

Learn Languages with Music: Lyrics Training App Review

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Website	https://lyricstraining.com/
Title	Learn Languages with Music: Lyrics Training
Contact Information	support@lyricstraining.com
Type of Product	Smart-device app software
Hardware Requirements	Smart-device (phone or tablet) and access to Internet connection
Operating Systems	Android and iOS
Registration	Required
Price	Limited Free Access per day. Full premium version available for: \$4.99 per month; \$29.99 annually (\$2.50 a month).

Music and language learning have been conjoined together for decades because “music inspires language, and language enlivens the music” (Kao & Oxford 2014, p. 116). The pedagogical integration of music and language has resulted in astounding outcomes for language acquisition (Stansell, 2005), such as supporting learners’ acquisition of a foreign language while simultaneously increasing learners’ motivation.

Since the early sixties, scholars have been arguing for the use of music in language learning due to its motivational effect (Engh, 2013). For example, the soothing effect of music can entice learners to focus on language learning activities with a goal of approximating their performance to the original song content (Erten, 2015). A practical approach of integrating music in language learning can be achieved through the use of mobile devices. The popularity of mobile devices encourages the creation of learning opportunities through mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) resources (Reinders & Pegrum, 2016). Klimova (2019) defines MALL as a subdivision of Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL), where MALL offers more spontaneity of interactivity, ubiquity, and portability; that is, accessibility to information without any constraints on time or context. One MALL tool created to support language learning through music is Learn Languages with Music: Lyrics Training (LLM:LT), an application (app) that provides 32 music genres to over 2 million users learning 14 languages. This app aims at creating unique language learning experiences through music to enhance learners’ listening, pronunciation, lexicogrammar, and language expression.

This review will provide a general description of the limited free access LLM:LT app, beginning with an overview of the registration process, the music genres and lessons available, and the type of learning activities provided. It will then evaluate the app's pedagogical effectiveness for supporting language learning, specifically targeting both young and adult learners.

General Description

After installing the app, users will be prompted to get started by signing into an existing account or creating a new one. To create a new account, users can use either a Facebook account or an email address and a password. Next, users select the target language. For this review, English was chosen out of 14 available languages. The LLM:LT app offers a wide variety of music genres (see Figure 1).

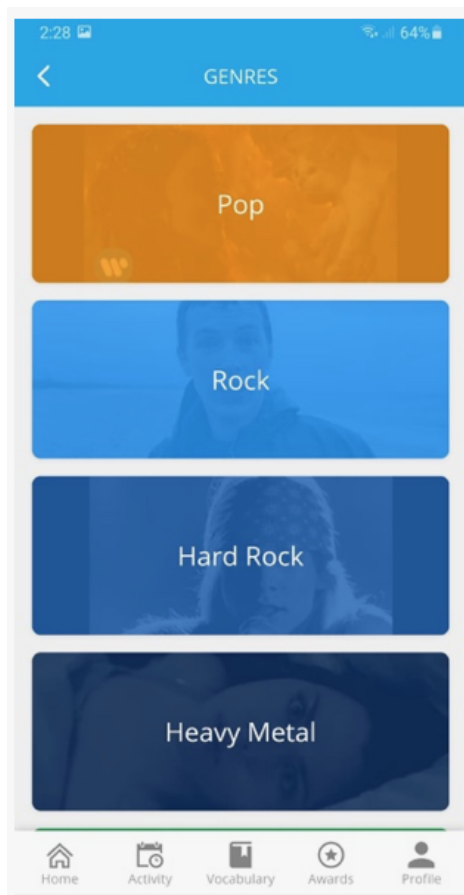


Figure 1. Music Genres

By selecting a song, users can access two types of game-style activities: multiple-choice and karaoke (see Figure 2).

