

The Analysis and Pedagogical Suggestions of Online Language APPs on Improving Oral English Ability

-- Take *Liulishuo* English as an Example

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Abstract: With “Internet+” becoming a notional strategy, traditional industries are accelerating the pace of integration with the Internet, and the education industry is also seeking innovating development. Shocked by the pandemic, online education began to show their functions. The online oral English practice APP *Liulishuo English* is widely use among students. Therefore, this passage is going to introduce the APP *Liulishuo English* in oral English improvement. By analyzing the advantages and the disadvantages of this app from different perspectives, some pedagogical suggestions will be put up, so as to better integrate the online learning APP with off-line classroom teaching.

Keywords: Online education, *Liulishuo English*, Advantages, Disadvantages, Pedagogical suggestions.

1. Introduction

The outbreak of COVID-19 has disturbed human’s life. What concerns us most is education, especially the way of teaching and learning. Due to the home quarantine policy, many schools adopt the online teaching measure in order to catch the teaching schedule. Therefore, many meeting platforms like *Dingding*, *Tencent Meeting* as well as *Zoom*, play the role as a classroom, and all kinds of Apps with specific focus are introduced to help students to learn by themselves and as a tool for teaching. For example, for oral practice, *AKaSuo*, *51Talk* and *ABC360* can provide 1 to 1 oral practice service. However, considering the fee as well as the flexibility of time, apps like *Liulishuo English* and *VOA Special English* will be the best choice for students and teachers to use in class and after class. This passage is going to analyze the advantages and disadvantages of the app *Liulishuo English* based on user experience of my own, and share my ideas about how to integrate the APP *Liulishuo English* with traditional English class.

2. Research on Mobile Learning

Wendeson Sahilu et al. [1] believe that the wide use of smart phones and mobile communication provides opportunities for the development of mobile learning technology, and the learning mode will shift from traditional learning and e-learning to mobile learning. The paper also proposes that mobile learning can combine behaviorism, constructivism, contextualism, collaboration, informality and lifelong nature to add value to the existing learning system. Sarrab Mohamed et al. [2] consider mobile learning as a way to take advantage of mobility and wireless technologies for learning and education. He believes that mobile learning is characterized by the ability to support strong interactions between learners and teachers, and provide a high level of motivation, collaboration and flexibility for learning activities.

Pemba Dhonam et al. [3] analyzed The situation of English learning and English learning apps in China from the perspective of native speakers, and believed that English

learning apps provided a real, contextual and interactive video learning mode. There are clear teaching objectives, professional learning content, and constant input and output ". Yanjia Xu [4] proposed the characteristics of English learning APP from the perspective of oral English learning. The author thinks that as an English learning APP, it should include the following four aspects: rich learning content, humanized teaching services, rigorous post-learning assessment system and interesting teaching games.

3. The Basic Structure of *Liulishuo English*

Recent year, especially from 2020, online education is embraced with a bright prospect. There are two main reasons. One is that the fast pace of modern life makes the time spent on study more fragmented, while the high competitive pressure of life urges peoples to improve their oral expression in English. And the other is the block of pandemic, which makes the off-line classroom teaching uncertainly. And these provide opportunities and advantages for the development of online education.

Liulishuo English is one of the products of *Liulishuo* series by Shanghai *Liulishuo* Information Technology company, which aims at improving users’ oral English ability. It has been successfully launched in 6 years after its launch, and has been downloaded by more than 160 million people. It has become a new unicorn company in the education industry, with certain popularity. There are two modules in *Liulishuo English*. One is “Easy Learning”, and the other is “Customized Learning”. The former “Easy Learning” is mainly a free function. It is relatively easy to learn knowledge, attract free users, and convert free users into paying users at the appropriate time. “Customized Learning (Know Your English)” is a paid course that improves users’ English level through systematic learning.

3.1. “Easy Learning”

There are two sections in this module. “Clock in” and “My course”.

