
IBRAHIM HALIL TOPAL

Gazi University, Türkiye
ibrahimtopal@gazi.edu.tr

Abstract

The past decade has been the heyday of mobile-assisted language learning (MALL), with increased use of mobile applications (apps) as learning platforms. Despite the central focus of mobile apps on language skills such as vocabulary (e.g., Duolingo) and pronunciation (e.g., BoldVoice), few have factored in both learners and teachers. Lirica is an engaging mobile app that fosters language learning through songs in five languages. Given the pedagogical and psychological affordances of songs and the personalized learning environment offered by mobile apps, this tech review seeks to present an overview of the Lirica app and its potential for language learning while tackling its limitations, following Kohnke and Moorhouse’s (2022) framework. The main findings are teacher-friendliness (i.e., level and objective-appropriate assignments), integrated skills practice (e.g., grammar, vocabulary, listening, and pronunciation), and information cards to raise learner’s cultural awareness. However, full content access is available only to premium users. Users might also experience technical hiccups, such as glitches and connection instability. Furthermore, the app prioritizes Spanish among the other languages of practice (i.e., English, French, German, and Welsh). Since this review introduces the app and outlines its potential advantages and disadvantages for language learning, classroom-based and experimental studies are needed to corroborate the findings.

Keywords: Lirica, mobile-assisted language learning, mobile apps, music, songs

Introduction

Many scholars argue that much learning occurs outside classrooms (Foster et al., 2023). Given the diversity of language learners and contextual challenges (Turgut & Aslan, 2021), many learners and...
teachers turn to out-of-class alternatives such as MALL products (Huang et al., 2024). Mobile apps might improve language skills, with MALL providing manifold benefits (Hsu & Liu, 2023). However, most apps are commercialized, with a specific language focus. Additionally, many fail to incorporate teacher support for classroom use (Wai et al., 2018). However, the positive impact of music on human psychology (Dolean, 2016) and language learning (Baills et al., 2021) features mobile apps utilizing music. Lirica (Appendix 1), a mobile app that promotes multilingual practice through songs, emerges as a convenient model for the very reason. Hence, this tech review evaluates Lirica by presenting an overview and handling its affordances and limitations of use.

Overview

Lirica is a mobile app that shows great potential for language learners. It allows practice in five languages: English, French, German, Spanish and Welsh. It has been tested with Spanish students in several institutions and has demonstrated impressive results. Due to numerous levels of lesson content, the app primarily focuses on Spanish learners.

Lirica is downloadable for Android (5 and up) and iOS (11 or later). Users can access more information at https://www.lirica.io/ Once downloaded, users are asked to register. Free (restricted content) and premium ($4.99–$24.99 per item) versions are available. It is user-friendly and has a straightforward interface with four tabs at the bottom page (Figure 1).

The Learn tab displays the course content according to level. Users can quickly check their progress by completion percentage. Independent users might go to the Play section to practice language through diverse genres. The Awards section shows the user’s achievements and the number of words learned. The fourth tab (Settings) enables users to customize settings or access information on privacy and help.

Opportunities for Language Learning

One of Lirica’s robust features is the teacher’s module (Figure 2), allowing teachers to manage their classes by assigning songs across levels (A1–C1) and learning objectives (e.g., tenses and themes). This way, teachers can review students’ progress and guide them accordingly. Given the scarcity of language apps that incorporate teachers’ use (Wai et al., 2018), this feature may give teachers a distinct advantage over other apps (e.g., LingoClip and Sounter).

Another distinct feature is diverse activities for language skills, considering the challenges these skills pose for different language learners (Brandt et al., 2024). For instance, users can revise grammar through episodic instructions (Figure 3) that guide them to relevant parts of the lyrics. They can also practice vocabulary by choosing the correct translation as the song proceeds. Listening is another skill that can be improved through manifold activities (e.g., ordering words, gap fill, multiple choice, and arranging the lyrics). In addition, all skills practice comes with various competitive activities. In an earlier study, Huang and Chen (2024) found that the Lyrics Training app effectively improved learners’ listening and vocabulary and reported that learners held positive perceptions. In another study, Busse et al. (2021) revealed the positive impact of songs on vocabulary, speaking, and grammar. In addition, Baills et al. (2021) reported pronunciation improvement in learners who practiced through songs. As the literature indicates, learning through songs might foster language skills; thus, Lirica could facilitate this.

