



Strengthening EFL Learners' Autonomy: Exploring the Voscreen App and its Impact on Encouragement and Engagement in Technology-Based Language Learning

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Software/App Review

Abstract

This preset software review article investigates the application of Voscreen, a video-based technology, in enhancing the vocabulary and listening abilities of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students. The software review article explores the potential of Voscreen to improve language learning outcomes and emphasizes the importance of integrating technology into language teaching. The article discusses the key features of Voscreen and provides insights into how teachers can effectively utilize the app in their lessons. Additionally, the study examines the role of technology in English language instruction and assesses the awareness and proficiency of instructors in implementing ICT-integrated teaching methods. Findings indicate that Voscreen can be a valuable tool for EFL teachers to incorporate vocabulary and listening skills in their lesson plans, while gamification elements enhance student engagement and motivation. However, successful implementation of technology in language learning requires adequate teacher training and expertise in ICT-integrated teaching.

Keywords: Voscreen, English as a Foreign Language (EFL), Technology, Vocabulary, Listening

Introduction

Don't you think we still fall short when it comes to utilizing technology for educational purposes, despite today's cutting-edge advancements? By taking a look at 2019 and before, we can realize that we have made a revolution digitally since we were forced to be adapted to the situations coming with the problems such as pandemics and the improvement of technology. Concerning technology and the digital era it wouldn't be possible to not mention information communication technologies (ICT). ICT can be defined as a powerful tool in presenting or representing information in many different ways (Aqsha, 2009) It can be presented through different forms such as texts, pictures, tables, graphs, and even multimedia which can make the class more interesting and lively.

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To be more specific, as a consequence of the conditions generated by the globally alarming condition caused by coronavirus disease called COVID-19 through the end of 2019, the world system had to adapt to new capacity needs and, in most cases, abandon its usual functions. ICT has been used worldwide to help people in business, trade, marketing, science, education, and others (Brian 2000). As Chertoff et al. (2020) have pointed out that in the context of physical separation, there was an essential demand for online gatherings. Hence, one of the most important roles of ICT was in education which helps us get through some challenging times with some breakthrough innovations.

That is to say, these revolutionary movements led to some interferences related to the wider usage of technology in the education area besides other fields. Peachy (2017) declared that the widespread availability of broadband Internet connections and the quick development of technology have made synchronous online education or distant learning utilizing video conferencing technologies, possible. In addition to this situation, many applications aimed at supporting online classes have been made possible for the language learning process. With these tools, further development was promised in the fields of speaking, reading, writing, listening, and pronunciation. Many innovations were conceived of new developments. With the increasing use and demand for these applications, these tools, which compete with each other, have moved much further, making not only useful but also making the process of language learning more entertaining. We can count Voscreen, Rosetta Stone, Duolingo, Memrise, and Busuu among some of those tools.

A teacher in an online classroom should not only be aware of how to use evolving technologies in a range of mediums for teaching but should also be able to apply learning depending on student requirements (iNACOL, 2011). In a technology age, we encounter new gen technologist learners and as teachers, we shouldn't be far from fashion and ought to follow the latest trends to be up to date. When we use the technology efficiently it is not challenging to achieve a successful learning process and using Voscreen for listening activities, for instance, can be a good idea to start. Chertoff et al. (2020) also declared the fact that virtually developed teaching sessions with language tools may be productive, engaging, and amusing, and they may provide more audience involvement possibilities than were previously available. It is necessary here to clarify exactly what is meant by language tools to express the importance of these cutting-edge technology products. The current phenomenal transformation in teaching English trends has mostly concentrated on increasing learners' language abilities with the assistance of new technology instruments such as hard-wares, soft-wares, the Internet, and mobile technologies (Singh, 2019). ICT is currently being used in education to assist students to learn more effectively and help teachers to do administrative tasks more efficiently (Neil Selwyn 2003). The Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL) software programs which have been designed for the purpose of language teaching despite other tools such as the Internet, e-mail, and others also promote student-centered language learning and help students develop their communicative skills as well (Gonglewski 2003).

Extensive research and scholarly literature exist on the implementation and efficacy of Voscreen, an educational tool designed for language learning purposes. This article dives deeper into existing research on Voscreen and analyzes and evaluates its effectiveness in improving vocabulary and listening skills. Additionally, it examines related content such as English language teaching with technology, students' and teachers' awareness and knowledge of ICT-integrated teaching, and opportunities in Turkey to apply

ICT-integrated classes. The present research can be beneficial to introduce the application to language teachers and learners and help the developers to see it from another perspective to make improvements. Hence, this study will be dwelling on the review of the software, Voscreen that is hoped to be helping the language learning process and making it much easier and more productive as it also supports communicative skills.

