# A Treatise on English Teaching Android Applications

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**Abstract**

Mobile phones have an indispensable role in the wide extensive growth of communication. The advent of the mobile operating system called Android, currently developed by Google, plays god for myriad conducive communication in the fields of commerce, medicine, engineering, technology and education. To state its role in education, there are umpteen teaching learning apps existing in the Google play store for a free-download to our android mobiles. Deploying one's discretion in making the right choice of downloading the tutorial apps from the play store is indeed, possible with minimal technical knowledge and an attitude for learning. Factually speaking, technology aided English teaching is end-focused and it is result oriented. Moreover, the noteworthy advantage of android aided English teaching is the availability of extensive English teaching apps for discrepant levels of learners namely Beginner, Intermediate and Advanced. Precisely, learning English from BBC besides, getting prepared for competitive exams like TOEFL and IELTS are made easy through these apps available in android mobile phones. In fact, this article is an effort to edify the possibility of enhancing one's English language proficiency exclusively through the regular access of learner to some of the effective English teaching android applications.

**Key words:** mobile phone, language learning, android, technology aided language learning.

## 1. Introduction

Android, the operating system designed for touch screen smart phones and tablets, is a boon for English language learners. As interfacing with android is not a cumbersome task, the learners of English language shall exhibit a phenomenal progress in the acquisition of English language just by using touch gestures of their smart phones like swiping, tapping, and affording either a virtual or keyboard input to execute their needs. A survey made recently observes almost 71% of the developers on creating apps for android besides the 40% of the full-time android developers identified in 2015(Developer Economics Q3 Analyst Report,

2013 & 2015). All these evidences perhaps simplify the prospects of English tutoring through simple means. An android smart phone can best assume the role of a language tutoring tool kit at the convenience of the learner.

In fact, the British Council has been advocating this technology of teaching English through mobile phones since 2010. These lessons of British Council are designed in a way to make the students enjoy expressing their thoughts over mobile phones through conversations, deciphering text messages and replying them as per need. The user-friendly applications of android mobile phones make them the most indispensable medium of communication. Therefore, teachers of English shall take advantage of all the great features and capabilities of mobile phones to encourage their students to learn English in a more comprehensive and effective way (Naveen K Mehta, 2012).

## 2. Literature Survey

Teaching through phones has been in practice with the innovative attempt of Twarog and Pereszlenyi-Pinter since 1988 in guiding distance learners by feed-back strategy. Even instructors of Brigham Young University situated in Hawaii helped their distance learners through computers and telephones (Green, Collier & Evans, 2001). There are evidences for a good number of creative attempts made to teach English in Japanese university through mobile phones where the learners showed adequate interest to learn through mobile phone rather than computers(Thornton & Houser, 2002; 2003; 2005). An effort towards the construction of mobile labs for teaching English was also pursued(Gilgen, 2004).

On the other hand, the task based teaching of English language was also experimented by researchers (Kiernan & Aizawa, 2004). Even the BBC World Service had helped its English learners in China and Francophone, West Africa, through SMS teaching which made mobile phones an essential learner requisite(Godwin & Jones, 2005). A trial of vocabulary building through mobile phones was executed in Taiwan classrooms (Chen et al., 2008). English teaching through mobile applications exclusively developed for the learners of English was observed to retain the 24 hours attention of the learners(Janelle Wills, 2010). However, mobile phones are not extensively utilized for teaching English(Mcneal et al., 2006) till date. These research articles helped to observe two discrepant strategies of teaching English through mobile phones namely,

1. Development of special course module by the teacher for teaching English through mobile phones
2. Utility of the already available applications or tool kits for teaching English.

It is noteworthy that, not much of studies are performed on the utility of an android device for teaching English, Therefore, this article aspires to embark on the existence of English teaching apps in the play store of an android device and how to make choice of the right app to master English. This of course is a learner-centred cum result-oriented approach.

## 3. Preamble to English Teaching Android Apps

There are umpteen number of English teaching apps ready for a free download from the plays store in any android mobile phone irrespective of its brand. Indeed, this circumstance of abundant apps actually invites the challenging predicament of downloading the best tutorial for learning English. On the other facet, anxiety interferes with second language acquisition (Krashen, 1982). So, the mandate requisite is the knowledge and choice of English teaching apps available for downloading from the play store. Table 1, titled, English Teaching Android App Features, describes the list of precocious features of an English teaching app for comprehension before utility.

