



The Impact of the Combination of Online English Learning App Cambly and TESOL on English Learners

Tingyu Liu¹

¹ Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences, Beijing Normal University - Hong Kong Baptist University United International College (UIC), Zhuhai, 519087, China

q030032031@mail.uic.edu.cn

Abstract. In the past three years, the world has been plagued by epidemics, and achieving face-to-face teaching between teachers and students has become a common problem. More and more classes are moving online. The rapid development of technology and the further spread of electronic products has laid the foundation for the development of mobile learning of English. With the development of technology and social progress, the rise of the big data era has made the combination of education and the Internet a trend. This paper considers online English learning apps and TESOL to explore how the product of their combination will impact English learners. This paper chooses Cambly as an example to explore the impact that the combination of Cambly and TESOL might have on English learners who are using the app. By analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of Cambly and discussing the possible needs of English learners, the paper concludes that learning with Cambly can have a positive impact on the user's learning. Finally, the paper also suggests some improvements to Cambly and other online English learning apps in the thought of current trends.

Keywords: TESOL, English learning App, Cambly.

1 Introduction

Mobile devices play a prominent role in all over the world. Previous research shows a positive connection between students' ability to learn a language and using mobile devices^[1]. Mobile learning is a new form of learning through communication with others, where learners can access educational information, resources and services through wireless devices and mobile devices^[2]. Digital applications like Cambly, Tandem, HelloTalk, and italki enable users to communicate and learn English words, phrases, and dialogs digitally. Among these, Cambly is one of the most popular English learning platforms in terms of use and popularity. Its features allow users to enjoy English courses with the TESOL model and have an improvement in English listening and speaking ability.

The TESOL model has a unique status and existing meaning in English language teaching. With the influence of the Internet, intercultural communicative teaching is gradually becoming a trend and English learning apps are becoming one of the

© The Author(s) 2023

S. Yacob et al. (eds.), *Proceedings of the 2023 7th International Seminar on Education, Management and Social Sciences (ISEMSS 2023)*, Advances in Social Science, Education and Humanities Research 779, https://doi.org/10.2991/978-2-38476-126-5_45

important channels for intercultural communicative learning, thus making the TESOL model particularly important. Due to the influence of TESOL, the knowledge that needs to be imparted to students in the classroom involves many practical aspects such as greeting, asking for directions, and other functional languages, in addition to the traditional basic knowledge of English such as the alphabet and grammar. This means that interaction between teacher and students is inevitable and should be as light-hearted as possible, with a chat-like approach that will stimulate students' initiative and desire to explore the English language and thus transmit knowledge to them.

Online teaching has brought great difficulties to language learning due to the negative effects of network instability, reduced interaction between teachers and students, and easy distractions for students. In offline classes, teachers can intuitively observe students' reactions and make adjustments to the content or progress of the class at any time according to the feedback. However, in the online classroom, teachers cannot find the current state of students in time, and this greatly reduces the interaction between teachers and students, which creates great difficulties for language learning classes that need to use the target language to practice. In addition, under the influence of network factors, the network may be unstable, which usually causes chaos in the classroom and delays truly effective class time. Under these influences, the quality of classroom teaching will be greatly reduced. Failure to get timely and effective language dialogue and feedback will also have a great negative impact on students' acceptance of knowledge.

In this context, mobile English learning apps have become the choice that most students would like to be. At this time, students need internet access and smartphones, for example, to make their routine activities online easier ^[3]. Through the combination of the Internet and mobile electronic devices, English learning apps can meet students' learning needs anytime and anywhere. Students can choose the time and place to study more flexibly with their own will.

The topic of this paper is the impact of the combination of the online English learning app Cambly and TESOL on English learners. This paper uses a case study approach to explore the impact of the combination of the online English learning app Cambly and TESOL on English learners. This paper also compares Cambly with another online English learning app and summarizes the strengths of Cambly and the areas that need to be improved. Sun (2022) researched and got results that show that the TESOL technical standards for language teachers are still applicable to teachers in the current environment ^[4]. Through an analysis of the problem, combined with real students' needs for English language learning and the current situation of English education in China, this paper proposes some modifications to online English learning apps as a way to help English learners make better use of online English learning apps to learn English, and approach to give some technological help for teachers' further improvement.

2 Online English Learning App Cambly Combined with TESOL

2.1 Features of Cambly

Cambly is an online English learning app, which focuses on improving users' oral English learning. Alghammas (2020) stated that Cambly is a commercial company founded in 2013, focusing on helping ELL or ESL to practice speaking skills with qualified native (or native-like) tutors [5].

On Cambly, users have the freedom to choose teachers of different nationalities according to their language learning needs and experience English accents from around the world. Unlike other English learning apps, Cambly's tutors are from native English-speaking countries such as the USA and Australia, and most of them graduated from world-renowned universities and have extensive English training experience.