The present study will be guided by the following questions:

1. Is Voscreen an efficient tool to develop language learners' vocabulary and listening skills?
2. What can be the Voscreen application's capacity for educational innovation in terms of vocabulary and listening achievement?
3. How can we benefit from the Voscreen application in the most effective way to improve English proficiency?
4. What are the essential adjustments to make in the application to be more user-friendly in terms of both convenient usage and productivity?

Literature Review

The use of cutting-edge technology in language learning has gradually gained widespread acceptance in the past few years, particularly as video-based tools like Voscreen have drawn attention as a means of improving listening comprehension and vocabulary acquisition among EFL learners.

English language teaching with technology

Technology has been used more and more in English language teaching (ELT), which has substantially increased the possibilities for both teaching and learning the language. However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of ICT-integrated teaching largely depends on teachers' awareness and knowledge of how to use these tools besides students' interest to attend and participate in the classes. Therefore we will be examining both teacher and student factors that contribute to successful technology implementation.

In their research, Al-Khairi and Alghamdi (2019) discovered that educators who were well-versed in the use of technology for formative assessment were more adept at integrating it into their ESL courses. Moreover, it was shown in Noeth and Volkov (2004)'s study that students tend to be interested in learning with technology, and their attitudes toward learning are positively affected by computer use. Since Voscreen is one of those technological tools that support learning interactively we can agree with the statement of Krumlova (2017) that Voscreen is one of the very useful tools for both intensive and extensive listening besides being beneficial for learners to enhance their English listening skills.

Students in ICT-integrated teaching

Azmi (2017) states that the use of information technology in the language classroom boosts autonomous learning and maximizes targeted outcomes, motivates learners, and helps them improve their performance in the EFL classroom. Therefore more and more digital tools like Voscreen should be included during lessons since it gives intrinsic motivation to learners. In the 21st century, the new generation is raised with

technology and it plays an important role in their social, personal, or educational life. Hence, including apps like Voscreen that comprise video clips helps them focus on the learning process more than the traditional way of teaching.

Yüçetürk and Bergil (2021) clearly stated that the use of Voscreen increases listening and comprehension skills since it has been observed that their listening improved significantly through the interaction with the target language via the Voscreen application. Moreover, this innovative improvement can give teachers the resources they need to help their students improve their language skills in an interesting, interactive, and challenging manner. (Saran et al., 2009; Taylan, 2018; Verdugo & Belmonte, 2007; West & Turner, 2010).

Teachers' awareness and knowledge of ICT-integrated teaching

Implementing technology and digital updates into the language learning environment is crucial. Some particular studies suggest that (Mcgrail, 2005; Bingimlas, 2009; Tsai & Chai, 2012; Al-Qallaf & Al-Mutairi, 2016), before 2015 teachers' technology integration was limited due to some factors such as lack of opportunity, access, and teacher training however, it can be seen in those studies that teachers were mostly enthusiastic to use technology in the education process as long as it has positive impacts on students' learning.

Yet, it can be noted that after the pandemic the technology use drastically improved and became more generic despite some continuous problems such as access to the internet and student attendance. (Hodges et al. 2020; An et al. 2021; Ahmed et al. 2021)

According to some studies, teachers were encouraged to use more creativity and expand their ICT abilities as a result of the change that happen after the epidemic. (DeCoito & Estaiteyeh, 2022; Shamir-Inbal & Blau, 2021). In their study, DeCoito and Estaiteyeh (2022) noted that instructors reported wanting to include more digital aspects into their lessons in the upcoming academic years. When it comes to EFL teachers using technology as an integrated tool in their teaching, it can be said that Voscreen can be a useful tool to implement both vocab and listening skills for their students.

Voscreen

Voscreen was created by Deniz Dünder in 2003 in Turkey. It's an interactive and entertaining app that has worldwide success in the competition "Reimagine Education 2016" as the third in the "Best Education Application" category. It is a free-of-charge app that has a marathon collection of short fragments from podcasts, movies, documentaries, news, cartoons, and music videos that are authentic and have a very wide range. Thanks to these clips language learners are exposed to hearing native English speakers employ expressions, chunks, idioms, and phrases that are most frequently used in a speech. Furthermore, since this website provides short clips with dialogues or speech used in real-life contexts, teachers can encourage students to do listening practice outside the classroom using this website to ensure constant exposure to input in the target language. (Kiliçkaya, 2018). Whichever method you choose, you can sign up, access through your Facebook account or start as a guest (Figure1).

