or seldom traveler, Verbal can help you connect with native or professional tutors to reach your fluency goals.

Key Insights From 11 User Interviews

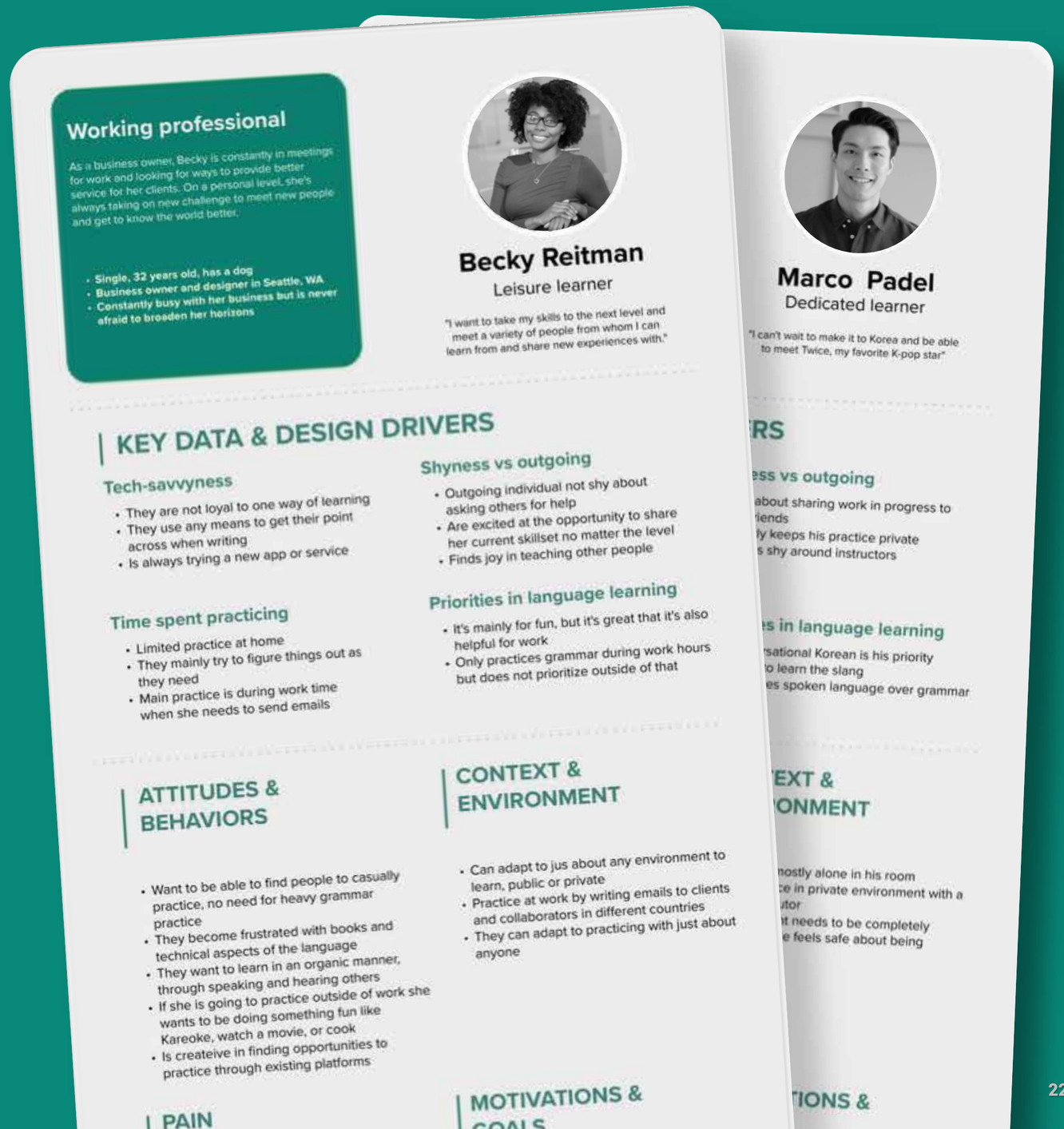
We interviewed a variety of language learners to learn more about their language learning **process** and where their major **challenges** lie. With their insights we built empathy maps and user personas.

- There was a wide range of **shyness and confidence** in learners
- People **immerse in the culture** of the language through social media, music, TV shows and movies with subtitles
- **Expression is the ultimate proficiency**
- **Internal motivation** is stronger than the external nudges from apps
- The classroom approach is not engaging enough for some learners to continue

Key Insights From Our User Personas

ABOUT OUR PERSONAS

- Research based personas distilled from 11 user interviews
- Created extreme users and identified key design drivers for each
- Validated with real users



Working professional

As a business owner, Becky is constantly in meetings for work and looking for ways to provide better service for her clients. On a personal level, she's always taking on new challenge to meet new people and get to know the world better.

- Single, 32 years old, has a dog
- Business owner and designer in Seattle, WA
- Constantly busy with her business but is never afraid to broaden her horizons

Becky Reitman
Leisure learner

"I want to take my skills to the next level and meet a variety of people from whom I can learn from and share new experiences with."

KEY DATA & DESIGN DRIVERS

Tech-savvyness

- They are not loyal to one way of learning
- They use any means to get their point across when writing
- Is always trying a new app or service

Shyness vs outgoing

- Outgoing individual not shy about asking others for help
- Are excited at the opportunity to share her current skillset no matter the level
- Finds joy in teaching other people

Time spent practicing

- Limited practice at home
- They mainly try to figure things out as they need
- Main practice is during work time when she needs to send emails

Priorities in language learning

- It's mainly for fun, but it's great that it's also helpful for work
- Only practices grammar during work hours but does not prioritize outside of that

ATTITUDES & BEHAVIORS

- Want to be able to find people to casually practice, no need for heavy grammar practice
- They become frustrated with books and technical aspects of the language
- They want to learn in an organic manner, through speaking and hearing others
- If she is going to practice outside of work she wants to be doing something fun like Kareoke, watch a movie, or cook
- Is createive in finding opportunities to practice through existing platforms

CONTEXT & ENVIRONMENT

- Can adapt to jus about any environment to learn, public or private
- Practice at work by writing emails to clients and collaborators in different countries
- They can adapt to practicing with just about anyone

PAIN

MOTIVATIONS & GOALS

Marco Padel
Dedicated learner

"I can't wait to make it to Korea and be able to meet Twice, my favorite K-pop star"

LEISURE LEARNER

Marco Padel

"I can't wait to make it to Korea and be able to meet Twice, my favorite K-pop star"

He's made plans to visit places of interest, so he learns on his spare time. He is open to practicing aloud, but only by himself, because of his introverted nature.

DESIGN DRIVERS

- Prioritizes spoken language over grammar
- Is not limited by apps available to learn a new language
- Is hesitant to pay for an app subscription

PAIN POINTS

- Cannot find tutor that caters to his specific needs
- Current apps are limited in what they can teach him
- Cannot find platform that meets his needs at his current level of proficiency

GOALS

- To be able to hold a conversation
- Needs to connect with tutor on demand
- Needs to know material that will be covered

SERIOUS LEARNER

Becky Reitman

"I want to meet a variety of people from around the world and share new experiences with them"

As a business owner, Becky is constantly in meetings for work and looking for ways to provide better service for her clients. On a personal level, she's always taking on new challenge to meet new people and get to know the world better.

