

5 What Can We Improve: Suggestions for Upgrading the LanGuide App for Slovenian Language

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According to research studies and the growing number of foreign users of Slovenian, interest in the Slovenian language has been increasing in the last few years. It can, therefore, be claimed that the Slovenian Module within the LanGuide project is timely and should be considered a welcome resource for exploitation on the mobile devices. The paper seeks to present the Slovenian Module from its inception, but it also gives a critical evaluation of what can be expected from this new resource. The theoretical part of the present article gives an overview of language guidance apps for learning foreign languages, including the ones for learning Slovenian, as well as making a comparison between apps and textbooks. The central part of the article thoroughly examines the Slovenian language exercises developed within the LanGuide project: the three levels of exercises, their types, and the skills learners gain by doing them. Unlike other Slovenian language apps, the LanGuide App offers its users – students, university professors, and administrative workers – vocabulary and grammar exercises for mobility, academic, IT, and administrative languages. As LanGuide App is relatively new, a substantial part of the article focuses on the evaluation of the app, namely, the technical and content-related advantages and shortcomings of this app, as well as offering guidelines for further work.

Keywords: Slovenian as a second/foreign language, learning Slovenian, language guidance apps, LanGuide

Introduction

A fast pace of life and rapid technological development have changed people's lives in modern times. The Internet, computers, and smartphones

have become a ubiquitous part of our lives and thus affect all segments of human activity and pursuits – including learning foreign languages.

The authors of the article joined the LanGuide project at the beginning of 2021, when the project was already in full swing, to design the Slovenian language exercises.¹ We encountered numerous difficulties already at the beginning. The mobile app was one of the predicted outcomes of the project,² but nobody knew with certainty what type of exercises can be designed for the app, how they will look and appear on the mobile app.

The exercises are divided into four specific domains, i.e. mobility, academic language, IT language, and administrative language. Limiting the exercises to specific domains is quite demanding, therefore certain exercise topics are more general and not necessarily connected only to the fields in question, while still retaining a common thread.

The Slovenian language exercises were initially designed at three levels (A1, A2 and B1), although to unify our exercises with those of other languages, the exercises had to be divided into only two levels, i.e. the beginner and the intermediate level. From our perspective, this was not a good solution as most of the A2 exercises are too difficult for the beginner level and too basic for the intermediate level. We have, nevertheless, decided to present all three levels of exercises in the article as the app offers the possibility of checking exercises at three levels, and because we believe that a third level will be added in the future. Each of the three authors prepared exercises for one of the levels, but for the exercises to complement and reinforce each other, we have first prepared the exercises at the level A1, followed by those at the level A2 and finally proceeding to the level B1.

We have already thoroughly described the process of exercise design in Pavletić et al. (2021), therefore the present article does not focus on materials development. It deals mainly with the evaluation of exercises, pointing out their advantages and shortcomings, offering some suggestions for improvement, as well as discussing the reasons why these exercises are a suitable tool for traditional learning and less appropriate for independent learning.

(Slovenian) Language Guidance Apps

For users to stay up to date and learn foreign languages by adjusting the time, manner, and level of learning to their needs, language guidance

¹ The exercises were also developed for English, Croatian, Italian, Romanian and Spanish.

² Visit <https://languide.si/en> to find out more about the project.

apps have been developed. Some of the most popular apps on the market are for example *Duolingo*, *Memrise*, *Busuu*, *Mango Languages*, *Brainscape* (Dražumerič, 2017), and *50 Languages*, which offer guidance for several foreign languages. The number of apps specializing in learning Slovenian as a second/foreign language, e.g. *Slovenščina za vsak žep* (Jurkovič, 2015), *Slonline*, *ZNAM*, *SOS slovenščina*, *Hotel Slovenščina*, has been increasing in the recent years. These apps mostly offer exercises enhancing vocabulary, phraseology, and practicing dialogues at a basic level (A1–A2 according to CEFR). The LanGuide project resulted in a language guidance app that focuses on four specific domains (mobility, academic, IT and administrative languages) and is aimed for three specific target groups (students, academic staff and administrative workers). The process of designing the exercises was described in Pavletić et al. (2021), where we presented the steps and challenges in developing mobile app exercises. In addition to that, when designing the LanGuide exercises we built on insights from Nechifor and Dimulescu (2021), who emphasize the culturological component, which is crucial for successful communication, yet often remains unnoticed while learning foreign languages. In a study by Čebren et al. (2021), the authors discuss the levels, motives and frequency of mobile apps usage for learning foreign languages and emphasize that the majority of learners decide to use a mobile app due to its availability everywhere and at any time. Thus, it is crucial to carefully choose and develop learning strategies when designing language guidance mobile apps, as they can significantly influence the process of foreign languages learning.