Figure 1. Registration

After the registration part, you will be shown a 4-5 second video segment ranging from a wide variety of genres. As will be discussed in detail later, it is limited to one type of task, however, it can be chosen from different modes and difficulty levels or modes while watching the videos. (Figure 2)

voScreen life - Random video pulled from the application's database with no parameters chosen specifically in terms of level, structure, or word count.

voStep - This mode focuses on choosing the learner's knowledge level and can be arranged from beginning to advance.

voStructure - It is convenient for the practice of different grammar topics like tenses, modals, prepositions, conjunctions, etc.

voRhythm - With this mode, you can select between various spoken text lengths, typically between 3 and 13+ words.

voKids - Has three levels for kids as it is claimed, 1st level is between 1-3 words while level 2 and 3 is more than 3 words.

Life	voStep	voStructure	voRhythm	voKids
Life itself	Beginner	Modals	1 to 3 words	Level 1
	Elementary	Passive Ve...	4 to 6 words	Level 2
	Intermediate	Phrasal Ver...	7 to 9 words	Level 3
	Upper	Tenses	10 to 12 words	
	Advanced	Conjunctio...	13 and more ...	
		Questions		
		Singular, Pl...		
		Be going to		

Figure 2. Voscreen categories and subtitles

Learners also choose whether they want to see English subtitles or not. This game aims to choose the correct translation of spoken information – see Figure 2. Learners score points for every correct answer and move on to the next clip in the series. The clips can be played as many times as they wish. However, every wrong answer takes points from your previous points.

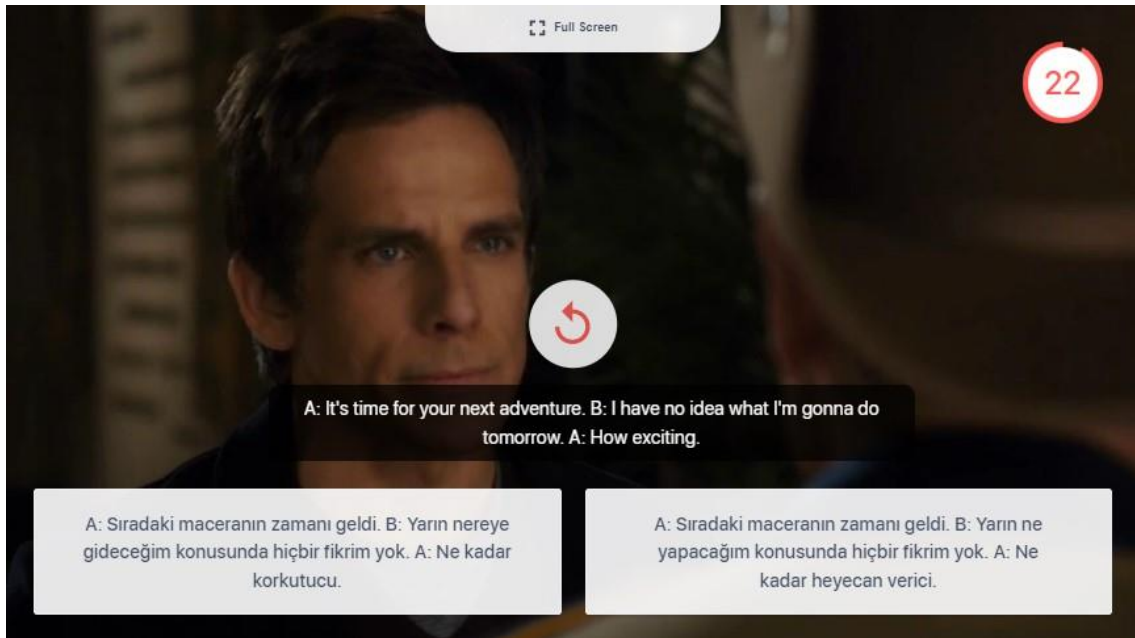


Figure 3. Voscreen - showing subtitles and two translation options

Since it has language options there is also a chance for you to make your native language English. Thanks to that instead of translation, you encounter the English – English paraphrase of the sentences as in Figure 3. Learners with advanced English levels can make their language options and study rewriting practices.