DESIGN DRIVERS

- Outgoing and not shy about practicing with others
- Is excited to share her current skill set no matter the level
- Is always excited to find a new tool to practice
- They are open to multiple ways of practicing

PAIN POINTS

- Can't find others to practice
- Does not want to waste time with grammar or textbook information during leisure time
- Values her time since she runs a business

GOALS

- Need to be able to learn at their own pace
- Need to be able to connect with a tutor on demand
- To be able to hold a conversation

Verbal.

UX Design

Explore ideas/options and design concepts based upon our research.

Uncovering Key Pain Points

We tracked the user journey to identify which areas gave them the most pain points and challenges

STAGE	LEARN A LANGUAGE	SEARCH FOR TOOLS AND METHODS	PRACTICE	ANALYZE PROGRESS
TASKS	• Watching videos • Reading books • Classes • Using language apps	• Online searching • Asking people • App store • Social media	• Pronunciation practice • Meeting people • Watching movies / TV shows • Listening to music	• Teaching / helping others • Performing language activities • Tests and quizzes
CHALLENGES	• Don't know where to start • Boring & too slow • Lack of engagement	• Apps are limited in what they teach • Content is not personalized • Cultural context is not included	• Can't find people to practice with • Apps are not language partners	• Not sure how to track progress or measure fluency • No test to know what level I am at

CONNECTING LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Our first key focus.

Opportunities

After identifying pain points,
we brainstormed potential opportunities
and other ways to take language learning
to the next level.

01 Make real conversations and connections when learning

02 Reward progress and build confidence

03 Keep an easy and not boring process for practicing

04 Incorporate cultural context while practicing

05 Connect local natives and new learners

Market Positioning

We examined how to position our solution in the marketplace and measure our success.

The main monetizing feature is the convenience of the app, much like Uber and Lyft allows users to use it anywhere in the world and connect instantly.

Unique Value Proposition

On demand in person language sessions with native and professional tutors.

Key Metrics

- Number of sessions
- Number of new users
- Satisfaction reviews

Revenue Streams

- 15% of pay from each session
- Advertisement on the app

The Lean Canvas

PROBLEM

- Lack of outlet for people to practice in
- Lack of human interaction
- Lack of personalized lang.
- Content quality
- Inconsistent practice

SOLUTIONS

- Personalized content
- Connecting with native
- speakers
- On demand tutors or learning sessions

UNIQUE VALUE PROPOSITION

- On demand in person language sessions

UNFAIR ADVANTAGE

- Face to face language learning interaction in your local community

CUSTOMER SEGMENTS

- Students
- Tutors (next steps)

EXISTING ALTERNATIVES

- Private lang. tutors
- Language apps
- Language classes
- Immersion programs

KEY METRICS

- Number of sessions
- Number of new users
- Satisfaction reviews
- Income

HIGH-LEVEL CONCEPT

- Verbal is language learning community that achieves fluency through a network of tutors from around the world

CHANNELS

- Word of mouth
- Advertising
- User referrals
- Social media

EARLY ADOPTERS

- Travel bloggers
- Freelance lang. tutors
- Exchange students

COST STRUCTURE

- Product
- Development
- Marketing
- Expenses
- Salaries

REVENUE STREAMS

- 15% of pay from each session
- Advertisement on the app

Our Design Methods

To create our app we developed user epics and storyboards, sketched ideas, and built a clickable prototype.

STORYBOARD & EPICS

SKETCH IDEAS

INTERACTIVE PROTOTYPE

User Epics & User Stories

Taking into consideration our users, we built epics and user stories to satisfy their unique language fluency goals.

Gain confidence

"As leisure learner I want to increase my confidence in learning and speaking a language, so that I can express myself better during my upcoming trip."

Filter tutor profiles

"As serious learner, I want to be able to filter through tutor profiles and practice with the instructor that best fits my need."

Schedule a meeting with a tutor quickly

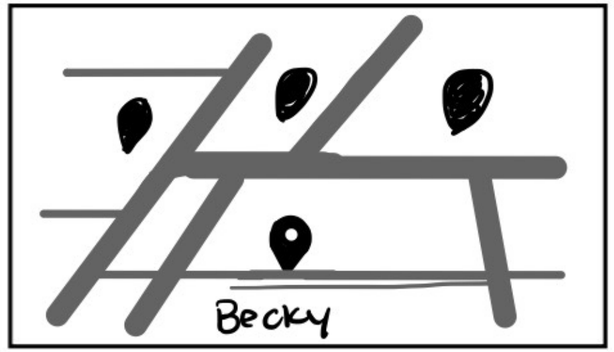
"As a serious learner, I want to be able to quickly find and meet up with an instructor to practice and go over the material that I need to present, for work."

Find language tutors near you

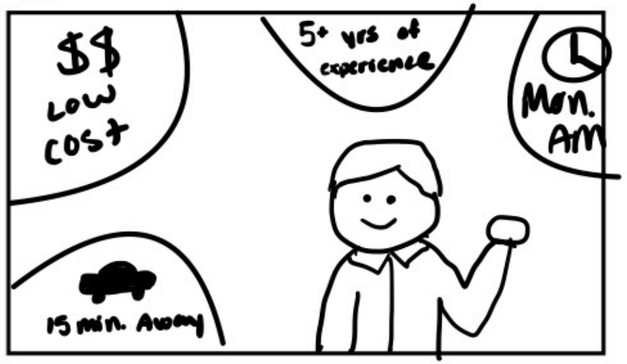
"As a leisure learner, I want to find instructors near me at any given location so that I can practice speaking the language of the region I am visiting."

Scenario: Becky Needs a Tutor

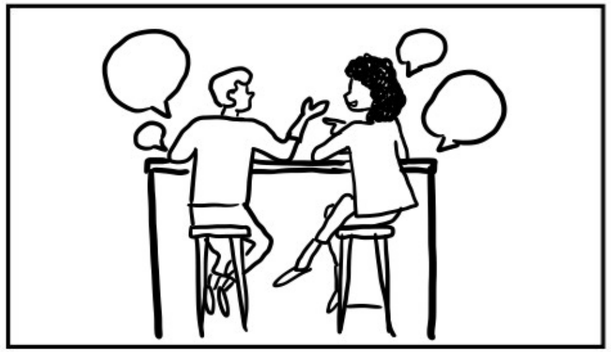
Becky wants an all-in-one app to practice Spanish with natives and get her questions answered to feel better prepared for her upcoming trip to Spain.



