Overview of Project

**Topic**

Being able to learn a second language through an app rather than taking physical, face-to-face classes is required in our fast-paced world. It allows for people to learn at their own pace and wherever they are. Most language apps are free as well, so learning a language is something people can learn at their leisure.

LingChat is an app based off a blend of Duolingo, Babbel and My Language Exchange. It allows users to practice their conversational skills with fluent speakers around the world. It’s a free app that pairs up native speakers and their student counterparts across the world, based on a CEFR system that is utilised in European nations and is well recognised as a ranking system for a speakers proficiency in another language. There is a chance further into the development of LingChat that we will have an opportunity to grow as the user base also grows. The demand for new languages as the diversity of learners increases will create a competitive app within the language-learning market. There us a potential to develop a second LingChat app specifically made for kids to make friends with other kids across the world- almost like a 21st century version of pen pals. Another interesting development that could be be made in the future would be the use of the camera to learn Auslan- which is currently only able to be learnt through physical classes or video tutorials that allow for no interaction. It also allows for offline learning- however the conversations will require the device to be online.

**Motivation**

The project was motivated by the need for a free, conversational, language learning app. Most commercial language apps only offer specific services within the free domain- however, if you want to access to more than those services, you need to pay. Also, with a lot of other language learning apps, there is little to no conversation or interaction with other language learners. The current apps within the language-learning market call for convenience, which comes from being able to have a lesson anywhere at any given time. It also appeals the fast-paced world that we live in where people want things much faster. If a future employer was to see this project, it would prove that we were able to see and fill a gap in the market. It would demonstrate we could do it in a way that was innovative and showed we could work well as part of a team.

**Landscape**

Apps like Duolingo and Babbel teach language in specific lessons- like greetings, foods, names for items of clothing- and allow for chats with bots about certain subjects. Duolingo is free, and Babbel boasts that it can teach a semester of a college language class in twenty one hours for minimal cost. The programs are both crafted by language experts- linguists as well as native speakers. Duolingo allows for learners to chat together in both their native language and the language they’re learning, but it does not allow for a native speaker to converse with them in the language they’re learning, or teach them how to use phrases in a way that is conversational instead of stilted. Duolingo also has carefully crafted structured conversations with bots. Babbel is very similar to Duolingo, except that it is a subscription service and also allows for quick lessons that are based on a learners individual learning style.

The most similar competitor is an app called HelloTalk, which connects native speakers to each other- for example, someone who is a native speaker of German who wants to learn English will get paired with somebody who speaks fluent German (but may want to improve their conversational skills) but is a native speaker of English. It also has a Facebook-style newsfeed that allows people to post “statuses” in the language they’re trying to learn.

When we originally started work on this project, HelloTalk did not yet exist, and so the development of our app was based on the gap in the market that called for a conversational language app that offered more than just structured lessons.