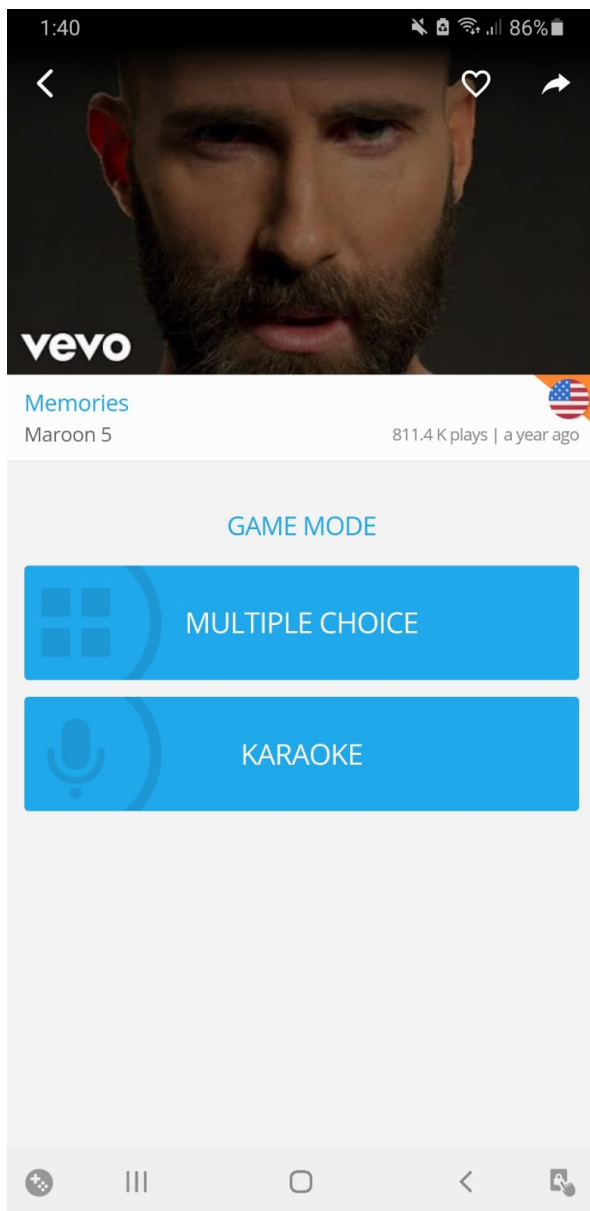


Figure 2. Multiple-choice & Karaoke Activities

In the multiple-choice activity, users self-assess their language level and then listen to their selected song while reading the lyrics with highlighted missing words/phrases. The user is provided with four-word options to complete the song lyrics (see Figure 3). It is worth mentioning that each language level in the multiple-choice activity varies in difficulty. For instance, the beginner level has one missing word/phrase in each line of the lyrics for a total of 34 missing words, two/three missing words in the intermediate level for a total of 61, four in the advanced level for a total of 113, and in the expert level users provide all the words to the lyrics. (see Figure 4 a and b).