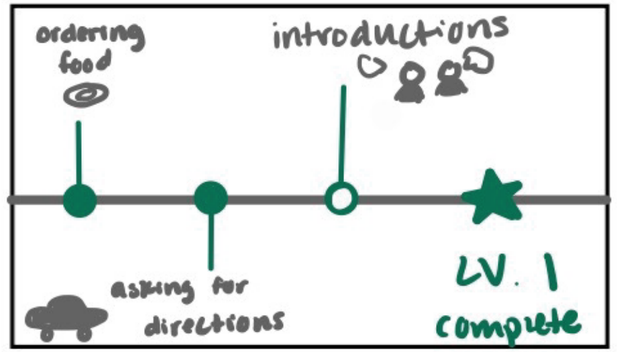
She opens the app Verbal to find language tutors near her.



With the app, she can look over instructor profiles and filter based on their price, availability, and instruction methods.



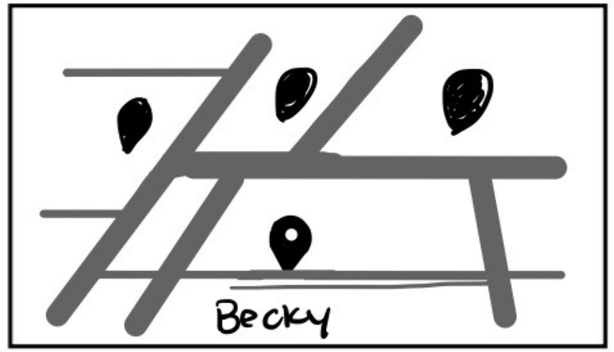
She schedules a lesson with a Spanish instructor just 15 minutes away from her at a local coffee shop. She begins practicing Spanish.



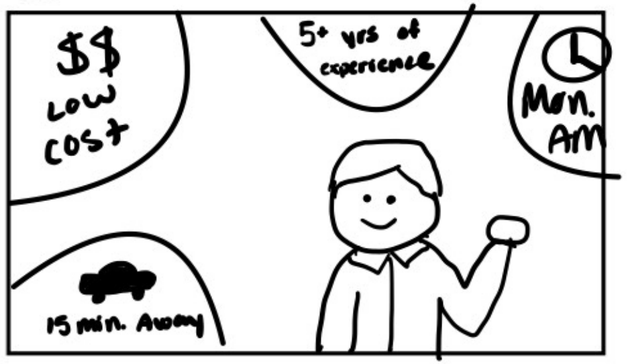
After the session, her tutor uploads the material on the app for Becky to review. Becky can also review past sessions and monitor her progress through the app with badges.

Becky finally has a tool she can use to practice speaking Spanish and monitor her progress so that she can express herself more confidently in her upcoming trip to Spain.

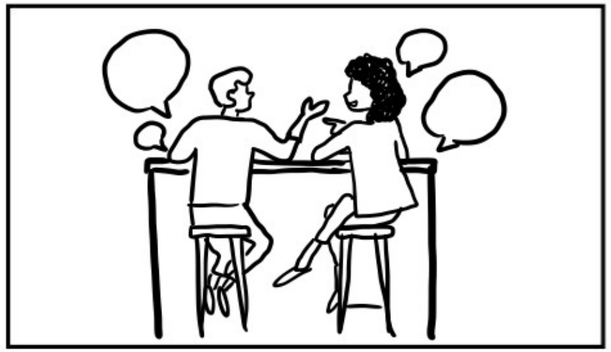
Solutions: Becky Needs a Tutor



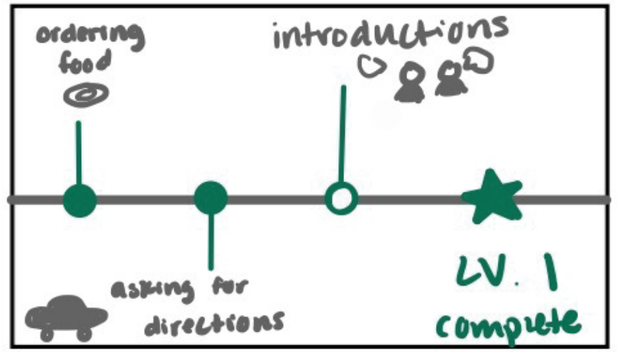
Find tutors nearby or online



Filter through tutors



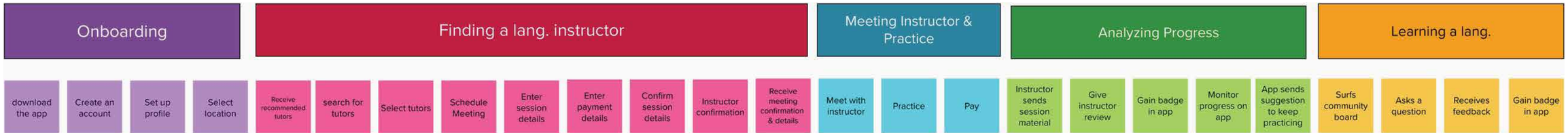
Book meeting with tutor and specify details



Monitor progress and review notes

End-to-End Workflow Progress (V1)

WORKFLOW v1



DETAILS

- Consists of five stages
- Main focus is to connect language learners and provide them with platform to practice at their convenience with native speakers.

CHALLENGES

1. Home screen going directly to search for tutors was overwhelming and with too much information.
2. Unclear if tutors were only nearby or online.
3. Uncomfortable paying up front for session.
4. Make scheduling more concise.
5. Will there be a chance to review tutor after session?
6. How will users interactive with the badge system?

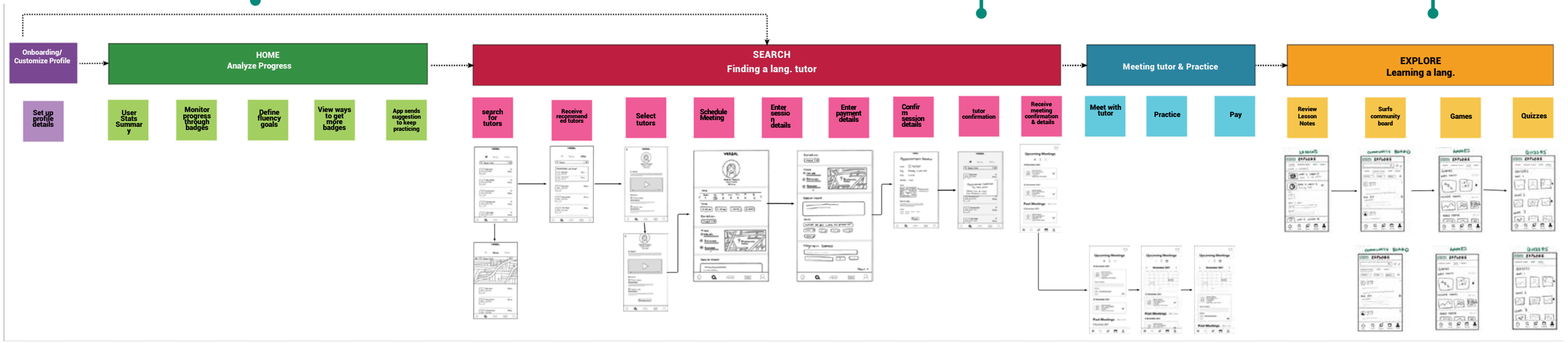
End-to-End Workflow Progress (V2)