| S.No | Features to be examined in the English Teaching Android Apps prior to installation | |
|------|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------|
| | Language Aspect of the App | Technical Aspect of the App |
| 1. | Assurance of a comprehensive module | User – friendliness |
| 2. | Neutral accent audio-visual lessons | High resolution audio-visual lessons |
| 3. | Focus on English language skills | Clarity of Audio recordings |
| 4. | Vocabulary builder as a component | Battery consumption capacity of the app |
| 5. | Module for Beginner level | Comprehending the terms and conditions |
| 6. | Module for Intermediate level | Knowledge about the App version |
| 7. | Module for Advanced level | Android compatibility of the app |
| 8. | Focus on English Grammar | Offline accessibility for few components |
| 9. | Adequate illustrations for each topic | Quick accessibility of online lessons |
| 10. | Exercises, interactive discussion forums | Data connection requirement |

*Table 1. English Teaching Android App Features*

## 4. Selection Strategy of English Teaching Android Apps

The English teaching android apps are broadly classified into two categories namely, Playstore Existence and Figure 1 describes the categories and characteristics of the English teaching android apps available or to be developed.
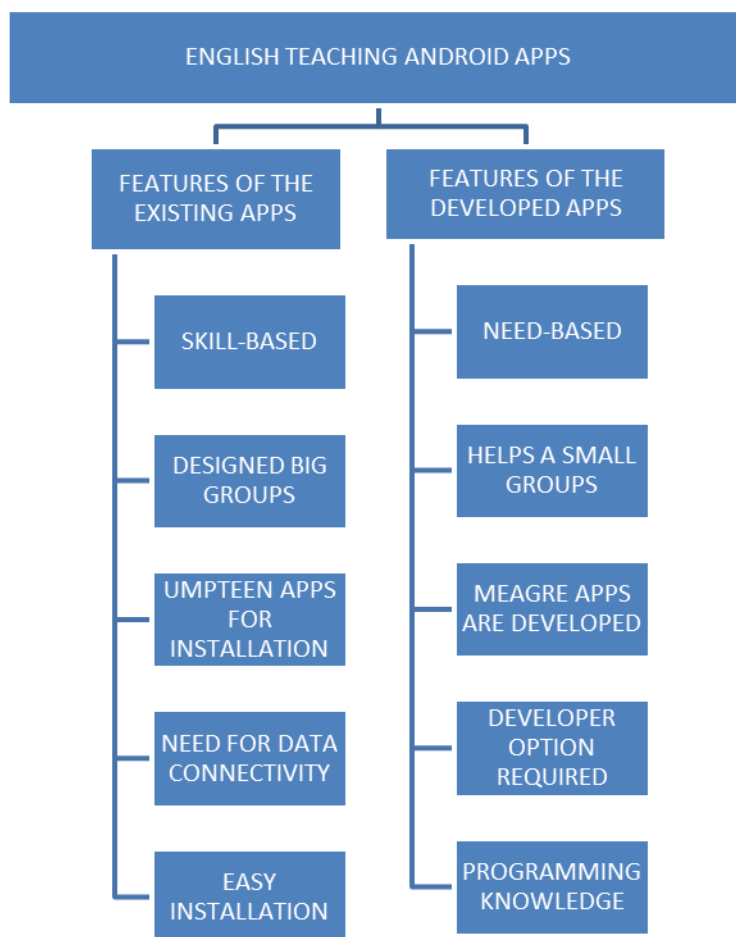


*Figure 1. Categories and Characteristics of English Teaching Android Apps*

The practical incredibility of all the learners to possess a clear-cut knowledge about all the English teaching android apps in addition to their discretion of making choices are very apparent. In such circumstance, how to make choice of the right English teaching app appeals to be a conundrum. Perhaps, there are a few strategies that can help the learners prior to their action of downloading any English teaching application. Here, the learner needs to get updated about the app content and its technical features before installation. They are:

1. Search the features of the English teaching app through a search engine.
2. Examine the richness of content of the app
3. Study the quality app content from the description before installing
4. Find out the functionality of the app through trial demonstration

5. Check for the storage capacity required in the android mobile phone

6. Identify the app compatibility with the android model in which it is to be installed

7. Observe the rating of the app prior to installation

8. Analyse the online and offline workability of English teaching app chosen

## 5. List of Android Apps Designed by Native Speakers

The British Council designs the best English learning apps for the learners of all ages which can be downloaded from www.britishcouncil.org/mobilelearning. These apps created by British Council impart English proficiency in the fields of grammar and vocabulary through audio-visual practice lessons. Some of the BBC, British Council, and Cambridge University Press collaborated android apps that can be downloaded from the play-store for learning English are stated in Table 2 along with their respective features.

