



RECOMMENDED APP

Z American English: A Mobile Language Learning App

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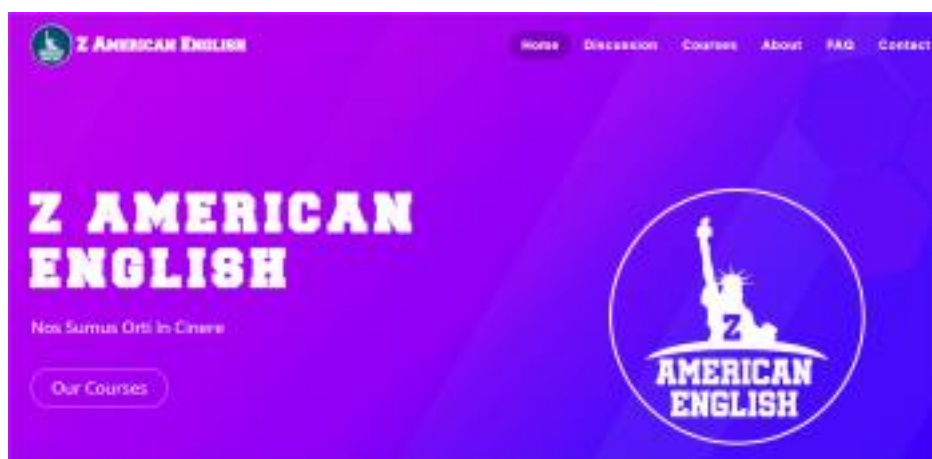
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Application Details



Publisher: Z American English

Product type: Smartphone Application Software

Language (s): Arabic, English

Level: Novice to proficient

Media format: APK/IPA

Hardware requirements: 24MB, Touch-screen device

Operating system (s): Android/iOS

Documentation: Available on app video and from website

Price: Free access to all features except voice training premium 20\$ per month

Website: <https://zamericanenglish.net/>

1. Introduction

Technology gives teachers many ways to make lessons more interesting and productive in terms of learning. Technology is one of the most important things that cause changes in both society and language. Already back in 1997, Graddol pointed out that, "technology is at the heart of globalization, affecting education, work, and culture." Since 1960, English has been increasingly used as a *lingua franca*. The use of mobile devices to learn and teach a foreign language (L2) has attracted interest from scholars, some of whom have conducted systematic reviews of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL); see for instance, Viberg & Grönlund (2012), Kamasak et al. (2021) or Nur et al. (2022). This trend will likely continue as wireless and mobile technologies advance. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning, which is a subset of M(mobile)-Learning, is a rapidly expanding field of research that has potentially beneficial implications for the learning and teaching of second languages (Pachler et al., 2010). Handheld mobile devices such as smartphones, tablet computers, laptops, MP3 and MP4 players, and the like are enticing to consumers because, among other things, they give users permanence, accessibility, immediacy, and interactivity (Ogata & Yano, 2004). According to Thornton & Houser (2005), "mobile devices can be excellent tools for a broad range of educational activities". In addition, mobile applications such as *Duolingo*, *Busuu*, *50languages*, and *HiNative* are currently in the process of implementing improvements to make language learning easier. Chen (2016) evaluated the affordances that seven mobile English learning apps provided for adult learners and came to the conclusion that the apps do enhance learning; however, "there is no single language-learning app that could provide a one-size-fits-all solution to meet adult learners' language learning needs".

There are currently apps being developed for mobile devices that make the process of education far more engaging and individualized. This article narrows the attention to one mobile language learning application, that is, *Z American English*, and investigates the various learning opportunities that are available through the use of this app to acquire a second language.

2. General descriptions

Z American English is a dedicated app for beginners of English with an unprecedented professional approach in the Arab world. This platform resembles a private school that takes the learner on a journey from the first steps learning English to fluency and mastery. The lesson plans were designed by an experienced English language teacher, Ibrahim Adel (<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UChrD4qdeQc1BbpG6EPqDBcA>) and the application was launched in 2017. All the lessons and the entire curriculum are freely available. The author's channel exceeded 30 million views in some videos and 8.97 million subscribers globally.

Ibrahim utilizes a number of videos clips, records them, and then uploads them to YouTube in order to provide the recipient with the ability to observe the teacher's voice and image in an educational setting. Because of this, more individuals are able to

concentrate on the content and study in a way that is more enjoyable. To facilitate access easier, Ibrahim has developed a mobile application compatible with Android devices, available for download from the official Google Play Store. Additionally, users can enjoy learning English on iOS devices by downloading the app from the Apple Store for iPhone compatibility.