WORKFLOW v2

Added a Home Section

Simplified the booking process

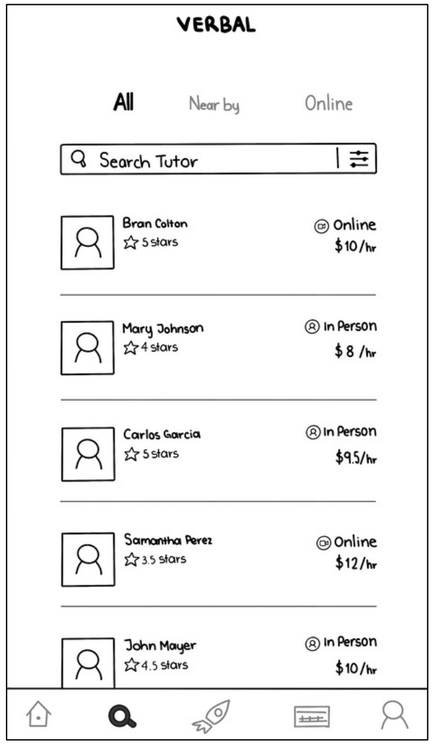
Opened the Explore tab for language learning

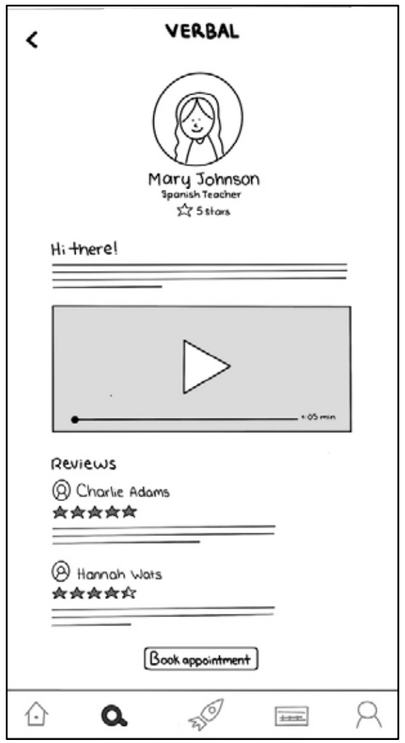


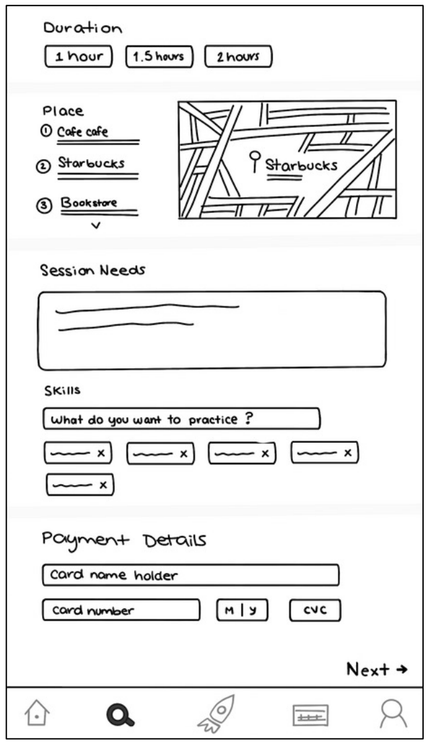
Booking a Tutor

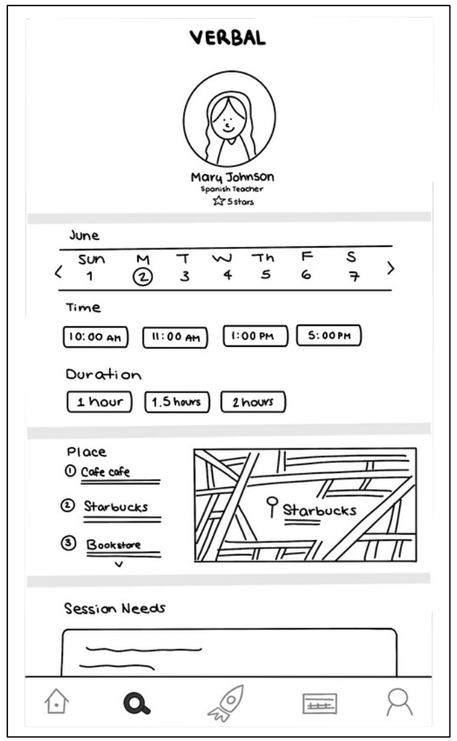
WORKFLOW WITH SCREENS

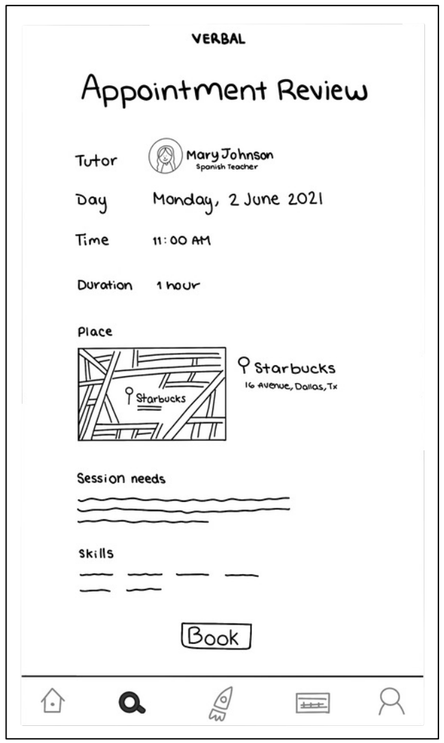
Find Tutor ▶ Review Tutor Details ▶ Book Tutor ▶ Select Availability ▶ Confirm Session