| Free Android App | Features | Developer |
|---|---|---|
| Listening English with BBC learning English | BBC 6 minute English, Learning through audio transcript, Exercise and quiz, Add on dictionary, Offline utility, Auto update of lessons, Chatting with other fellow learners. | BBC & SED |
| Speak English | Controllable MP3 audio lessons, Add on dictionary, Exercises and quiz. | BBC and Blue Droid Dev |
| Jonny grammar | 3 levels-easy, medium, hard, Learning words, grammar and spelling through quizzes, 10 Common topics, Feedback on incorrect answers. | BBC |
| IELTS Word power | Provision of question bank, Exposure to vocabulary needed for IELTS, Tips for candidates, Information about nearest IELTS test centres | British Council |
| IELTS 1001 Ways | Exposure to different English accents of the world, play-way learning, recording & rating the accent, funny learning | British Council |
| Job seekers | Vocabulary building, writing job applications/CVs/Resumes, Interview preparation, pronunciation practice, Lessons on interpersonal skills. | British Council |
| My Word Book-Cambridge | Vocabulary from Cambridge University Press' learner dictionary, 75 preinstalled flashcards for new words, interactive vocabulary workbook. | British council |
| Learn English Podcasts | Designed for beginners and kids by Native speakers, offline access possibility, downloadable lessons, 40 episodes and 20 hours of free listening. | British Council |
| British Council: Learn English Great Videos | Module designed by Native speakers, pronunciation lessons, listening with the audio-script, video lessons without audio-script, interactive teaching. | British Council |
| Learn British English | Introduction to latest vocabulary building, Exposure to words in news, 6 minute English, Pronunciation | BBC & Education Apps |

| | | practice, learning through English dramas. | |
|---|---|---|---|
| English Grammar in Use | | 6 unit- study guide glossary, Lessons designed by Raymond Murphy, the grammarian, audio lessons & audio recording for practice, Specially devised for android. | Cambridge University Press |

*Table 2. Features of the English teaching android apps designed by native speakers*

## 6. User-Friendly English Teaching Android Apps

There is a noteworthy growth witnessed in the development of English teaching android applications. This amazing growth indeed strengthens the challenge of finding the right and user friendly app for learning English. Table 3 provides a detailed list of frequently downloaded free English teaching android apps with desirable rating and good reviews.

| S.No | Free Android Apps | Focus of the App | Developer |
|---|---|---|---|
| 1. | Speak English | Enriching Listening and Speaking skills of English | APP Jungs |
| 2. | English Listening | | SCD Group |
| 3. | Daily Learn English | | Khanh Le |
| 4. | Hello English : Learn English | | Culture Alley |
| 5. | Learn English Conversation | | TFLAT-Group |
| 6. | English Conversation | | TrungHoang |
| 7. | English Pronunciation | | Kepham |
| 8. | How to Speak English | | DS&T-Modern English |
| 9. | Learn English for Begginers | General Usage of English Language | Bryan Rolandsen |
| 10. | English for all Levels | | Voontv |
| 11. | I love English | | Tinh Hoa Viet Co. Ltd |
| 12. | 1200 English Grammar tasks | Significance of English Grammar | SevenLynx |
| 13. | English Tenses | | Coderz |
| 14. | English Grammar | | Appsoft India |
| 15. | 100 English lessons | | Chandler Nguyen |
| 16. | English grammar handbook | | Miracle Funbox |
| 17. | Learn English with videos | | Learn English 247 |
| 18. | Vocabulary Builder | | Magoosh |
| 19. | English Writing Skills | | Mobdevs |
| 20. | English Idioms | | Atomic Info App |
| 21. | Practice English Grammar | | Cleverlize |

| 22. | Tense Buster | | Clarity English |
|-----|--------------|------------------------------|-----------------|
| 23. | TOEFL Preparation | English for Competitive Examinations | SolarDev |
| 24. | Test your English | | Martin K |
| 25. | SSC Bank English | | Praveen Yuva |

*Table 3. User-Friendly English Teaching Apps*

## 7. Advantages of App Oriented English Learning

The English Language learner irrespective of his/her age, when takes effort to systematically learn English through the Android apps mentioned in Table 2 and 3 of this article, indispensably enjoys the advantages stated subsequently.

- Privacy of the learner's progress gets maintained
- Freedom of learning pace
- Enjoyable and informative learning
- Informal Learning
- Technology aided learning ambience
- Comfortable utility of the electronic gadget
- Interactive and play-way learning possibilities
- Result-oriented approach
- Easy error detection
- Self-rating of the progress
- Lack of hesitation for error correction

Moreover, learners assume a lead role in observing their own communicative requisites by expressing themselves without reluctance. Taking up assignments, making notes, voice recording and interaction with fellow learners make the learning process more enjoyable.

## 8. Conclusion

Mastery over English language rapidly turns to be a fruitful dream with the help of English teaching android apps in this electronic era. Besides, the need-based and skill-based approach, the android apps also pave the way for the result-based progression of the English learners. Undoubtedly, these reasons make an android mobile phone the best English learning tool kit for the user. Precisely, an android mobile is handy and the English teaching apps are

free and cost-effective. Therefore, higher degree of language comprehension with fullest satisfaction is feasible for all those learners who simplify their English learning through android apps.

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