ORIGINAL RESEARCH PAPER

Education

EFFICACY OF LANGUAGE APPS *HELLO TALK* AND BUSUU IN DEVELOPING ORAL FLUENCY AMONG STUDENTS WITH LANGUAGE LEARNING DISABILITIES

KEY WORDS:

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ABSTRACT

The present experimental study was undertaken with two objectives in view (i) to identify students with language learning disabilities and to apply Language Apps i.e *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* in the teaching learning process of students with language learning disabilities and (ii) to verify the effectiveness of Language Apps with special reference to students with language learning disabilities. Two matched groups of students with language learning disabilities were formed for the purpose of this experiment. The language learning disabled students were identified and selected for the study on the basis of their performance in the LLD diagnostic Test-a tool specially developed by the investigator for the purpose of this experiment. To assess the effectiveness of the applied language learning apps a comprehensive oral test was also constructed on the basis of plus one frame work of aural oral test. The control group was taught through traditional lecture method while the selected Language Apps were applied to the students with language learning disabilities. The obtained results show that the applied language Apps i.e *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* were effective in enhancing the oral fluency of students with language learning disabilities to a considerable extent.

INTRODUCTION

English began as an obscure tongue, spoken in a remote and unimportant corner of the world. But now it is the most important of all living languages. Partly because of commercial advantages, partly because of conquests followed by industrial development, partly because of emigration and colonisation, and partly, again because it opens up one of the world's greatest literatures, it is not only the native speech of large communities scattered across the globe, but also it is second language to a number of people in many different countries. It is a subject of study and the medium of instruction in most universities throughout the world. With the advent of globalisation and multinational companies, English has become all the more important for placement and professional development.

To learn English in this digital era we cannot depend on traditional lecture method alone. It needs to be complemented with technology mediated strategy for development of language skills in students who learn English as a second / foreign language. This is where language Apps can be of much use to learn English with ease.

Language Apps

Language App means software that one can access and use while on line, via a browser, instead of software residing on one's computer.

A mobile application, most commonly referred to as an app, is a type of application software designed to run a mobile device such as smart phone or tablet computer. Mobile application frequently serves to provide users with similar services to those accessed on personal computers.

To put it in simple terms, language App is a specific application with sole focus on linguistic aspects used by millions of people across the globe. It accounts for language learning to a considerable extent. It facilitates language acquisition of students with language learning disabilities. *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* are the most widely used free language apps.

Hello Talk

Hello talk is an app aimed to facilitate speaking practice and eliminate the potential stress of real time conversation. Learners can find native speakers and converse with them using a whats app - like chat with voice and text messages.

The best feeling is when the user comes across a native speaker of his or her target language who also wants to lean his or her mother tongue- it's like you hit the language jackpot! Users can correct each other's messages with an in-built correction tool, which transforms the language exchanges into tiny tutoring sessions. The

app also has an integrated translation system to help the users avoid those moments when they really want to communicate something but just lack the one word that gives the sentence it's proper meaning. The users can mark their top conversations or messages, so their favorite phrases will not get lost and the text-to-voice option will make sure they always know how to pronounce the messages they receive. To help you with conversation motivation you can also arrange language exchanges with lengths defined by different parameters like time, number of exchanged messages or characters.

Busuu

Bussu is a language app that offers full courses in 12 languages. The app is free but to unlock most of the features and course materials you have to invest $ 17 a month. The app takes the learners through learning individual words to simple dialogues and questions about the dialogues all of which include audio where you can listen to native pronunciation. The lessons are organized in topical themes where we learn skills and expressions connected to tasks. Each course also comes with a separate mini "travel course" for those who need to quickly get the basics before a trip abroad-pretty handy!

The special aspect of *Busuu* is that we can engage native speakers in our personal learning process. *Busuu* learners contribute their native speaking skills to the platform by correcting texts created by those who study their language. The desktop version even allows us to chat to native speakers' real time. Both studying and contributing to the platform as a teacher allows us to collect "berries", points used to rank students based on their activity.

Language Learning Disabilities

According to Tansley and Panckhurst (1981) the learning disabled students are those students who in the absence of sensory defect or overt organic damage have intractable learning problems in one or more of reading, writing, speaking and mathematics and who do not respond to normal teaching. Kirk (1976) defines the language learning disabled students as those students who have disorders in development in language speech, reading and associated communication skills needed for social interaction'.

These students with language learning disabilities are marked for disorders of attention, hyperactivity and impulsivity, memory disorder, and disorders in listening, reading, writing and spoken language. Besides, these students exhibit poor social and interpersonal skill, visual perceptual deficit, auditory perceptual deficit and motor deficiencies. As a result, they lag behind in learning and using language. But, these students with language learning disabilities constitute such a considerable percentage of student population that they cannot be ignored. Also, one cannot conceive of any all-round national development without ensuring

adequate human resource development of the disabled, deprived and disadvantaged students in every classroom. This warrants a special teaching learning strategy for the students with language learning disabilities. Language learning apps i.e *Hello Talk and Busuu* can be of much value to use English with ease

Need for the Study
Language Apps can be used by teachers and students for learning English and to build language skills anytime, anywhere on their mobile devices. It is possible to learn a language with a book, but it is much more entertaining when using a language learning app. When we are constrained to waste our time while waiting for an appointment or on the bus / train we can use language learning apps to learn the specific language.