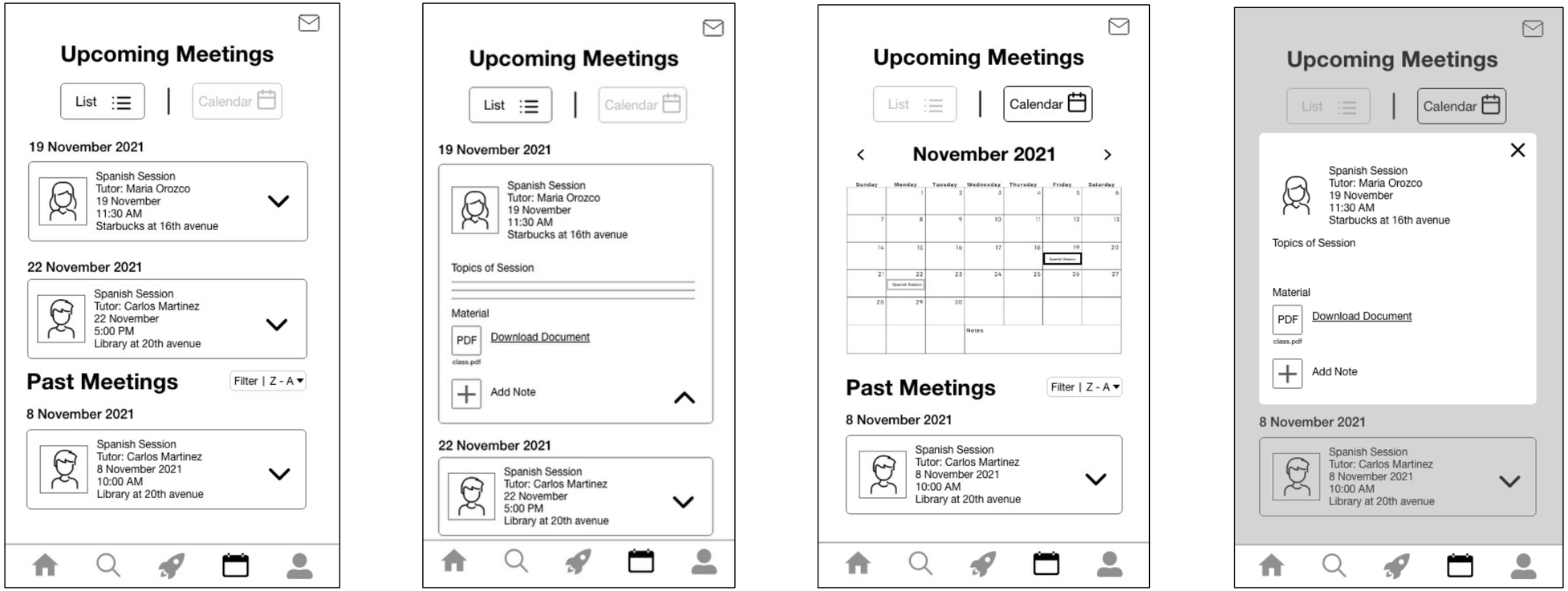




Reviewing Sessions

WORKFLOW WITH SCREENS

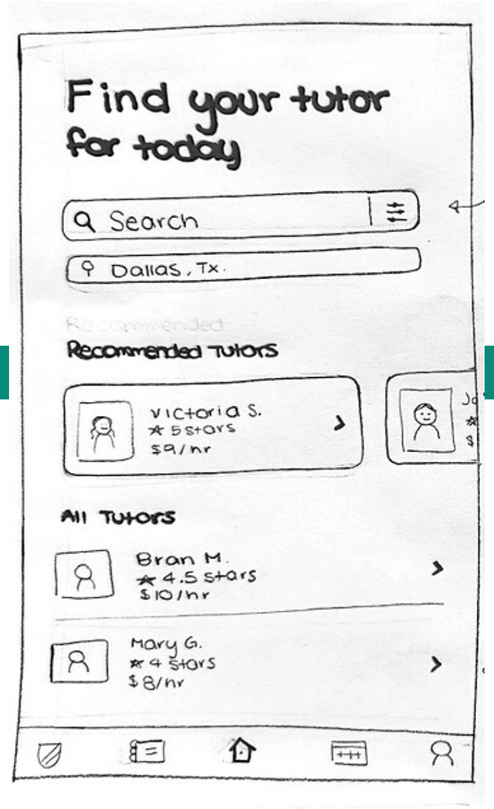
Open Meetings ▶ **View Session Details** ▶ **View Calendar** ▶ **Access Lesson Notes**



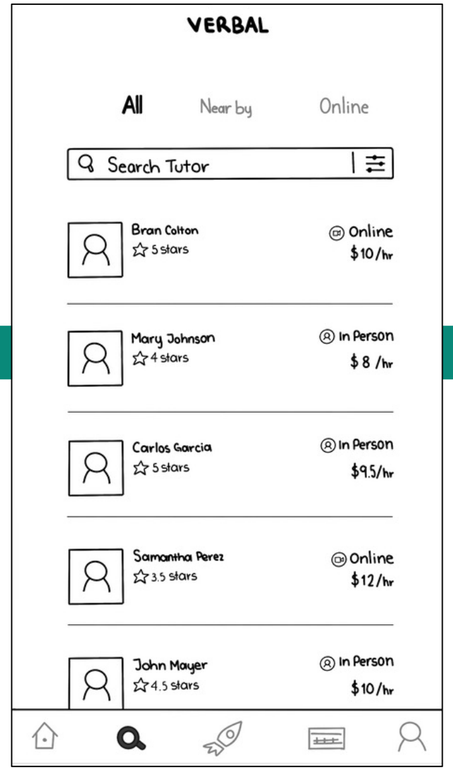
Refining Our Design: Finding Tutors

Our designs went through continuous refinement as we learned more.

