

iAGREE; MOBILE APPLICATION FOR ENGLISH LEARNING

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ABSTRACT

Young children are often more attracted to use mobile learning applications because mobile learning applications are usually engaging, friendly and interactive. iAgree is an attractive mobile learning application to learn English which can be used offline in remote areas, where internet access is very limited or scarce. The uniqueness of iAgree where it can be used offline while its content reflects on pupils' local cultures and daily life activities will be the novelty of this application. The simplicity yet bold and bright color scheme selections of this application would be great features in order to grasp students' attention to easily use this application. Furthermore, as an alternative choice in order to cater the needs of rural students without internet access or having a very poor internet connection, both iAgree content and its progress tracking feature will work even on offline mode due to its ability to stand alone. iAgree will ensure that rural students will not be left far behind their counterparts in urban areas, whose internet connections are much better than those living in the remote areas. Hence, iAgree can help to minimise the urban-rural digital divide associated with internet access and online learning experience.

Keywords: mobile application, english learning, mobile learning, rural students

1. INTRODUCTION

The COVID-19 pandemic has forced everyone to stay at home. When schools remain close during the Movement Control Order, teaching and learning online become a new norm. While rural schools are still confronted with the lack of basic necessities such as water and electricity supply, the new norm for online learning requires a stable internet connection, which is a scarcity in many rural schools. Young children spend more time using digital devices as smartphones and tablets either for learning particularly due to its flexibility and user-friendly feature offered by mobile learning application.

Furthermore, learning through mobile learning applications will minimize the barriers provided by traditional methods or activities used to be carried out in schools or universities (Valk et al. 2010). While many mobile learning applications available in the market are very accessible, they require good internet connection. In urban areas, where the internet connection is reasonably more reliable than in rural areas, these learning apps can be used anytime and anywhere. However, for students in the remote areas, mobile learning applications are not widely used due to the poor internet connectivity. According to Johnson et al. (2012), adaptation of mobile learning applications in teaching and learning have been inspired by the multifunctionality of mobile devices capability such as smartphones and tablets. Learning through mobile applications have become one of the latest trends in teaching and learning however the students in rural areas are still left far behind it due to a very poor and unstable internet coverage. Barker and Hall (1994) have suggested distance education including the use of Internet and web-based materials, interactive television, computer conferencing, and multimedia modules as at least a partial solution to some of the problems rural schools face. iAgree is a stand-alone mobile learning application for learning English

which can be used offline in remote areas, where internet accessibility is very limited or scarce. It will bring benefits to students in rural areas as it allows the students to experience a flexible online learning albeit the poor internet connection. iAgree will ensure that rural children will not be left far behind their counterparts in urban areas, whose internet connections are much better than those living in the villages.

2. OBJECTIVES

This mobile learning application called iAgree will serve the following objectives. Firstly, it will cater the needs of rural students in using mobile learning applications without internet access or having a very poor internet connection. By developing an application such as iAgree that will adopt an offline capability, this will allow the students to experience a flexible online learning albeit the poor internet connection whether they are at home or being in schools. Interestingly, Sandberg et al. (2011) has conducted a research whereby it is found that the extra time spent on mobile English learning positively affect students' learning result. Since iAgree can be used offline, it will be able to cater the needs of rural students whose internet supply depends on the limited daily supply of electricity from a portable generator that is either powered by battery or diesel supply. iAgree will ensure that rural children will not be left far behind their counterparts in urban areas, whose internet connections are much better than in the villages. It will ensure that rural students will not be left far behind their counterparts in urban areas. Apart from that, iAgree will also minimise the urban-rural digital divide associated with internet access and online learning experience. iAgree offers a learning mobile applications with offline capability for rural students to experience a flexible online learning. Although there are a lot teaching and learning resources available online, the inadequate access to internet becomes a deterrent for students from rural schools to participate in online learning activities. Hence, this mobile learning application called iAgree is hoped to minimize the gap in online learning experiences between students from rural and urban schools.



Figure 1. iAgree Interface



Figure 2. iAgree –Photo Vocabulary (Intermediate) Interface

Software and Hardware Requirement

Table 1. Software and Hardware Requirement

No	Items	Requirement
1	Hardware	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Android smart phones (to run the application)● Computer or laptop (to develop the application)
2	Software	<ul style="list-style-type: none">● Android version 5 and above (to run the application)● Windows / MacOS / Linux OS (to develop the application)● Android Software Development Kit (to develop the application)● Flutter Software Development Kit (to develop the application)● Android Studio (to develop the application)

3. NOVELTY

The uniqueness of iAgree when it can be used offline with as its contents reflect and consist of pupils' local cultures and daily life activities will be the novelty of this application. The simplicity yet bold and bright color scheme selections of this mobile application would be great features in order to grasp students' attentions to easily use this application. iAgree reflects on remote learning where it can also be used at home during school break. Learning away from the classroom not only helps students to progress faster, but also improve their ability to use technology. Besides, that education and entertainment combination will make sure that the children can enjoy the learning process.

4. COMMERCIALIZATION POTENTIAL

This iAgree mobile learning application can be commercialised to other schools in remote areas throughout Malaysia rural areas/ students/ schools through collaboration with district or state education departments or Ministry of Education.

5. CONCLUSION

In sum, although there are a lot of teaching and learning resources available online, inadequate internet access becomes a deterrent for students from rural schools to participate in online learning activities. This iAgree which portrays its uniqueness features such as the ability to stand-alone, interactive and simplified notes display and contains progress tracking feature is hoped to minimize the gap in online learning experiences among underprivileged rural students.

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