Users are able to practice their speaking skills and adapt to listening to English with a variety of accents as they interact with the tutors on an ongoing basis. Each tutor has their profile, where users can find people who match their interests or share the same ideas. Tutor profile information is accurate and publicly available, and when users open Cambly, they can view the profiles of available native speakers before starting an audio call in order to select the person with whom they share the most common interests and are most comfortable talking.

2.2 Cambly Has a Clearer Target

With the development of technology and the Internet, the combination of Internet and language learning is becoming an unignore trend, and there are more and more English learning apps have appeared in the market.

Many different aspects of language learning have been carried out by various English learning apps. However, most of the apps focus on both users' word learning and other aspects, considering them as their technical target, and make many rules to create their teaching methods. Li and Su (2022) states that for the majority of users, most English learning apps focus on their functional design, but neglects their educational aspect, which lacks the integration of educational concepts, resulting in an obvious convergence of mobile English learning app on the market without outstanding features [6]. Cambly has a clearer target. It focuses on users' oral English improvement and combines it with the TESOL pattern. However, other English learning apps on the market provide users with learning opportunities through some interesting ways or self-study modes. Compared with these apps, Cambly is more inclined to course teaching and can better integrate with TESOL's pattern. At the same time, Cambly provides users with a channel to communicate with native speakers, which can create an atmosphere closer to the requirements of learning English language environment for users.

In addition, in traditional English teaching, students are mainly in a passive state, listening to the teacher's key points while they take notes and memorize them on their own. This is too rigid a mode of teaching for students to receive knowledge.

According to Chen (2021)'s research, in recent years, the English learning mode has gradually changed from cramming teaching mode to stimulating students' interest and independent learning [7]. What's more, in the context of COVID-19, English classes have been moved online and many students have started to use English learning apps. Learning English on mobile does not exactly replicate the traditional English teaching model; instead, the TESOL model is better adapted to the online classroom. A fun and active online English classroom is essential as the teacher is unable to discipline and interact with the students in a timely manner, making it difficult for students to be interested and focused on learning English. However, as Ren Jiayin (2022) argues, English teaching should take place in a good English learning environment, where students' English literacy is generally low and passive teaching usually fails to stimulate students' interest in learning and makes it difficult to urge them to actively participate in classroom interactions, whereas the TESOL-based English teaching model mainly enables students to learn in an autonomous way [8]. Therefore, teachers should focus on cultivating students' interests in the teaching process, taking students' interests as the main focus and using their own lives or hobbies as an entry point to create an attractive and active classroom, which is important for online English classes. Cambly has gathered a large number of teachers with professional teaching experience, who are basically native speakers, which creates a good English learning environment for the students, i.e., the users, and enables them to quickly integrate into the English-speaking environment. Moreover, Cambly offers users the possibility to choose their own teachers and encourages students to find teachers who match their interests, thus creating a more efficient classroom.

3 Comparison with Tandem

In the current English learning apps market, Hellotalk, Tandem, and other apps are also popular. This article will take Tandem as an example. Compared with Cambly, Tandem is more like a global English communication app. In contrast, Cambly has a greater focus on classroom teaching, combined with the TESOL model, a system that is more in line with the needs of English learners for learning the language and more able to provide a professional educational classroom. Tandem lacks the professionalism of a teaching classroom and focuses more on chatting between users and is more entertaining. Cambly, on the other hand, is more focused on creating a classroom that shapes the English learning app to be free, inclusive, selective, and mobile, which gives a great deal of choice to a diverse audience with a need for English learning.

Due to the influence of the TESOL model, Cambly's curriculum is more in line with a teaching style classroom. Compared to a traditional face-to-face classroom, Cambly's classes are freer, allowing students to be more comfortable with the teacher and the atmosphere is more relaxed, thus imparting more practical knowledge. While Tandem's chat-based English interaction stimulates users' interest in using the app, it is difficult for them to gain the knowledge they need from the chat. Because in Tandem, users can choose to chat with people from any country, who may also be English learners and not proficient in the use of English, it is difficult to give users any substantial help.

However, Cambly is able to give users a professional English teaching experience, and through the interaction of native speakers, it gives users a good boost to improve their English speaking and listening skills, as well as boosting their confidence in speaking English, which is what makes Cambly better than most English learning apps on the market.

4 Improvement

4.1 The Free Trial Time Can Be Extended for New Users

To retain new registrants, Cambly gives away 15 minutes of lesson time for free, which new users can use to experience Cambly's and decide if they want to continue. However, 15 minutes is a little too short for a lesson. Perhaps some users have a very fragmented amount of time at their disposal to learn English, and this group will need a 15-minute lesson. But for most users, there is not really much that can be communicated with the tutor in just a 15-minute class. It is worth noting that most of the groups that have a need to use Cambly are lacking in spoken English communication skills and have a need for further improvement in this area, so the free access time is too short to provide more comprehensive or positive feedback to the users. Cambly could increase the free time from 15 minutes to 30 minutes, which would allow new users to mention more options. Users can choose to take two short 15-minute lessons, or a full 30-minute lesson, which depends on their own needs.