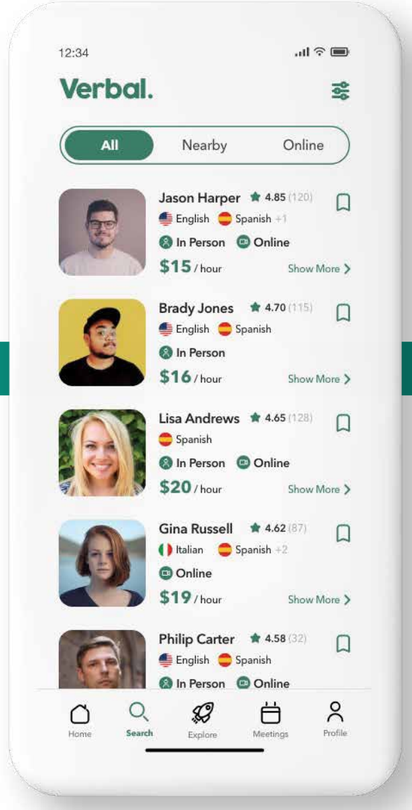
1 SKETCHES



2 WIREFRAMES



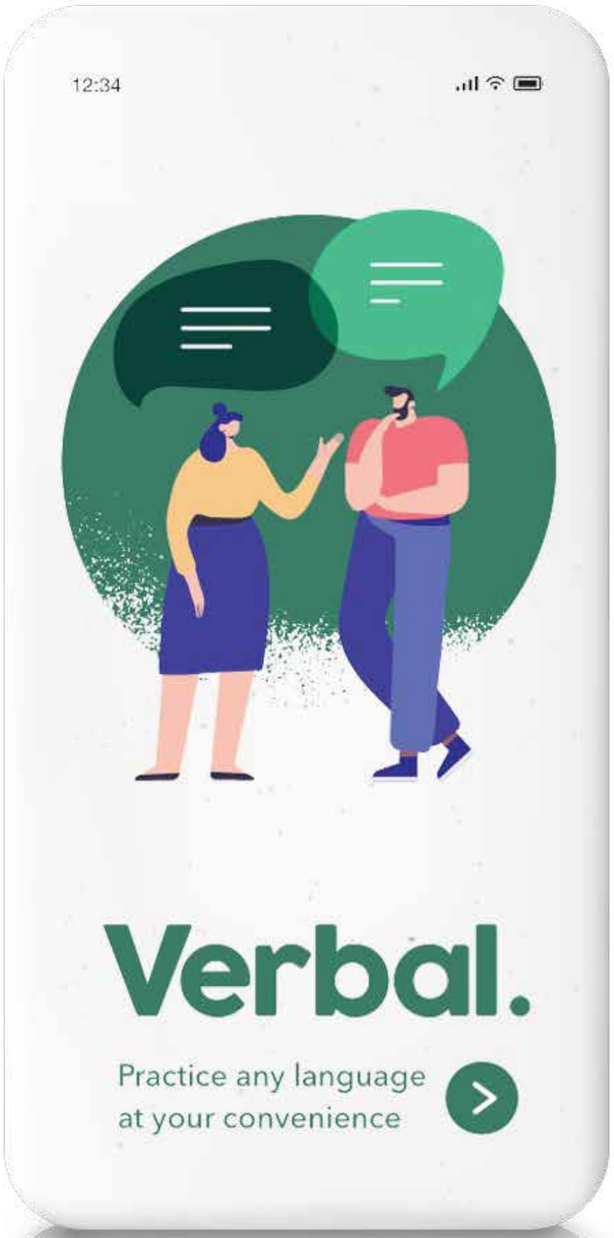
3 HIGH FIDELITY



Verbal Prototype

Quick Demo

VIEW



Verbal.

Usability Testing

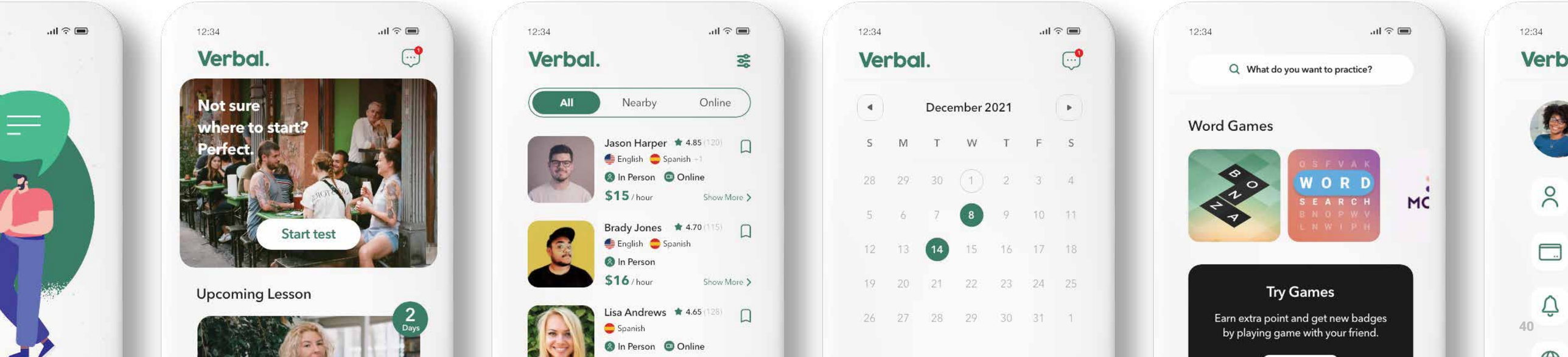
Validate our design with real customers to improve it

Usability Test Overview

The following is an overview of the usability tests conducted to validate our prototype.

HIGH - LEVEL OVERVIEW

- Blink Test
- Initial Impressions Survey
- User Scenario Tests
- Post-Scenario Questions
- SUS Survey
- Post-Test Survey



Usability Test Scenarios

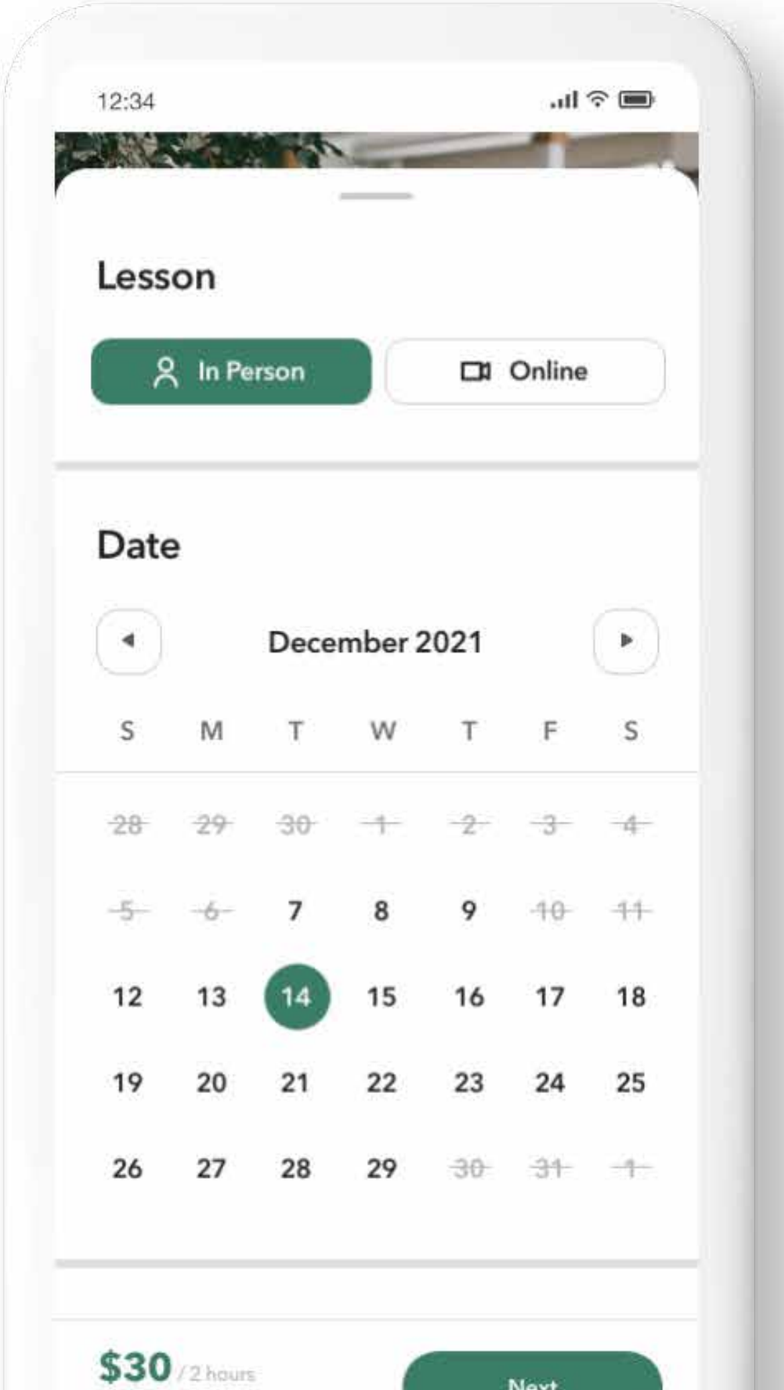
We tested a detailed scenario based on our personas with users to ensure that the usability of our workflows.

SCENARIO

You want to practice your Spanish before a big meeting next week and want to find a tutor that will help you go over your presentation and possible questions. You want to have a 2-hour session.