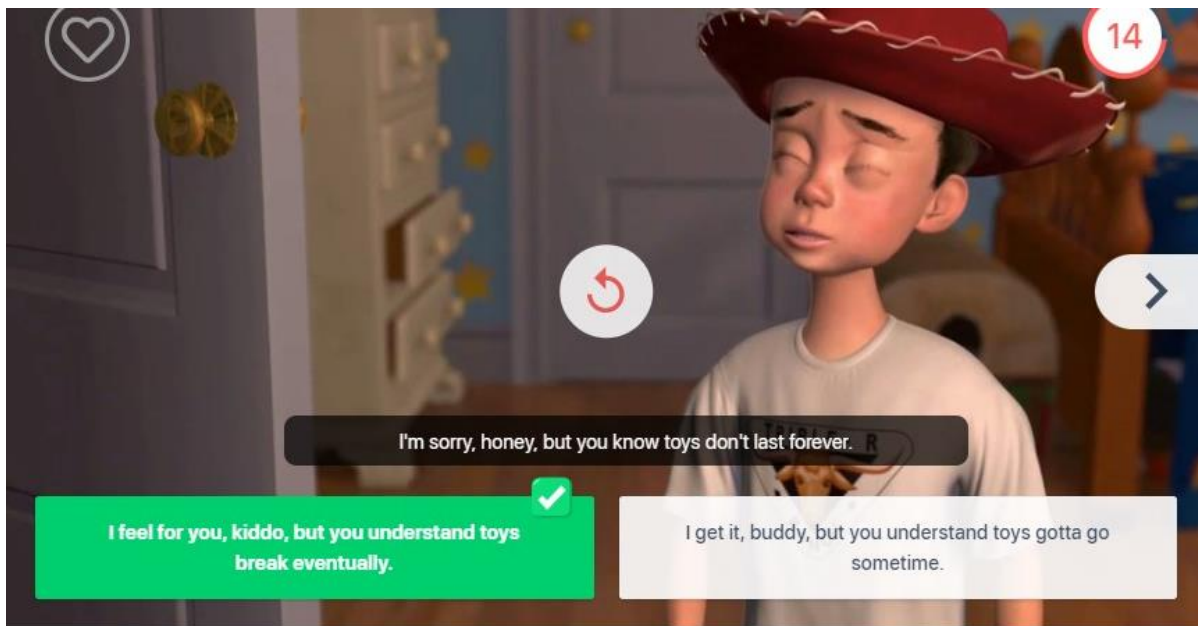


Figure 4. Voscreen - showing subtitles and correct paraphrased option

There are 21 language options usable which is quite adequate while taking the quiz when you made your choice whether with the subtitle or not a countdown immediately starts. The time changes according to the length and how challenging the video is. The more advanced it is, the more time it provides you.

Applying Voscreen for English Language Teaching

Evaluation of Features

Voscreen has more than 3 million users today. As a motto it embraces the idea that “*Voscreen is transforming the learning process, allowing individuals to absorb English as it is truly spoken today and to connect with it like never before.*” However, besides all the positive sides of the app, some sides should be improved. To start with the categories;

voStep - This mode focuses on choosing the learner's knowledge level and can be arranged from beginning to advance. However, the Common European Framework for Language Learning could have been used instead of beginning, intermediate, etc.

voStructure – Choosing the structure is convenient for the practice of different grammar topics like tenses, modals, prepositions, conjunctions... Yet, there are other specific structures I couldn't find while I teach my students. Therefore it can be improved with the help of some educators from the language teaching field. Using CEFR also makes the learner more encouraging to study.

voRhythm – Selecting spoken text lengths, typically between 3 and 13+ words helped me to adjust the activities in class better since I have different age groups to teach. Using fewer words for beginners and more words for advanced ones. While choosing the length it could also permit one to decide on the level as well. Vocabulary level would change that way.

voKids There are three levels for kids 1st level is between 1-3 words while level 2 and 3 is more than 3 words. However, there is no clear distinction between levels 2 and 3. Moreover, there were some inappropriate video clips for kids. Young learners, on the other hand, cannot get benefit from the kid's part. There should be another section for young learners that contains clips from child songs, games, cartoons, etc. In that way, it can be used in kindergartens by preschool teachers as well.

As another recommendation, it can be seen that choosing one category nullification other categories. However, it can be more convenient if the app allows multiple selections. Thus, you can adjust the level, structure, and length at the same time which allows you to be more productive in your specific lessons.