4.2 Mechanism Optimization

The normal mode of use for Cambly currently requires users to top up and purchase the corresponding level of course. Compared to most English learning apps on the market, Cambly operates in a more homogeneous way, with tutors teaching one-on-one. Most English learning apps have developed features to make learning more fun, and have developed fun modes or chat areas for users to communicate with each other and with tutors. But Cambly has not developed this. Perhaps Cambly wants to enhance the academic atmosphere of the app, but it also takes away some of the fun of learning from its users. Cambly could add a free chat area for users to share their learning experiences with each other. However, in order to eliminate any possibility of deceptive behavior, Cambly needs to increase the level of vetting of users and tutors.

In Tandem, there is no special English teaching course, but a community of global users. Users in different countries can ignore the restrictions of network conditions and chat with people in any country. When registering for Tandem, the system will ask users to fill in their reasons and expectations for using the app and write a simple self-introduction and intention for chatting, so that users can find the chat object they want. This is what Cambly lacks. Online communication and anonymous interaction are learning links that allow e-learning tools to carry more communication projects. Online interaction places communication between users in a free and relaxed atmosphere, which breaks through the limitations of time and space and makes communication between users more relaxed, equal and free, thus effectively expanding the width and

breadth of these communications^[9]. This is why it is important to set up chat interaction for users, as this will increase their interest in using Cambly. But in Cambly, users, that is, students, do not need to fill in their own introduction, or the reasons and expectations for using the camera. This will cause users to be no longer clear about their learning objectives, or facilitate the system to monitor users' learning.

During the COVID-19 pandemic, UN Secretary-General Guterres called on educators to turn their attention to online learning. In an age of high reliance on technology, no one can avoid learning online, and the spread of disinformation and malicious deception on the internet has revealed itself. As users of English learning apps include a large number of children, most of whom are students, and it is difficult to ensure that even adults can recognize lies, it is important for user safety that Cambly needs to be vigilant about the process of vetting people identification to prevent malicious people using the app to commit fraud.

4.3 Internet and VPN Issues

This article has been researched and found that most Chinese users have more negative feedback about network issues. According to Chinese users, they must use a VPN tool to connect to an external network in order to use Cambly fluently, otherwise, they will have some network problems, such as lagging. This seriously affects the user experience and tends to cause user churn. Due to political demands, Chinese users cannot log in to foreign websites from within the country. If people want to access overseas websites or use overseas apps, they need to purchase VPN tools, but this is an additional expense for most users, and the purchase of VPN tools is time-sensitive and requires a long renewal period, so it may cause problems for some users who use overseas apps. Cambly needs to make relative changes to address network restrictions and other factors, giving different countries' policies and opening up the corresponding permissions to users to ensure that users in different countries can use the app to learn without any problems.

5 Suggestions

5.1 For ESL Students

With the development of the Internet, more and more online learning apps are being developed and used. The development of the internet and technology has led to the development of electronic products, and nowadays the electronic products on the market tend to be slimmer and more portable, and such changes have contributed to the development of mobile learning apps. Portable electronic devices have become mainstream, and an English learning app that can adapt to this trend is an excellent product for the times. Irudayasamy, Uba and Hankins (2021) collected thirteen research papers and disposal their data and found that one research paper (8%) found that these technologies are used for peer and self-assessment of English language proficiency, while four research papers (31%) found that mobile technologies, which means mobile devices, are used to improve second language proficiency skills^[10].

The amount of time available to learn English on a daily basis varies depending on the identity of the English learner. From a regional perspective, traditional classroom teaching requires fixed premises and equipment, as well as fixed staff to support the teaching, but this is often difficult to meet anywhere, and in some remote locations, for example, these basic conditions may not be met at all. However, electronic devices, such as mobile phones and computers, have become commonplace and in this context, English learning app is the best option for English learners to learn anywhere, anytime. From an identity point of view, English learners may be office workers who need to work or students who need to stay at school, and each user may not be able to spare a lot of time to study English as a whole. In this case, an English learning app can be a good fit for users with fragmented time. Users can choose courses of different lengths according to their own conditions and do not need to study at a fixed time and place.

5.2 For Online English Learning Apps

Over the past few years, the epidemic has affected online app, which has been quite well received and people have gradually accepted and adapted to the combination of life and mobile clients and have begun to develop a huge dependency on the internet. Now that the epidemic has passed, people's use of the web and the mobile-based app will only become more frequent, an inevitable trend given the development of the internet era. More and more social groups are widely accepting and using the internet and mobile devices etc. In addition, the rapid development of society is driving the pace of people's lives to accelerate, and the speed at which things are being updated is only getting faster and faster.