The “Clock in” function shows the oral score, the learning time of the day, the total number of days clocked in. “Clocking in” is a kind of incentive for users, and they can get green diamond courses by punching in for a week. “Clocking in” is an effective means of activating, which can improve the frequency of users opening the APP. This function is placed at the top of the easy learning page, which is the most eye-catching module in Easy Learning.

In “My course”, the series of spoken English courses added by users in multiple scenarios will be displayed. As long as the series of lessons learned will be displayed in “My course”. The course learning adopts the gamification mode of “entering a level”, and the next level can be unlocked only after passing the level. The series of courses cover a wealth of scenarios. The mode of entry makes the learning process more smooth, and the word is also very convenient.

In addition, “Easy Learning” also includes interesting functions, for example, answer PK, real conversation, and planning functions, for example, today’s learning plan, today’s reading plan, as well as some other personalized recommendations.

3.2. “Customized Learning (Know Your English)”

The courses that “Know Your English” are more personalized, and the courses that are difficult to match and easy to match are formulated for users according to their English level after English assessment. The curriculum is more systematic. Each level is composed of core unit lessons and level tests. After passing the level tests, students can enter higher-level courses. Unit course consists of two modules, learning and games, covering three parts: Listening, Vocabulary and speaking.

“Customized Learning” also adopt the mode of entry, unlock the next stage of courses need to meet the star conditions, so as to force users to review the previous courses and improve their proficiency. In user incentive, on the one hand, the use of cashback and other activities; On the other hand, the concept of class is added, and class ranking is cited to strengthen the user’s learning behavior.

4. The Advantages of Using *Liulishuo English* In Oral English Teaching and Learning

As an online language app, *Liulishuo English* can be use in every free time. Although apart of module is charged, the free part “Easy Learning” can satisfied basic teaching function, especially as an extended part in the homework step in teaching plan.

4.1. Abundant Practice Resources

The dialogue content in *Liulishuo English* covers life, business, workplace, tourism and other scenes and different degrees of difficulty, focusing on the systematic and advanced. Whether you are a beginner or an English enthusiast, there are plenty of learning materials for you. What’s more, it provides daily feed of authentic American conversation organized by experienced American speaking expert system. Therefore, as an teaching aid, *Liulishuo English* can provide certain situation for students to practice their oral ability according to their interests, and at the same time, as a window to know what is happening in the world by reading news materials. Students can improve their literature awareness in their

practice because those oral materials mostly come from masterpieces, movies, novels, and poets.

4.2. Automatic Scoring System

With AI technology, the Read mainly, the user will see a dialogue, which has a number of small sentences, you can listen to the original read, and read after, the system will recognize your voice, bonus black and green three colors indicated. Red means wrong, black means room for improvement, green means right, and it will also tell you which word is wrong, as well as what the correct phonetic pronunciation is. APP can evaluate the users’ input material automatically. The user will see a dialogue, which has a number of small sentences, the user can listen to the original read version, and then read after. The system will recognize the user’s voice and mark it in three colors, red, black, and green. Red color means wrong. Black means room for improvement. Green means right. And it will also tell you which word is wrong, as well as what the correct phonetic pronunciation is.

4.3. Free Practice Time

One of the sign of modern society is “Age of fragmentation”. Life is full of work and trivia, it is hard for one to squeeze out a full time for learning. When users are too busy to practice, *Liulishuo English* APP is specially designed for busy “mobile people”. With modular content design, users can complete a practice in a few minutes, which is convenient for busy users to use fragmented time to practice oral English anytime and anywhere.

4.4. AI Teacher Service

For many Chinese students, one of the main problems in learning English is that they are afraid to speak. *Liulishuo English* has designed different oral classes for students of different levels, and they can have conversations with AI teachers. Each long dialogue is divided into several parts, each part is graded separately, and the total score is calculated at the end. According to the different English level, subtitles are set in the process of spoken dialogue. During the dialogue, AI teacher will correct students’ weak pronunciation and incorrect grammar. At the end of the dialogue, the teacher will provide you with a transcript so that students can know the overall situation of the dialogue and the areas for improvement. Therefore, it can create an situation for students to open their mouth, and needn’t worry about their poor oral ability will be laughed, which can encourage students to try to speak as much as possible.

