



### Software Review

Title	<b>Busuu</b> 
Publisher	Busuu – Mc Graw Hill Education  <i>Contact Information:</i> Busuu Limited 3 <sup>rd</sup> Floor 10 East Road, London, N16AD, UK  <i>Website:</i> busuu.com <i>Email:</i> <a href="mailto:team@busuu.com">team@busuu.com</a> , <a href="mailto:mobile@busuu.com">mobile@busuu.com</a> <i>Target Audience:</i> Everyone
Platform	Apple Store (iOS), Google Play (Android), Online (Mac and PC)
Minimum system requirements	Requires iOS 8.0 or later. Combatable with iPhone, iPad, iPod touch, and Apple Watch. Android – varies with device
Target languages	English, Arabic, French, German, Indonesian, Italian, Japanese, Polish, Portuguese, Russian, Simplified Chinese, Spanish, Turkish
Target audience	Language Learners
Price	Apple In-app Products (\$10.99 – 1 month, \$54.99 – 6 months, and \$74.99 – 12 months -for monthly subscriptions) Android In-app Products (\$0.99 - \$169.99 per item)

*Busuu*, a language learning app, is designed to provide learners with a fun and interactive way to learn a new language anywhere by connecting learners with over 60 million international native speakers. Learners can download and try the app for free after registering, but learners need to pay to get full access. In 2015, *Busuu* teamed up with McGraw-Hill Education to provide learners with an official McGraw-Hill Language Learning Certificate. Studies from the City University of New York and the University of South Carolina have shown that using *Busuu* for just 16 hours will significantly improve elementary language skills. An independent study by the City University of New York states that 22.5 hours of *Busuu* Premium equals one college semester of language study (Taylan, 2018; Vesselinov & Grego, 2016). Learning the basics of a new language in about 16–23 hours is, by all accounts, fast learning indeed.

*Busuu*'s free app can help learners learn, practice, and improve elementary basic skills and knowledge in Spanish, English, German, French, Italian, Japanese, Portuguese, Polish, Chinese, Russian, and Turkish. The app provides lessons and practice in speaking, pronunciation, grammar,

listening, writing, spelling, memory, and phrases. *Busuu* is easy and fun to use because it provides varying practice in speaking, spelling, listening, grammar, phrase pronunciation, and vocabulary. *Busuu* also has complete language courses with distinct levels in each course, phrase and grammar units, audio dialogues, listening exercises, spelling challenges, and language games. Learners can take their time while learning because there is no limit to how long it takes to practice.

The app includes several features, including, but not limited to, vocabulary trainer lessons that help learners understand the basics, personalized lessons befitting each learner's skills, and offline learning modes allowing learners to learn anywhere for free (and with no internet connection). Learners can thus practice several exercises and improve their phrase skills by interacting with native speakers. They can learn from 150 topics encompassing some 3,000 words. In all, learners can test their learning via lessons with quizzes, listening exercises, and vocabulary games. In the new version 10.3.1, *Busuu* has further improved their voice recognition technology to make pronunciation exercises more accurate and reliable. *Busuu* also added pronunciation exercises in new course languages (French, German, and more).

With respect to the Apple *Busuu* app only, learners need to register before access to the app is granted. When registering, learners will first need to choose a language. If one chooses English, the message reads "Looks like you speak English already. Are you sure you want to LEARN this Language?". The app then offers two options: "I'm sure" or "Cancel". Selecting "I'm sure", the app then asks to enter a username, email, and password. Thereafter, the app asks to choose between "I am a beginner" or "Find my level". Choosing the latter reveals the app's available levels. Only 2 levels each for beginners and intermediate learners alike appear to be available. To have these lessons available offline, learners will need to purchase a premium package, an important piece of information not mentioned at the outset of the registration process. To be fair, the app does mention that certain activities are available only to premium paying users.

Premium packages aside, the first lesson and exercises provide vocabulary words learners can replay as needed to hear them more than once or hear each word respectively with slower pronunciation. Oftentimes, two to three vocabulary words connected in some way are provided at once. For example, *hello* and *hi* are given first, with pronunciation followed by a tip on how it is used with examples. A multiple-choice exercise for each word follows. Similarly, each lesson is followed by a quiz, and there is even an option to correct the work of other learners or have them correct your own work. However, when learners proceed through the practice exercises and choose an incorrect answer, the app does not provide the correct answer or an explanation why the selection is wrong. For example, at times during the test learners are asked to spell the words and are even given the correct spelling right away if a particular word is misspelled, though no spelling practice in the lesson is provided. This limitation was present in the free Apple version of the app. Consequently, no further claims are made here with respect to the premium version which may indeed provide such spelling practice.

In sum, the *Busuu* app is an efficient language learning app that is easy to use. Importantly, it is a fun way to learn another language while also making new friends from around the world. In our assessment, the app can help with learning the basics of a language learners can use when traveling or communicating with native speakers. Even so, the app may not be suitable for learners who wish to pursue academic degrees in the target language chiefly because the app does not provide sufficient or adequate academic language practice, support, or assessment. Language teachers are thus counseled to weigh considerations important to them and their students and

choose wisely. The *Busuu* app may indeed be the one they have been looking for among the hundreds of apps available for language learning. In the end, as the German proverb so wisely states, *wer die Wahl hat, hat die Qual* (the bigger the choice, the harder it is to choose).

Choices are hard to make indeed. Choose wisely!

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## REFERENCES

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- Taylan, U. (2018). VoScreen online foreign language learning environment. *Journal of Educational Technology & Online Learning*, 1(1), 60-69.