In this context, it is inevitable that innovative online English learning apps will become available to those who need to learn English. In some ways, online English learning apps will become a necessity for English learners. The future of online English learning apps needs to be developed in line with the rapid development of this era, actively embracing new things and technologies, and combining the most current technology to create the most appropriate learning app for the needs of users.

6 Conclusions

Through a comprehensive examination and analysis of Cambly and the needs of modern English learners for an English learning app, this paper concludes that Cambly fully incorporates the TESOL model and runs a formatted classroom education management model that can provide users with professional teaching conditions while maximizing freedom of choice and providing different options for different groups of users, thus fitting the needs of the users themselves. A comparative analysis of popular English learning apps in the modern market, a summary of Cambly's strengths and weaknesses, and some constructive suggestions. In order to meet the demands of modern English language learning and to meet the conditions of language courses in the classroom, Cambly should be adapted to provide users with a more complete and comprehensive classroom option.

To keep up with the demands and changes of a time that is always changing, English learning apps have to adapt to the trends. This article discusses possible future trends in English language learning, electronic technology, and big data on the Internet, and makes some general suggestions for improving the English learning apps on the market. Referring to the changes can make the app more responsive to user needs and optimize the user experience. By optimizing the app and improving the user's experience and satisfaction with the app, the user will use the app for longer periods of time. The output of a good user experience will also lead to users referring apps to potential user groups around them. Over time, the number of users using the English learning app will increase, which will have a positive impact on the operation and development of the app, as well as provide a more convenient and professional English teaching service to a wider group of people who need to learn English.

References

1. Waldren, S. M. Attitudes held by teachers when using mobile devices as language aids. In C. N. Giannikas, E. Kakoulli Constantinou & S. Papadima-Sophocleous (Eds), *Professional development in CALL: a selection of papers* (pp. 11-24). Research-publishing.net (2019).
2. Yang, L., Tong, Y., & Siyuan, X. The Efficacy of Using Liulishuo for Spoken English Ability—Taking the Practice of Liulishuo in North China Electric Power University (Baoding) as an Example. *International Education Studies* (2019).
3. Sudarmaji, I., Forsia, L., Siregar, I.P., & Yusuf, D. Hello English App for Online Learning during the Pandemic: Does it Enhance the Students' English Vocabulary Development? *El-sya: Journal of English Language Studies* (2022).
4. Sun, X. Ten years later: Reexamining the TESOL Technology Standards for Language Teachers. *TESOL Journal* (2022).
5. Alshammary, M.S. The Impact of Using Cambly on EFL University Students' Speaking Proficiency. *English Language Teaching*, 13, 12-26 (2020).
6. Li Mengru & Su Tao. The synergistic effect of mobile learning software on college students' English learning under the background of "Internet +". [HU LIAN WANG+ BEI JING XIA SHOU JI XUE XI RUAN JIAN DUI DA XUE SHENG YING YU XUE XI DE ZENG XIAO YAN JIU]. *Computer knowledge and technology* (12),91-93 (2022).
7. Chen Liuye. A Study on College Student's English Listening Learning Under Mobile Learning Platform—Taking Daily English Listening APP As an Example (2021).
8. Ren Jiayin. Research on the Application of TESOL Teaching Model in English Teaching. *Journal of Educational Research and Policies* (09), 121-123(2022).
9. Yu Xinhong. Application of smartphone App mobile learning platform in blended college English teaching. [ZHI NENG SHOU JI APP YI DONG XUE XI PING TAI ZAI DA XUE YING YU HUN HE SHI JIAO XUE ZHONG DE YING YONG]. *Journal of Heilongjiang Teacher Development Institute* (04),139-141(2020).
10. Irudayasamy, J., Uba, S.Y., & Hankins, C.A. Exploration and Exploitation of Mobile Apps for English Language Teaching: A Critical Review. *English Language Teaching*. (2021).

Open Access This chapter is licensed under the terms of the Creative Commons Attribution-NonCommercial 4.0 International License (<http://creativecommons.org/licenses/by-nc/4.0/>), which permits any noncommercial use, sharing, adaptation, distribution and reproduction in any medium or format, as long as you give appropriate credit to the original author(s) and the source, provide a link to the Creative Commons license and indicate if changes were made.

The images or other third party material in this chapter are included in the chapter's Creative Commons license, unless indicated otherwise in a credit line to the material. If material is not included in the chapter's Creative Commons license and your intended use is not permitted by statutory regulation or exceeds the permitted use, you will need to obtain permission directly from the copyright holder.