4.5. Online Community Services

Liulishuo English uses Wechat groups to gather 100-200 users who register for classes at a given time, managed by an online teacher who acts as the head teacher. The head teacher is mainly responsible for answering questions, urging students to complete learning tasks and promoting the course. The establishment of a community is equivalent to the establishment of a learning circle for users. Punching in every day is also a great way to monitor and motivate yourself. The head teacher will announce the total amount of the last week’s study every week to promote healthy competition. By this way, the head teacher in Wechat groups play the role as the monitor, so as to encourage students to finish and challenge the task.

5. The disadvantages of using *Liulishuo* English in oral English teaching and learning

As the saying goes, every coin has two sides. Although *Liulishuo English* brings many conveniences, it also brings a lot of trouble in teaching and learning.

5.1. Monotonous Word Game

The most commonly used way for Chinese to learn English is to memorize words. In *Liulishuo English*, the game mode and content of vocabulary mini-games are too single, and the fun and playability are not high. They only examine whether they know the meaning of words. If the content of the game is expanded from the simple meaning of the answer into groups of words and sentences, and further divided into different topics according to the difficulty of the question, just like the ranking in the market competitive games, users will be more interested.

5.2. The AI score Evaluation System

Although the fluent AI teacher is a great progress in the history of spoken English APP, after repeated practice, it will be found that the AI teacher gives people the impression of being too rigid, the pronunciation is not fast and slow, and the evaluation is not targeted. As oral practice, more scenes should be set up so that the topics students want to talk about can be searched on the APP. AI teachers should also respond in diversified ways, guided and graded by AI. The spoken language is more casual and informal, with lots of slang, which can be interspersed in the speaking class. Finally, for pronunciation correction, if you mispronounce a word, it will teach you which pronunciation of the word is wrong, and show you how to read it. But sometimes students can't pronounce correctly if they don't explain the rules of pronunciation. Therefore, the APP needs to analyze the differences of pronunciation in different regions according to Chinese people's phonetic database, and the human teacher will record and explain the pronunciation errors of a sound in different regions and implant them into the course.

5.3. The Uncertainty of Teaching Effect

It is difficult to guarantee the effect of online teaching. Online teaching are distance education training, which can not teach students in accordance of their aptitude, so it increases difficulties of students to interact with the teacher. It is difficult to intuitive understanding of teacher to the students' mastery of knowledge level, and limits the students' imagination and creativity. What's more, it make students more in the passive to accept knowledge, and the process, especially the interference factors and temptation in the family a lot of circumstances. It tests the efficiency and self-control of students. At the same time, staring at the screen for a long time, there is greater harm to the vision, dizziness and exhaustion after a day.

5.4. The Formalism of Learning Model

It's easy to fall into formalism. The ultimate goal of online learning is to enable students to learn and acquire knowledge to maximize their learning efficiency at home. Compared with traditional classroom teaching, online software learning is more a test of self-control. Furthermore, online learning is relatively more boring. If the school just in order to fulfill the task of superior orders, and the teacher only use the software

in the existing teaching material and not try to adjust according to the students' learning, the teacher in charge is keen on regular clock in, ignore the students' feelings, such formal online teaching will not be welcomed by the students. This is not only a poor effect, but also a waste of students' time, and even stimulate students' weariness.

5.5. The Neglect of The Meaning of Experience In The Classroom

There are teachers, students, interaction between teachers and students, students interaction, communication, observation in the classroom. What happens in the classroom is hard to do online from a screen. Almost all teaching objectives must be achieved through experience. The process of seeking knowledge, the process of forming abilities, the process of cultivating temperament, the process of cultivating habits. If not accompanied by experience, the final harvest will be superficial and temporary. One of the things that often frustrates teachers is that when teaching happens but learning doesn't happen, or when teaching is substantial but learning is not solid, the main reason may be that the link and bridge between teaching and learning has broken: neglect of experience. Experience builds a bridge between teachers and students, and between students and knowledge. Through this bridge, teachers and students come together, and knowledge and people blend together.