We can learn at our own pace and we can learn what is relevant to us. The students can ingrain the new language i.e. English with a nifty review manager. Language Apps facilitate speaking from the beginning.

A method that contains images, sound and video can be much more effective and motivating than the traditional lecture method. In addition, one can obtain corrections or feedback immediately. One need not wait for a correction. The fact that it is fun will keep the students motivated. So the content that is updated regularly, virtual coaching and statistical progressions will augment motivation.

Language Apps are cost effective and time effective. So the language learning apps will be more useful to such students who experience considerable difficulties in learning a language in addition to their mother tongue. Hence, an earnest attempt has been made in this research to verify the efficacy of Language Apps i.e *Hello Talk and Busuu* in enhancing oral fluency of students with language learning disabilities.

Objectives of the Study
The main objective of the study was to apply language learning apps i.e. *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* to enhance the oral fluency of LLD students in class XI and to assess its effectiveness with special reference to LLD students. Keeping the above main objective in mind the following specific objectives were framed.
1) To verify whether there is any significant difference in the pre-test performance between control group LLD students and experimental group LLD students.
2) To assess whether there is any significant difference in the post test performance between control group LLD students and experimental group LLD student.
3) To find out whether there is any significant difference in the performance of the control group students and experimental group students between pre-test and post-test.
4) To verify the significant difference if any in the retention test performance of the students between control group and experimental group.
5) To measure the significant difference between the mean gain achievement scores of the students in control group and experimental group.

Hypotheses of the Study
1) There is no significant difference in the pre-test performance between control group LLD students and experimental group LLD students.
2) There is significant difference in the post-test performance between control group LLD students and experimental group LLD students.
3) There is no significant difference in the performance of control group students and experimental group students between pre-test and post-test.
4) There is no significant difference in the retention test performance of the students between control group and experimental group.
5) There is significant difference in the mean gain achievement scores between the students in the control group and experimental group.

Methodology
The various steps followed in the methodology of this study include development LLD diagnostic tool, identifying students with language learning disabilities, construction of achievement test, selection of sample, applying language learning apps, administration of tool for pre-test and post-test, collection of data, scoring procedure and employing appropriate statistical techniques for arriving at scientific conclusions.

Construction of Tool
To measure the performance of the students before and after the experiment, an oral fluency test was constructed by the investigator based on the frame work of +1 aural oral test. The test was subjected to the scrutiny of the subject expert and the experts in test constriction and was further refined on the basis of their suggestions .The agreement of the experts was taken as the index of the validity of the tool. The content validity of the tool by expert opinion, item validity by item analysis and the reliability of the tool by split half method were established.

Identifying LLD students
For the purpose of this investigation the students with language learning disabilities were identified on the basis of curriculum based assessment and their performance in the diagnostic test developed by the investigator for the purpose of this experiment. The developed LLD diagnostic tool included listening comprehension scale, oral expression scale, reading comprehension scale and written comprehension scale. The students who scored below 25% in the LLD Diagnostic Test were classified as student with language learning disabilities.

Sample Design
For the purpose of this investigation, 50 students with language learning disabilities of class XI from TNPMMN Higher Secondary School, Dhalavaipuram were selected as stated above. Out of the fifty students with language learning disabilities finally selected for the study, two groups were formed following systematic random sampling technique. They were placed in the order of merit. All the odd number students formed the control group while the even number students constituted the experimental group. To see whether both the groups were matched ones or not, mean and standard deviation were calculated for their LLD Diagnostic test scores. Then t-test was applied. The obtained t-value (0.62) revealed that both the groups were matched ones before the experiment. The control group was taught through the traditional lecture method and the experimental group learnt through language learning apps

Implementation of the strategy
The experimental treatment was provided to the LLD students of the experimental group for a period of one month. The LLD students were clearly instructed how to use the language learning apps *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* for their vocabulary development and conversational practice. Since the students were good at using smart phone/ I phone and at using whatsapp, using the language learning apps *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* was not much difficult. With progression of time, they were able to use with ease.

Data Collection
The experiment was conducted for a period of thirty working days. At the end of the experimental period, a post-test was conducted to the students of the experimental group and the students of the control group. To assess the efficacy of the strategy in terms of retention, a retention test was also conducted after a lapse of one month period. The responses given by these three groups in pre-test and post-test formed the vital data required for analysis.

Scoring Procedure
The achievement test consisted of 100 objective type questions. These test items were selected on the basis of item analysis. The total score of the test was 100, for each correct answer, the score was one and for each wrong answer, the score was zero.