The main interface of the application is divided into three sections (See Figure 1):

- Study, which consists of various proficiency levels, and includes the lessons and activities that the learner must follow before moving on to a subsequent level.
- Practice, which registers the words that were added by the learner to "favourites" while completing the lessons, listing them in files that can be accessed for practice.
- Chat, which is a means of communication within the application for learners, but they must have completed half of the lessons in the first level to be able to enter the chat utility.

In addition, the application contains a variety of activities that focus on helping learners develop different language skills, grammar explanations, pronunciation exercises, etc. Educational videos are provided for each level to explain new vocabulary and how to pronounce these (Figure 2). Moreover, the learner can save a selection of words for each lesson in a personal folder for revision (Figure 3).

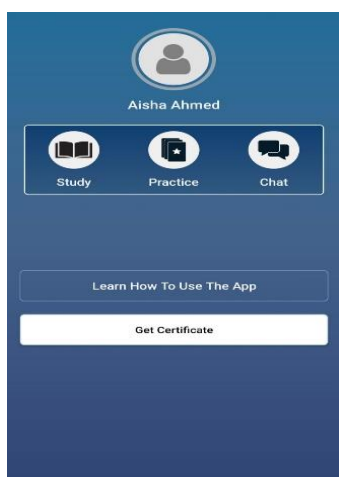


Figure 1. Application interface.



Figure 2. A lesson with audio, video and a test after each lesson.



Figure 3. Review the new words through your own flashcards.

3. Evaluation

3.1. Technological features

One of the main features of the *Z American English* application is that it is free on electronic stores such as the Google Play Store and the Apple Store. The application is available for both iOS and Android. *Z American English* does not require a large amount of the phone's storage memory as it only takes up 24MB of memory space. Also, installation on mobile devices is straightforward from either app store.

The *Z American English* app follows a well-organised learning path. The course content is divided into a set of levels, which are arranged from beginner to advanced. Additionally, the app includes numerous films and short videos featuring native speakers pronouncing words, providing an enjoyable learning experience for users. According to Čepon (2013), the video format is helpful for studying a foreign language. The Quiz section presents ten questions after each lesson to measure how well the learners have mastered the content and to become aware of their weaknesses so as to be able to strengthen them.

After completing an achievement test, the programme also issues a certificate for those who wish to accredit having achieved a given level. Within the application, there are chat rooms that help its users communicate with each other. In addition to the rooms in which language teachers participate, strict laws have been implemented to keep these rooms for education purposes only (Figure 4). The intuitive interface and the design of the *Z American English* app make it appropriate for all age groups.

Another feature is that the users can download the course in PDF format after every lesson. These files are colourful and easy to use. The use of colours has been implemented as a tool to identify different parts of a lesson and to make the information stand out more easily (Ambard & Ambard, 2004).

Users can obtain all the information about how the app works through the introductory video presented by Ibrahim within the app interface; in addition, the user can get further help by entering the dashboard, clicking on Contact Us, the FAQs symbol, or submitting a ticket directly by email. The user can also ask about the most common problems, such as general information about using and accessing the app, course content, troubleshooting, and error messages. Such a support system is useful and promotes satisfactory learner experience.

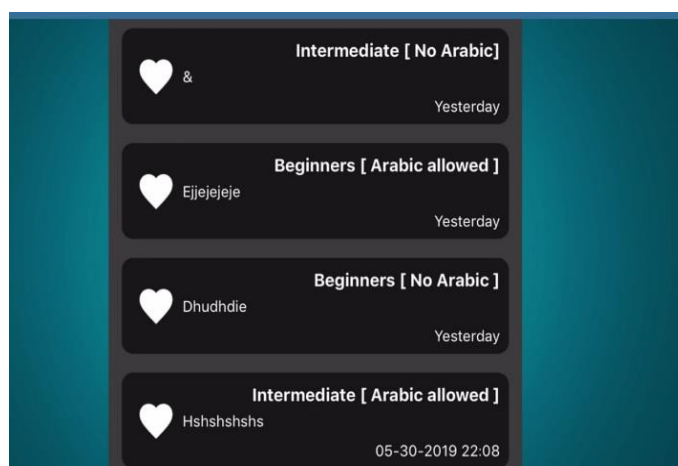


Figure 4. *The rules of the chat room.*

3.2. Activities

The *Z American English* programme aims to facilitate English proficiency for learners at no cost, in an effortless, enjoyable, and straightforward manner. While the application offers free access to lessons, videos, and tests, there is a premium feature called the "Activities Icon" available for \$20 per month. This premium feature encompasses various activities such as games, voice training for clear pronunciation, sentence construction practice for ease of expression, and a spelling trainer to enhance word mastery. The app challenges users in a gamified manner and gives them three chances to respond. If they fail, the game is over. This challenge is a motivating factor the learner. Lastly, the application is compatible with all mobile devices and computers.