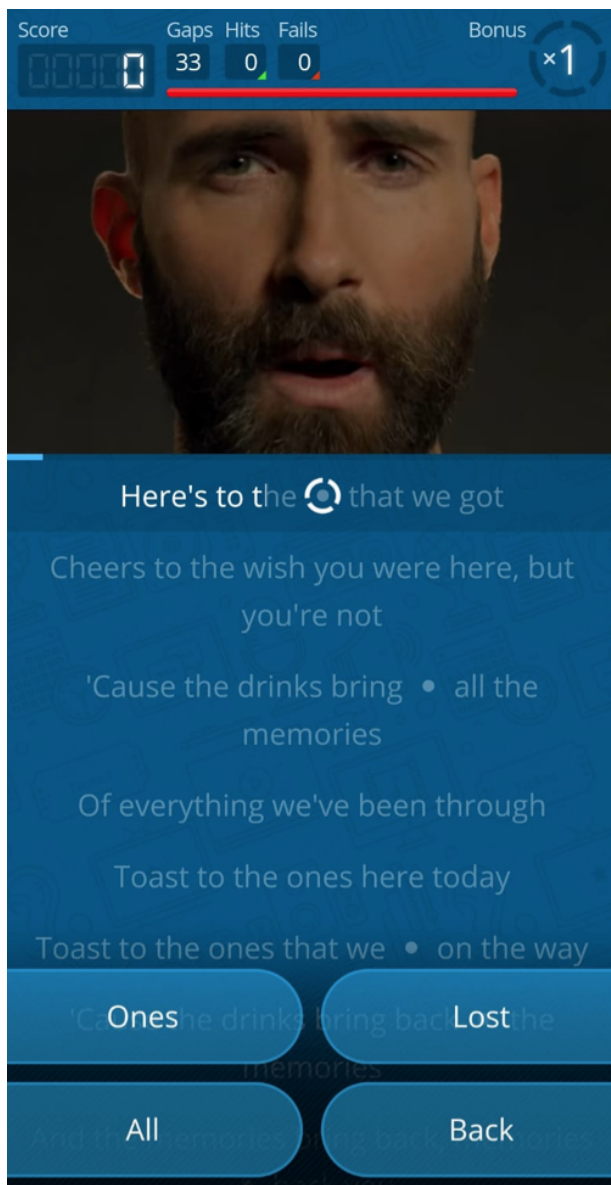


Figure 3. Multiple-choice Options

As shown in Figure 3, each multiple-choice activity is timed and users' scores are counted based on their correct and incorrect choices (Hits=correct, Fails=incorrect). The free version offers three trials of this activity every 30 minutes.