GOALS

1. You want to schedule a session with a language tutor near you.
2. You want to review your upcoming sessions.



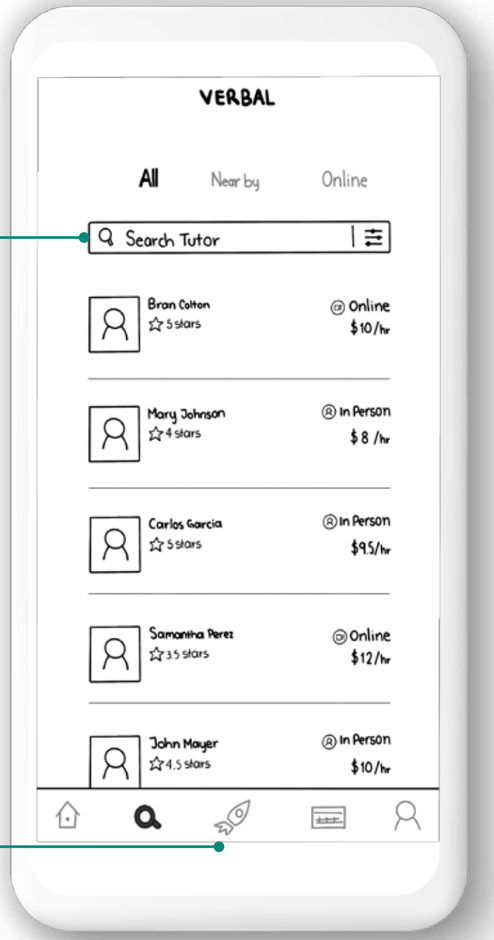
Changes After First Round of Usability Testing

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

- Generally, it was simple to use
- Good use of existing conventions
- Found information they needed relatively quick

CRITICAL FEEDBACK

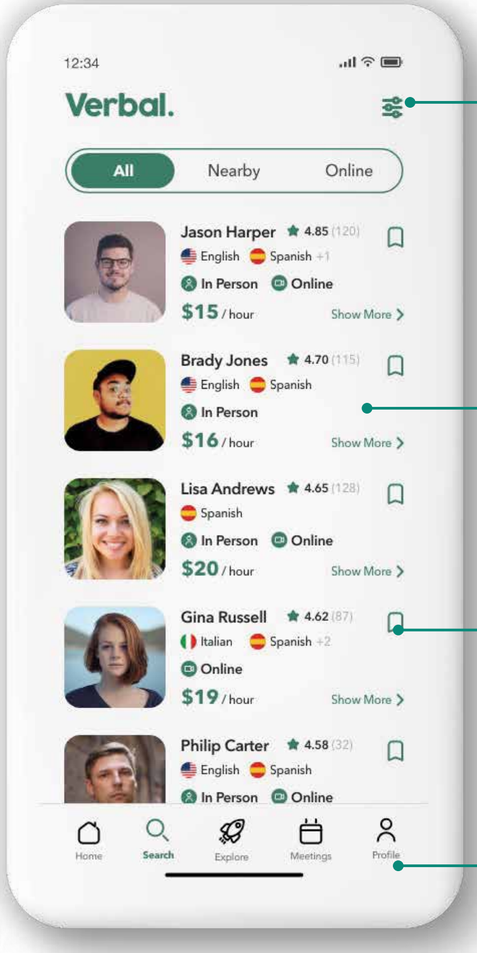
- Filter criteria needed to be defined
- Refined booking process
- Added extra information to tutor profiles



Removed Search

Labeled Explore (future steps)

BEFORE



Changed position of filter

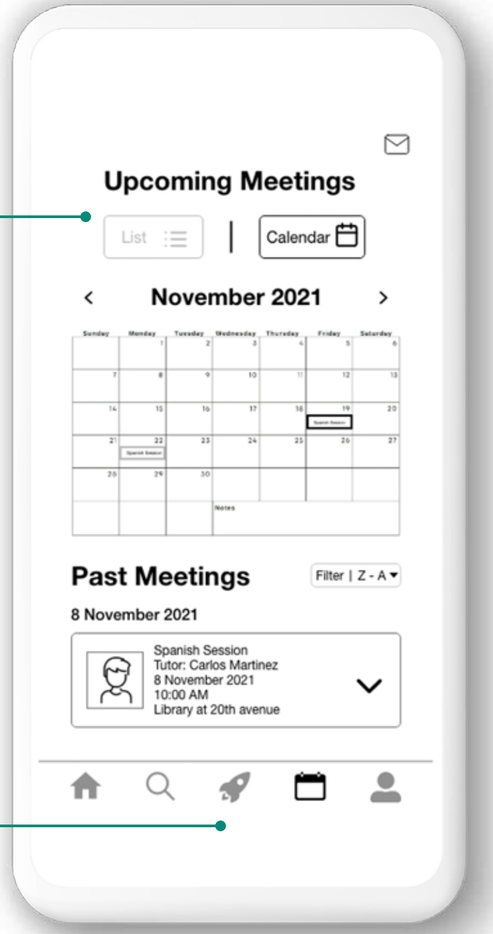
Added more details to tutor profile

Added save feature

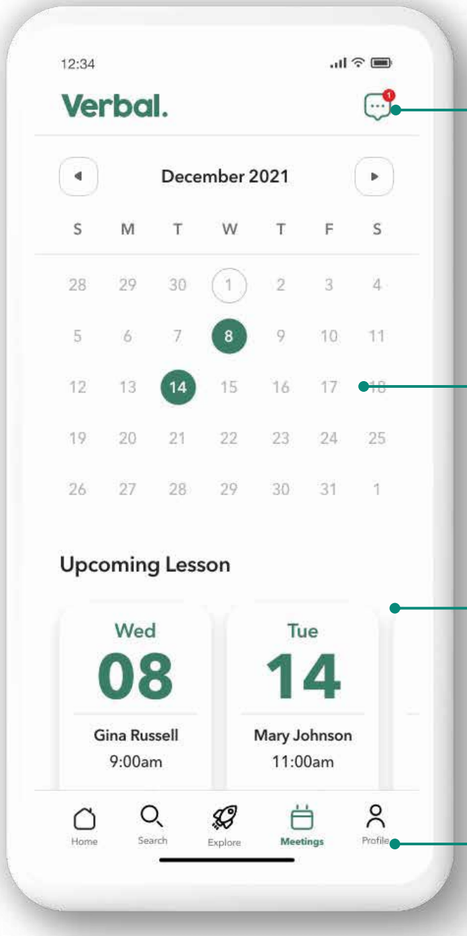
Added name to icons

AFTER

Changes After First Round of Usability Testing



BEFORE



AFTER

Removed list option

Removed Explore (future steps)