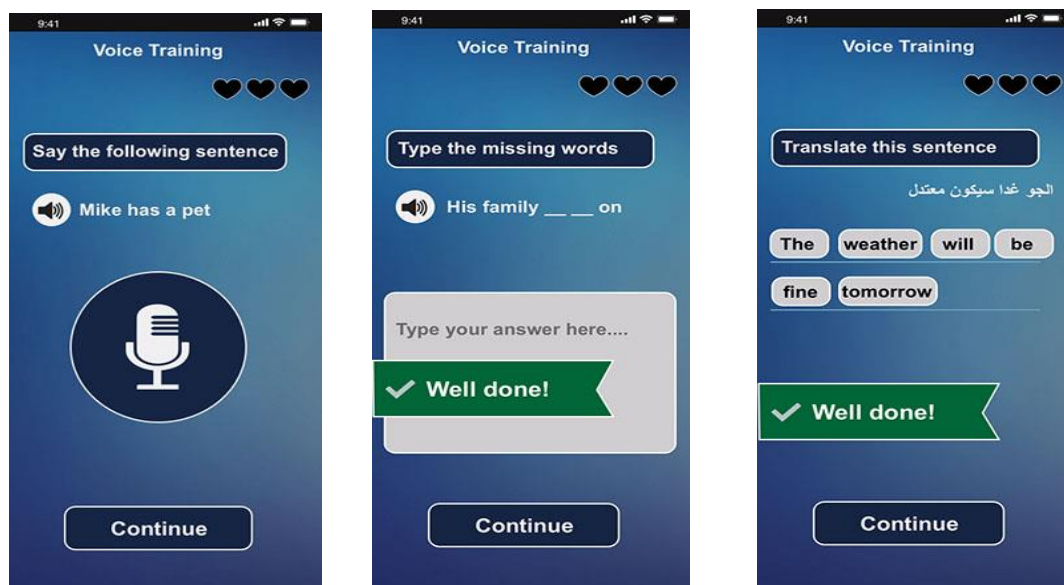


Figure 5a. Practice speaking with a clear Voice through the voice trainer.

Figure 5b. Practice building sentences with ease.

Figure 5c. Spelling trainer helps you master spelling those tough words.

3.3. Pedagogical features

Each level in the course covers various topics and is divided into eight different parts, including grammar, pronunciation, as well as reading, writing and listening comprehension practice. It also includes tips to aid faster learning. The author suggests that learners should take notes so they can look back at them at a later stage. This recommendation assumes that individuals may not fully grasp the content upon initial exposure, often necessitating multiple iterations for comprehension. In the first level, the teacher gives explanations in the Egyptian Arabic dialect to facilitate comprehension by beginner learners. In line with this, Schweers Jr (1999), Burden (2000) and Tang (2002) claim that students and teachers have a positive attitude toward using their mother tongue during their English classes. After completing each lesson in the course, the learners can test themselves by answering a set of questions related to the lessons, which is interactive. *Z American English* provides learners with audio and video lessons, including short movies and images, to stimulate language intake and make learning an enjoyable and stress-free experience.

Z American English provides a comprehensive learning experience for individuals starting from the basics and progressing towards higher levels of proficiency in English. This is achieved through user-friendly methods, including the creation and sharing of video clips on YouTube and within the application. These clips allow users to see and hear the teacher, creating an immersive educational environment that enhances focus and makes learning entertaining, preventing boredom. A successful educational system helps the person to flourish their natural talent and educates them as a person aware of global issues and responsible for the values of a society attached to it (Seif, 2011).

The *Z American English* app covers all aspects of the English language. The lessons are designed for students of all levels, whether the learners are beginner or experienced speakers, so the learners can join in on the fun and improve their English.

4. Summary

Z American English is an application that works as a personal instructor for L1 speakers of Arabic who wish to learn English as it takes them on a fun learning trip that starts from the absolute beginner's level until they gain proficiency in English and acquire other abilities. It offers a comprehensive approach to language acquisition, with lessons created by an experienced teacher, Ibrahim Adel. The app is highly accessible, free, and compatible with both iOS and Android devices. One of its notable strengths is its clear learning path, suitable for learners of all levels. The addition of video content and interactive quizzes makes learning enjoyable and effective. Additionally, the premium "Activities Icon" subscription offers extra features. The inclusion of chat rooms fosters learner interaction, enhancing the educational experience. Overall, *Z American English* is a valuable resource for learners of English, providing a structured and engaging path to language mastery.

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