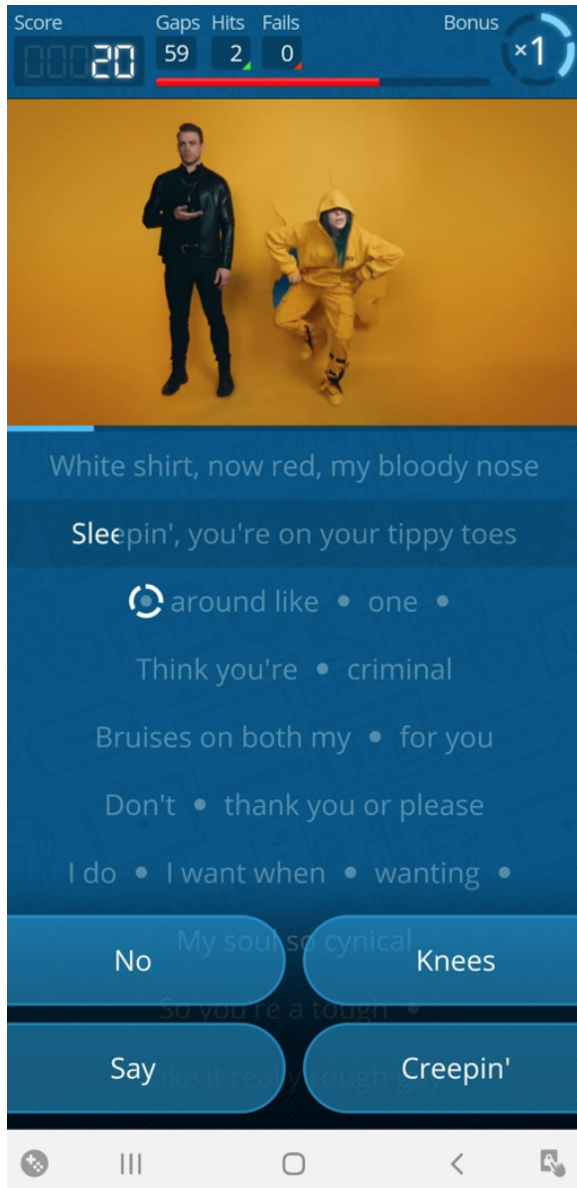


Figure 4a. Intermediate

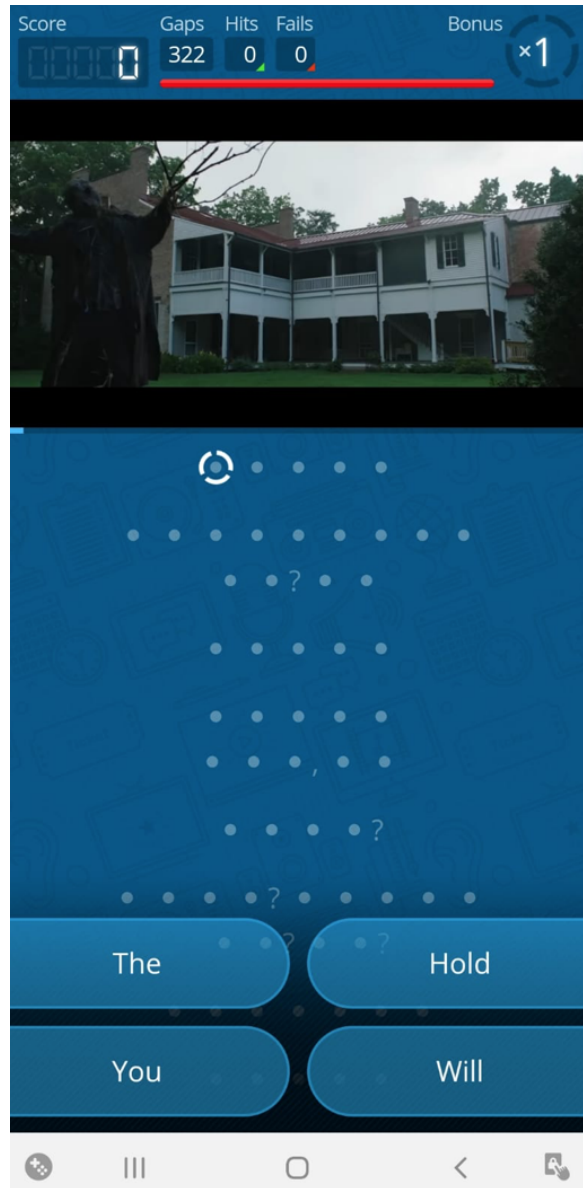


Figure 4b. Expert Level

If users do not select one option from the multiple choices, they will be prompted to swipe left to repeat a line or swipe right to skip a word at any language level. Once the choice is made, users move to another missing word/phrase in the next line. Within this activity, users can challenge others in their local country or worldwide.

The karaoke activity offers users with more flexibility to read the song lyrics while listening, pause songs, and simultaneously repeat any line multiple times while singing along with the singer (see Figure 5).

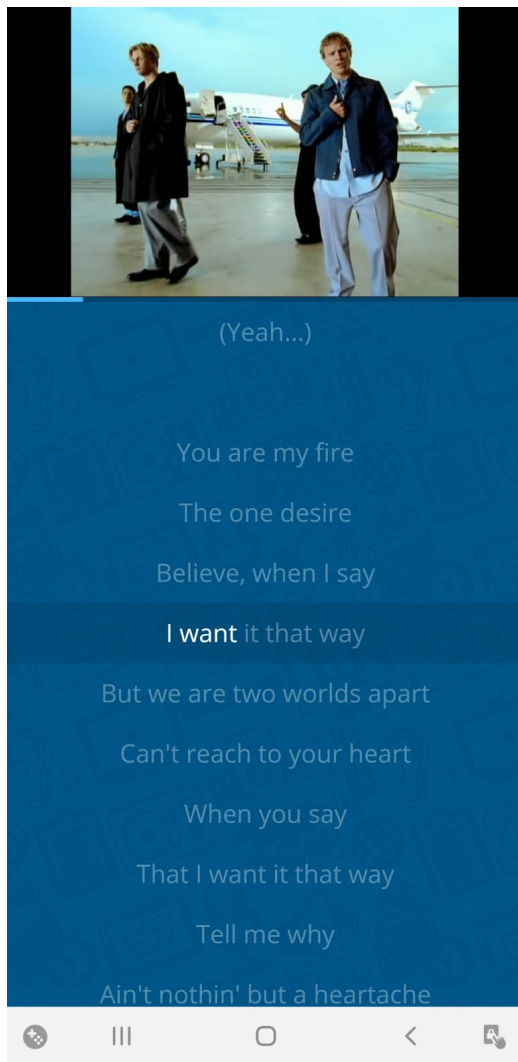


Figure 5. Karaoke Activity

In both the multiple-choice and karaoke activities, users can return back to any line in the lyrics and listen to it as many times as they would like. Additionally, users are provided with a log of the songs played and the answers of the multiple-choice activities completed. Users can translate any words in their vocabulary list to any of the 59 languages offered (see Figure 6).