6. The Pedagogical Suggestions for Integrating *Liulishuo* English With Off-Line Classroom Teaching

Liulishuo English, as an online learning software, with so abundant resources, will be helpful if use correctly. So, what is the correct way to use online software in off-line classroom teaching? It is better to integrate the online software with off-line classroom teaching.

6.1. Emphasis the Off-line Classroom

Suhomlinsky once said, "School learning, not without enthusiasm from one mind into another mind, but between teachers and students at all times in the heart contact." The essence of education is to improve students' autonomy, develop interest in learning and deal with problems in life independently. The classroom is the carrier between the teacher and the student, in the form of words will be linked together. And the teacher's preaching can provide impetus for children's growth. In this class, students will unconsciously judge the teacher's teaching attitude, professional level, teaching methods, and even their opinions on a certain topic, and this process is the development process of students' thinking ability.

Teaching is an art that requires teachers to teach students according to their personality. Therefore, in this new educational environment, teachers need to constantly improve teaching methods and enhance teaching professionalism. In teaching, teachers should make effective use of various teaching strategies and adopt scientific approaches to create a charming lecture hall, which can greatly enhance students' enthusiasm and interest in learning and thinking, and realize the two-way improvement of imparting knowledge and mastering skills.

The teaching of primary and secondary schools lays more emphasis on cultivating and improving students' learning ability and thinking ability, so the improvement of students'

ability should be regarded as a key point of teaching. Attach importance to guiding students to think in class, and give play to their enthusiasm and initiative in thinking. Cultivate children's thinking and innovative thinking, create a good learning environment for them, so as to cultivate students' ability to deal with and solve problems, let students return to the essence of education, let exam-oriented education and quality education.

6.2. Using the Online Software as A Teaching Assistant Tool

No matter in what situation, online education cannot substitute the off-line classroom. Therefore, the character of the online software should be a teaching assistant tool. For example, *Liulishuo English* can be used as an preview work and homework in teaching plan.

Teachers can master the basic situation of students by using the audio scores uploaded by students before class as teaching reference. The teaching content "remove the dross and select the essence", to ensure that the teaching "detailed and slightly appropriate". If the correct rate of a certain knowledge point reaches 100%, the knowledge point can not be explained repeatedly. As students' learning situation is understood before class, teaching key points and difficulties will be highlighted in the classroom teaching process. Teachers can provide targeted answers, and also guide students to explore independently, so that students can explain what they have learned by themselves, realizing the "flipped classroom". After class, the students will have a homework as a test again, so that the students can independently evaluate the learning content.

Use data analysis to find problems in time and improve teaching. For example, by observing AI scoring and online discussion in *Liulishuo English*, we can further focus on students' interest points and help students find in-depth research topics. When presentation time is limited in class, many of students' ideas can be transferred from classroom discussion to online discussion. Teachers should help students form discussion groups on a certain topic on the cloud platform to explore the content that students are interested in.

Organizing the study groups. Adopt the interactive supervision of offline learning and online communication,

and the way of teacher guidance and allocation, carry on stratified incentive. According to the comprehensive situation of the students, the head teacher uniformly assigned to establish a study group, each group of 6-7 people, each group has learning activity rules, names and slogans, students in the group study together, discussion, and under the guidance of teachers to carry out discipline development activities, members of the group coach and cooperate with each other, urge each other to improve. As a result of the implementation of points system in various activities between study groups, students' enthusiasm has been significantly increased.

7. Conclusion

Nowadays, various forms of "online education" can make children get learning opportunities anytime and anywhere. One the one hand, it make excellent educational resources available to more children. On the other hand, it will greatly reduce parental investment in education. It can be seen that online education has a huge impact on traditional education. Technology is changing education. However, the essence of education is the classroom, and the meaning of classroom can only be achieve by real interaction between teachers and students. Therefore, no matter how online education develop, we should use it in teaching properly, and realize the essence of education.

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