Additionally, the arrangeable speed of the videos also can be helpful during the learning process. Activities can be made accordingly and the speed could be reduced for lower levels if the native language is heavy for them to comprehend fully. Thanks to this feature, advanced levels can also practice in a slower motion and understand the sentences more clearly than usual. As it was claimed by the creators of it Voscreen advertises an Artificial Linguistic Intelligence for Visual Education system (ALIVE), which tailors the videos to each learner's needs. It can be connected with some other features and be more beneficial in terms of language teaching and learning.

As another useful feature, classes can be created by teachers using their accounts. The technology enables the instructor to collect an address for registration after creating the class (Figure 4). The students can

sign up for the class using their accounts when the trainer gives them this address. Trainers can as design many observation classes as they wish. The score tables have also helped to foster a competitive atmosphere among the students.



#	Group Name	Observees	
1	6A (Uludağ ortaokulu)	0	X
2	7C (Uludağ Ortaokulu)	0	X
3	8B (Uludağ Ortaokulu)	0	X

Figure 4. Groups

Activities Based on Voscreen App

Even with limited task options, several activities can be created by the instructor while using Voscreen. Vocabulary building is one of the main opportunities it provides to the learners. Voscreen provides a vast bank of vocabulary that is contextualized within everyday scenarios. Interactions through gaming, social media, or virtual worlds represent further channels for L2 vocabulary expansion (Godwin-Jones, 2018).

Listening comprehension practice is the other way to make an activity. The videos on Voscreen are a great tool for improving listening comprehension skills as I mentioned before. After watching the videos, students take quizzes that test their understanding of the content. Activities could include note-taking while watching the videos and checking with a pair or in group work.

On the other hand, there are also this pronunciation practices that can be applied. Voscreen has a feature that enables students to hear how words are pronounced by native speakers. Students could participate in activities that involve watching videos and working on their pronunciation of the new terms they have learned. To compare their pronunciation to the speakers in the videos, they may even film themselves and share with classmates.

In terms of speaking and making dialogues, after watching videos summarizing orally can be made at the end, criticizing the video or playing a guessing game are also the ones which lead to speaking practices. It can be worked with a group or in a pair or can be turned into a class discussion.

As the writing skills practice, after students have watched a video on Voscreen, they can be tasked with a writing prompt based on the content of the watched video. Activities could include writing a summary of the content, and a reflection on what they learned from the video or memory games. As a memory game, learners may jolt down the keywords from the videos and make a list at the end or put the videos in order.

Conclusion

The fundamental characteristics of Voscreen and explanations that make clear how teachers may utilize it have been discussed in this study. According to Taylan (2018), viewing English-language films and videos might enhance students' hearing and pronunciation abilities in foreign language classes since they make it evident how the language is used in daily life.

This study also focused on how effectively Voscreen, a video-based technology, helps EFL students' vocabulary and listening abilities. Moreover, it examines how technology is used to teach English, how well instructors and students are aware of ICT-integrated instruction, and how ICT-integrated classrooms might be used.

Technology has been proven to be a useful tool for language acquisition, and Voscreen has been shown to increase vocabulary and listening comprehension. Learning using technology often fosters a good attitude among students, and it may increase independent learning, optimize desired results, and inspire learners. Alhawad (2020) claims that the relationship between Vo-screen App and oral performance is when students use it, will help them to raise their level of performance in the English language, and master the language. However, the awareness and expertise of teachers in using these resources are crucial to the success of ICT-integrated teaching.

Voscreen may be a helpful tool for EFL teachers to include vocabulary and listening skills into their lesson plans but to successfully utilize technology in language learning, some factors such as teachers' training and expertise in ICT-integrated teaching should be taken into account. Some adjustments should be made and some features that can help instructors to be more fruitful during classes should be updated. Overall, using Voscreen in the language teaching process may improve the student experience and encourage language learning since it is a game-based app that motivates students.

Limitations and Suggestions for Further Research

One limitation is the need for further investigation into the specific impact of Voscreen on different proficiency levels of EFL students. The study focused on the overall effectiveness of Voscreen in improving vocabulary and listening skills, but a more detailed analysis of its effectiveness for beginner, intermediate, and advanced learners would provide valuable insights.

Another limitation is the focus on a specific context, namely Turkey. The study discussed the opportunities and challenges of implementing ICT-integrated instruction in Turkey, but it would be beneficial to explore the applicability of Voscreen in different cultural and educational settings. Comparing the results across various contexts would provide a more comprehensive understanding of its effectiveness.

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