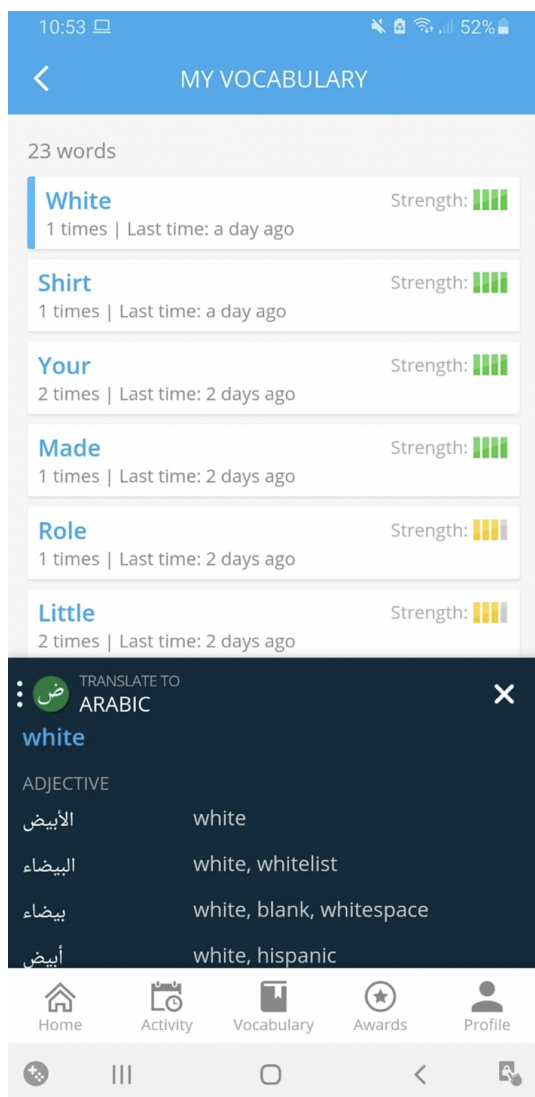


Figure 6. Vocabulary Translation

Lastly, to motivate users to make more learning progress, users can win badge awards for reaching a specific number of language levels, lyrics, and words (see Figure 7).

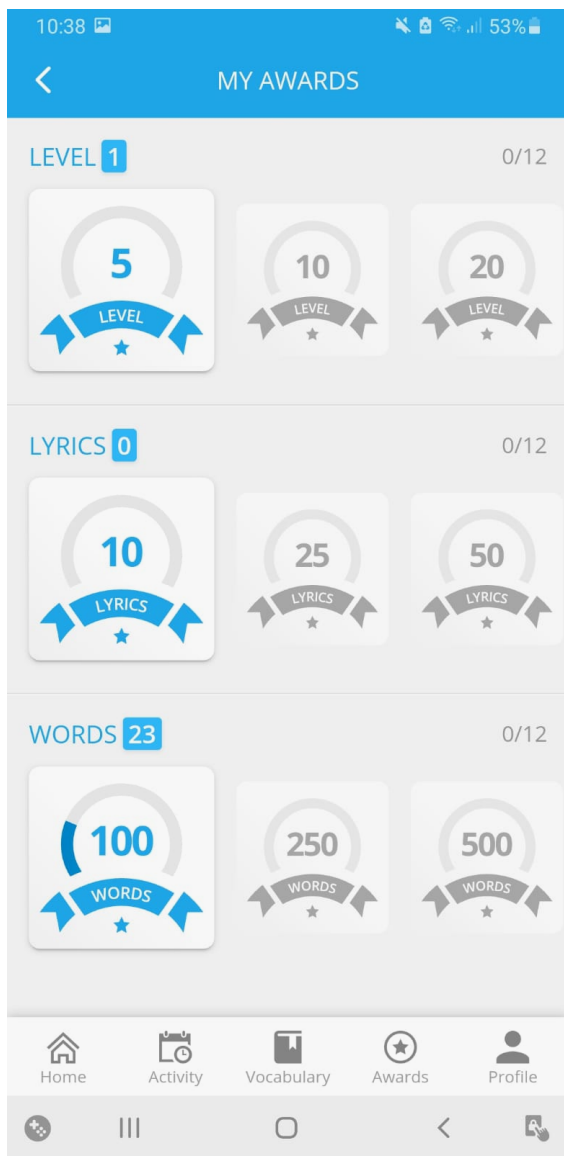


Figure 7. User Awards

In essence, the LLM:LT, an app designed for young and adult learners, provides self-study language learning opportunities through multiple-choice and karaoke activities, an activity-tracking feature, vocabulary history list, and word translation. This language learning app claims that it uses music as motivation to enhance learners' speaking, pronunciation, listening, and vocabulary in the target language.

Evaluation

According to the MALL framework, to evaluate MALL tools, it is necessary to consider the tool's educational affordances, general pedagogical design, second language (L2) pedagogical design, second language acquisition (SLA) design, and affective design (Reinders & Pegrum, 2016). This section will evaluate the LLM:LT app with regards to its suitability for both young

and adult users and its effectiveness for supporting language learning as a MALL tool using this proposed framework.