Statistical techniques used in the study
The data thus obtained were then analyzed by using appropriate statistical techniques such as mean, standard deviation and t-test.

FINDINGS AND CONCLUSIONS
There is no significant difference between the pre-test mean scores of control group LLD students and the experimental group LLD students. Both the groups were very much alike before the inception of the experiment. Further, this table substantiates the reliability of the classification of the matched groups on the basis of their scholastic achievement in quarterly examination and diagnostic test. (Ref.Table1)

Table-1: Analysis of the pre-test scores of control group and experimental group

Name of the group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-values
Control Group	25	19.96	4.23	0.14 @
Experimental Group	25	20.12	3.77	

Note: @ not significant at 0.05 level

2) There is marked difference in the post-test performance between the control group students taught through traditional lecture method and the experimental group students taught through language learning apps. The achievement of the experimental group students with language learning disabilities is higher than the achievement of the control group students with language learning disabilities. Moreover, the progress as well as the rate of progress made by the experimental group students is higher than the rate of progress evinced by their counterparts in the control group. The gulf of difference between the rates of progress made by the control group and the experimental group is the resultant outcome of the experimental treatment i.e. implementation of language learning apps during the experimental period.(Ref.Table2)

Table-2: Analysis of the post-test scores of control group and experimental group

Name of the group	N	Mean	SD	Calculated t-values
Control Group	25	22.48	4.89	16.42 **
Experimental Group	25	44.32	4.49	

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level

3) There is significant difference in the performance of the experimental group students taught through language apps between the pre-test and the post, while there is no such difference between pre-test and post test with reference to control group taught through traditional lecture method. The applied strategy i.e. language learning apps i.e. that is *Hello Talk* and *Busuu* augmented the achievement of the experimental group students in the post-test. Their achievement is higher in the post-test than in the pre-test. It testifies to the efficacy of language apps (Ref.Table3)

Table-3: Analysis of the Pre-test and Post-test Scores of Control Group, Experimental Group

Name of the Group	Pre-test			Post – test			Calculated t-values
	N	Mean	SD	N	Mean	SD	
Control Group	25	19.96	4.23	25	22.48	4.89	1.76 @
Experimental Group	25	20.12	3.77	25	44.32	4.49	17.66 **

Note: ** Significant at 0.01 level @ Not significant at 0.05 level

4) There is significant difference in the EL achievement among the control group LLD students, experimental group LLD students and normal group students at retention test stage. The performance of the experimental group students is better than the performance of the control group students and the achievement of the normal group students is higher than that of the LLD students belonging to control group and experimental group. Another interesting fact is that the experimental group students have narrowed down the gap between them and the normal students. They have retained the voluminous information learnt during the experimental period. It is evident from their performance in the retention test. So the strategy is effective in terms of retention. All these vouch for the efficacy of the strategy i.e. Language learning apps(Ref Table4)

Table 4 - Analysis of retention test score of control group and experimental group

Name of the Group	N	Mean	SD	F-value	Calculated t-values
Control Group	25	21.44	4.74	187.09	CG Vs EG – 17.62**
Experimental Group	25	44.32	4.49		CG Vs NG – 17.39**
Normal Group	25	49.96	6.72		EG Vs NG – 4.24**

Note: ** significant at 0.01 level

5) There is significant difference in the mean gain scores between the control group LLD students and the experimental group LLD students. The experimental group LLD students have established a clear lead over the control group LLD students in terms of progress and rate of progress. While the rate of progress made by the control group students is meagre and insignificant, the progress as well as the rate of progress made by the experimental group students is very significant. The efficacy of language learning apps is clearly evidenced by the progress and the rate of progress made by the experimental group students. (Ref Table 5)

Mean Gain Scores Analysis of LLD students in Control Group and Experimental Group

Name of the Group	N	Mean	SD	Critical ratio	Calculated t-value
Control Group	25	2.52	4.96	0.51@	17.05**
Experimental Group	25	24.20	3.98	6.08*	

Note: ** significant at 0.01 level

Implications
1) The results of the study have established that language learning apps are more effective than the traditional lecture method in teaching English of Class XI to the students with language learning disabilities. When, it is very effective to the students with language learning disabilities, it has to be equally effective, if not more effective, to other backward students like under-achievers, low achievers, and slow learners etc.
2) Since the use of the language learning apps enhances the achievement of students with language learning disabilities, it would diminish wastage and stagnation in our schools. Therefore, necessary orientation may be given at District Institute of Education and Training level so that awareness can be created among primary school and high school teachers also and they would be able to identify and combat learning disabilities at the early stage itself.

CONCLUSIONS
The above analysis and the findings lead to the conclusion that language learning apps are more effective than the traditional lecture method in teaching English to the students with language learning disabilities. Further, the strategy enables the students with language learning disabilities to cope with normal students to a considerable extent. Hence, this strategy can be applied as a viable learning strategy in inclusive setting.

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