Changed icon for messaging

More visible calendar

Added Upcoming Meetings

Added names to icon

POSITIVE FEEDBACK

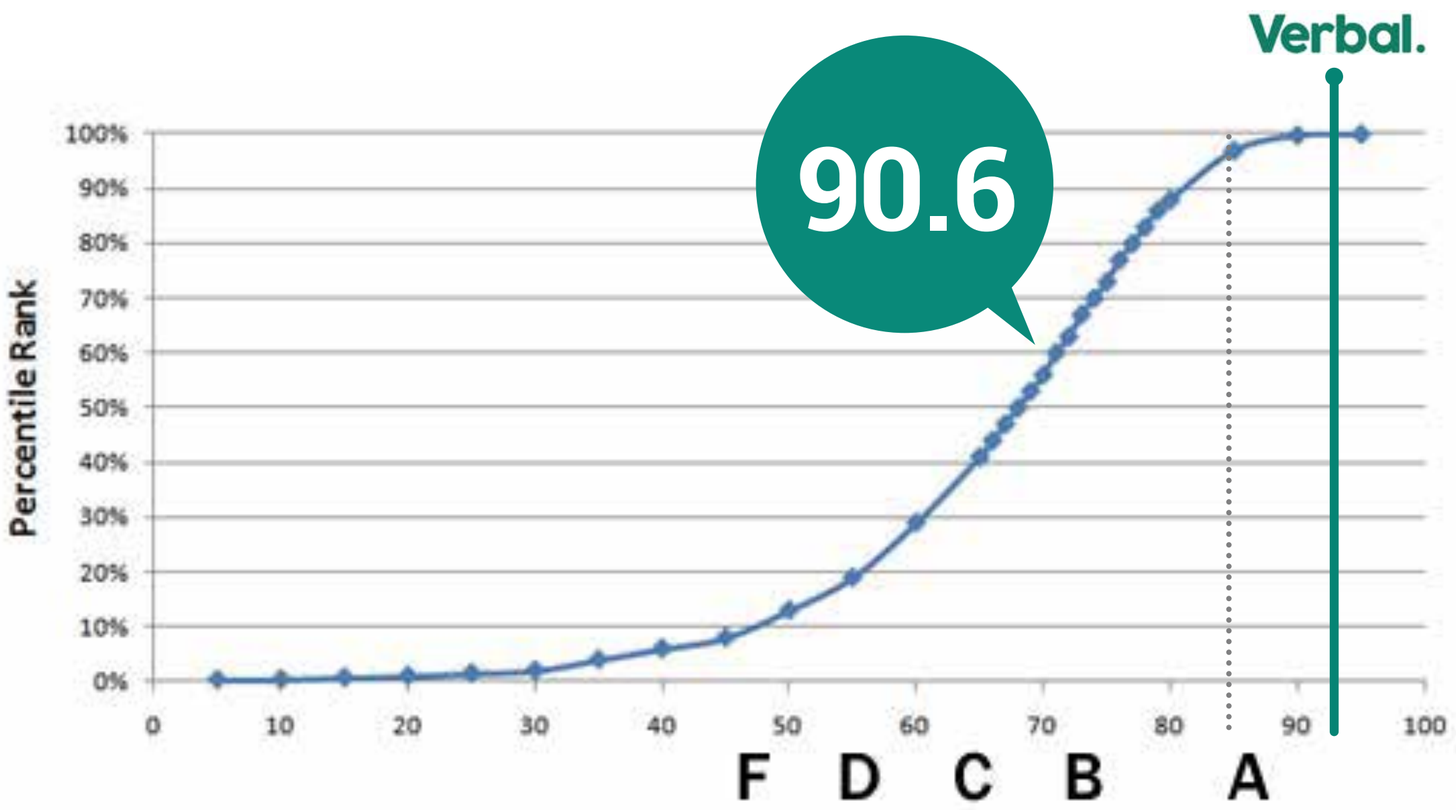
- Visually pleasing at glance
- Liked to see the price upfront
- Easy to complete task

CRITICAL FEEDBACK

- Search bar seemed unnecessary
- Explore icon and function were ambiguous and confusing
- Nav bar needed names

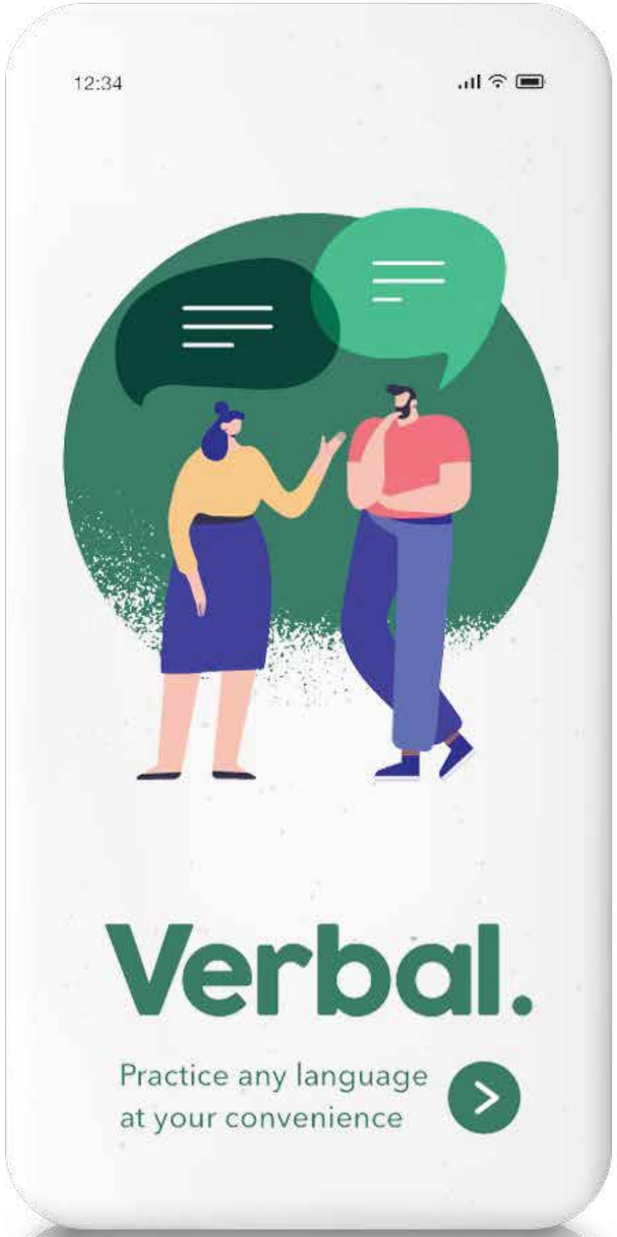
System Usability Scale / SUS

The SUS score for Verbal was a 90.6. This score shows the overall usability and learnability of the prototype. Becky may likely recommend Verbal to a friend.



SUS SCORE

- A score above 82 is where products are recommended to achieve
- Scoring at 68 is a C, and where most products score
- Scoring at anything below 51 is an F, putting you in the bottom 15%



Positive Comments

"Very easy and simple way to help someone learn another language but in a more refined way"

"I really like the concept and how it closes that gap between learning vocabulary / grammar and speaking in real life"

"It looks like a great way to learn language from a more conversational standpoint."

"Clean, serves its purpose without it being too complex"

CONNECTING LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Our first key focus.

Next Steps

We plan to continue to refine our current designs and might include the following features:

01 User Progress Dashboard

02 Community Board

03 Session Notes

04 Games and Quizzes

05 Social Media Integration