The general pedagogical design is concerned with “traditional pedagogical approaches (behaviorism), progressive approaches (social constructivism), 21st century skills, situated, embodied, student-centered, and informal learning” (Reinders & Pegrum, 2016, p. 5) Through the lens of the general pedagogical design, users can find it easy to navigate through the LLM:LT app, promoting more learner-centered learning environments. All users need are basic mobile skills, including the ability to swipe right or left, type in the search engine bar, play and pause songs, and navigate through different sections. Although this app claims that it is suitable for both young and adult learners, it does not provide engaging learning environments for young users. It lacks children-friendly vibrant visuals, colorful and highlighted texts for easier reading, and animation of animal characters that can grab young users’ attention. Additionally, it does not provide consistent music genres for all of the provided languages; for example, the children’s music genre is not present for users who want to learn Korean.

The incorporation of music into language learning evokes an appreciation of the target language’s culture (Engh, 2013) while simultaneously motivating learners to infer the grammatical rules of the language (Stansell, 2005), enhancing vocabulary retention (Forster, 2006), and reinforcing pronunciation (Stansell, 2005). Similarly, the LLM:LT app provides opportunities for expanding vocabulary, inferring grammatical rules, and immersing users in the culture of the target language. However, it does not seem to reinforce pronunciation with clear learning goals because there are no pronunciation-related activities, feedback, or guidance. One of the educational affordances (i.e., the uses mobile technologies can readily provide to their users) that the LLM:LT app claims to offer the connectivity feature, linking users on a local and global level. This feature allows users to challenge each other in the multiple-choice activity either locally or globally, creating more room for motivation in language learning. However, this interaction is limited to scoring points. While the scoring challenge feature supports the incorporation of motivation into language learning, users’ interaction does not lead to any authentic or pragmatic language use beyond the recorded music videos, in which users would ideally practice the target language with other users or native speakers in a real-world scenario.

From the SLA and L2-specific pedagogical design perspectives, LLM:LT lacks a number of features that could make it more pedagogically effective. The SLA design spans areas of input/output comprehensibility, opportunities of meaning negotiation, and feedback whereas the L2-specific pedagogical design focuses on language within communicative, task-based approaches, and intercultural learning. A noteworthy limitation is that learners only have the choice of two types of learning activities, multiple-choice and karaoke. While the LLM:LT app augments language learning, it does not provide any opportunities for immersing learners into real-life intercultural communicative learning or negotiation of meaning. The app has clear strengths in terms of the interface simplicity, wide variety of songs in different accents of the offered languages, and the selection of songs based on music genres. However, language learning assessment and feedback is limited to two words: hits and fails. Providing learners with explicit corrective feedback and an opportunity for linguistic interaction could improve the pedagogical design. The feedback-related shortcomings can make learners less certain

about their language learning progress and possibly become less motivated to continue learning.

The affective design revolves around the creation of engaging, motivational, and enjoyable learning environments. The affective design of the LLM:LT app seems to focus more on the motivational aspect through music. Language learners favor learning in contexts of low anxiety and high motivation (Engh, 2013). Therefore, the use of music that this app offers to its users can create a more relaxed and highly motivational learning environment, where users would become more receptive of the target language input that they receive. However, there are still some areas that can be considered for further improvement. For example, adding voice recording features can help learners compare their own pronunciation with the original song content and possibly self-assess their language learning. Another useful improvement can be adding children-friendly songs and learning activities to make its content more inclusive of young and adult learners' language learning needs. According to Shin (2006), one way of creating engaging and enjoyable learning environments for young learners include supplementing their learning activities with brightly colored visuals and realia (real-life objects) that can capture their short attention spans. Consequently, incorporating vibrant colors and visuals into the provided activities can be more engaging and perhaps more enjoyable for young users.

Conclusion

The LLM:LT app delivers a practical approach to learning languages through music. With over 2,500 songs in 14 languages and 32 music genres, this app provides a behaviorist learning approach and a repetition exercise for listening comprehension and vocabulary building to over 2 million users. However, as a MALL tool, LLM:LT app cannot be used as an only source for language learning. While it creates low anxiety and high motivation learning opportunities through music, it can be improved by providing its users with pronunciation-based exercises, effective corrective feedback, real-life intercultural communicative learning contexts, and negotiation of meaning that users learn from the songs.

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