Information cards (Figure 4) that expose users to the target culture are also beneficial. Users can learn about artists and their local culture by reading these cards. Given the interconnectedness of culture and language learning (York, 2023), this feature might assist in raising users’ cultural awareness. Previous
Figure 1  *The Main Screen.*
**Figure 2** Teacher’s Module.

**Figure 3** Episodic Instructions.
studies also showed that singing songs from diverse cultures could significantly impact how we form our identities, perceive and comprehend others, and ultimately develop a better understanding of ourselves (Ilari et al., 2013; Kelly, 2018). It was also demonstrated that language learners preferred learning through entertainment (e.g., learning about music bands) (Ma, 2017). Furthermore, cultural information is one of the criteria for evaluating language learning apps (Rosell-Aguilar, 2017). All things considered, Lirica has these characteristics and might be helpful to language learners in this regard.

Figure 4 Information Cards.
Users can further benefit from the gamified learning environment. Previous research revealed the positive impacts of gamification on learner experiences and learning outcomes (Dehghanzadeh et al., 2021). In addition to earning gold and diamond discs, stars, and characters based on their achievements, users can also check their progress after completing the activities. Further, the app’s digital assistant displays instructions in episodes, scaffolding users through their learning experience. Given gamification’s pedagogical affordances, this feature might increase learners’ motivation (Hong et al., 2022). A meta-analysis of gamification studies between 2011 and 2019 indicated its positive effects on learner motivation and engagement (Boudadi & Gutiérrez-Colón, 2020). Accordingly, the relevant literature supports our claim that Lirica might foster learner motivation.

**Conclusion and Limitations**

Notwithstanding its primary focus on Spanish, Lirica can be an advantageous tool for language learning and practice via songs in multiple languages. The app stands out, particularly for its teacher-friendly feature, along with integrated skills practice and cultural awareness-raising features for learners. Teachers can leverage this app in classrooms to review learners’ vocabulary, grammar, listening, and pronunciation progress. On the other hand, learners might customize their learning preferences (e.g., selecting musical genres to practice songs with) and have a motivating and engaging learning experience.

However, the app suffers from a few limitations. First, it allows full access to premium users only. Also, it is only accessible to users with a stable internet connection. Additionally, glitches might occur during practice and thus slow learners’ pace, which can be discouraging. Furthermore, the app emphasizes Spanish more among other languages for practice (e.g., English, French, German, and Welsh). Since this review aimed to introduce Lirica and present its affordances and limitations for language learning, more studies are needed to verify the results. In this regard, prospective researchers might examine the effectiveness of Lirica in improving language skills, particularly vocabulary, grammar, listening, and pronunciation. Researchers might also explore learners’ perceptions of the app across diverse educational contexts. Furthermore, future studies might compare Lirica with similar apps, such as LingoClip and Sounter.

**References**


## Appendix 1: Product at a Glance

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Title</th>
<th>Lirica</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Developer</td>
<td>Taplyrica Ltd</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Website</td>
<td><a href="https://www.lirica.io/">https://www.lirica.io/</a></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Product Type</td>
<td>Online/mobile language practice (in English, French, German, Spanish, and Welsh)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Operating Systems</td>
<td>iOS 11.0 or later, iPadOS 11.0 or later, macOS 11.0 or later and a Mac with Apple M1 chip or later, visionOS 1.0 or later, Android (5.0 and up)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Registration</td>
<td>Required</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hardware Requirements</td>
<td>An internet-accessible device</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Price</td>
<td>Free</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>A seven-day trial account</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Subscription at $4.99 – $24.99 per item</td>
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