Textbooks and apps have the same goal, i.e. to enable the learning of a foreign language, but differ in regards to structure and method of transmitting information. Foreign language textbooks and textbook sets can consist of several parts, namely textbooks, workbooks, teacher's guides, audio, graphical and other materials (role-play, dialogues, cards, etc.), as well as additional grammar exercises and tables. Textbooks are relatively large, as they comprise 10 to 30 lessons on average. They include detailed tables of content, tables, thematic word lists, vocabularies, phonetic transcriptions, tests, and exercise keys. Textbooks consist of simplified texts and authentic texts that form a whole together with illustrations, photographs and audio recordings, in order to encourage and develop various forms of learning: visual, auditory and logical. (Markovič & Pirih, 1997, pp. 294–296). If compared to designing traditional textbooks, a language guidance app development is based on different principles. For maximum efficiency, didactics and foreign language teaching methodology need to be

considered when designing a language guidance app. In terms of didactics of the Slovenian language for elementary schools, the book *Didaktika slovenskega jezika v osnovni šoli*, Žagar (1996) proposes nine didactic principles, which need to be considered to a certain extent, when designing a language guidance app for learning Slovenian as a second/foreign language:

1. The principles of suitability of lessons for the individual developmental stage of students and graduality require that new knowledge be introduced gradually, i.e. from simple to complex, from known to unknown, from concrete to abstract, while considering students' physical and psychological abilities. (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 35) The latter proved to be difficult to consider as we lack the information on target audiences and decisions are based on the authors' assumptions.
2. The principles of individualization and differentiation of lessons are based on the individual needs of each student (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 36) that is already difficult to attain for the teacher in the classroom, but almost impossible when creating and developing an app. Thus, an app needs to be as universal as possible, i.e. suitable for the widest possible range of users.
3. The principle of clarity is one of the most important principles in learning and acquiring a foreign language, as learners encounter abstract concepts and rules, especially in grammar (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 36). Clarity is even more important when using an app. In the absence of a teacher's explanation, it is crucial for the learner to independently understand and successfully master the materials. This concerns not only the clarity of interpretation but also the adequacy of visual materials, the appearance of exercises, the combination of colours, the size of the fonts, layout, etc. (Jurkovič, 2015, p. 26).
4. The principles of activity and awareness focus on active involvement of learners, their motivation and practical use of the acquired knowledge. It is imperative that the materials provided are not too easy for learners, as this can affect their motivation and the quality of lessons (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 37). The app should therefore contain different types of exercises, which must be interactive and encourage a problem-based approach and critical thinking, while developing all the components of communicative competence. Due to

unpredictable target audience, it is important that the app offers different levels of exercises so that users can choose them according to their needs.

5. The principle of relying on students' experience can only be realized in the classroom in contact with a teacher, who encourages students' oral and written expression (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 37), which cannot be monitored and assessed with language guidance apps. This includes creating a relaxed atmosphere, trust and acceptance, therefore the content included in the app should not be discriminatory, exclusive or offensive.
6. The principle of leaning standard language in everyday use by students is relevant especially for the didactics of Slovenian as the first language, as each student enters school with an accent (or colloquial language) and should be introduced to the standard variety gradually (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 38). When learning a foreign language, the standard variety should present the base for learning, with a special emphasis on language usage. For foreign speakers it is of the utmost importance to be able to communicate in Slovenian as soon as possible, so the app must offer them to learn the most common everyday phrases, vocabulary and communication patterns, thus enhancing communicative skills.
7. The principle of priority of the spoken language over the written variety recommends that the teacher guides learners from spoken to written language (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 38). The speech component is the most problematic in learning a foreign language on an app, as a dialogue is possible only if speakers receive appropriate answers or feedback, which is difficult in the absence of a teacher. A language guidance app thus primarily enables the development of passive communicative skills (i.e. reading, grammatical ability, and listening), while there are fewer options for learners' language productions (i.e. writing and speaking), due to app limitations.
8. The principles of scientific and systematic methodology require from the teacher to teach in accordance with the findings of modern Slovenian studies, and present contents in a way that students can later upgrade and meaningfully link to (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 38). This principle should also be considered when designing an app, as the exercises have to be based on the findings of modern Slovenian studies. Hence, authors must have the necessary knowledge and be properly trained. In addition to relevant knowledge, practical expe-

rience in teaching homo- and heterogeneous language groups also plays an important role.

9. The principles of sustainable knowledge and continuous autonomous learning require that the knowledge acquired be permanent and useful. This can only be achieved through practice and recycling (Ivanuš Grmek & Mithans, 2021, p. 39). When learning a foreign language on an app, the fulfilment of this principle predominantly depends on users and their decision about what to consolidate and repeat besides the exercises on the app and to what extent.

In terms of content, the intercultural component, which brings knowledge of the Slovenian culture, customs, literature, etiquette, etc., should also be considered when designing an app, in addition to the didactic principles. It has been very demanding to combine all these components, including the intercultural component, with the numerous limitations of the LanGuide app in such a short period of time. Therefore, in what follows, the authors present the exercises included in the LanGuide app, their shortcomings and the inadequacies of the app, and most importantly the possibilities for upgrading and improving the app.

Design and Presentation of Exercises

The Slovenian language exercises were created between February and September 2021. They are divided into four fields and designed to acquire language knowledge at three CEFR levels, i.e. A1, A2, and A3. At the beginning of the project, we were not aware of future limitations and created numerous exercises, which were not included in the app due to technical restrictions. Each author prepared exercises for one of the levels, but for the exercises to complement and gradually raise difficulty levels, we first prepared the exercises at the level A1, followed by those at the level A2 and finally at the level B1. The expected achievements of students at different levels of CEFR are as follows (Ministrstvo RS za šolstvo in šport, Urad za razvoj šolstva, 2011, p. 46):

- *Level A1 speakers* can understand and use frequent everyday expressions and very basic phrases to meet concrete needs; can introduce themselves and others as well as ask and answer questions about personal details, such as where they live, about people they know and things they have; can interact in a simple way provided the other speaker talks slowly and clearly and is prepared to help.

- *Level A2 speakers* can understand sentences and frequently used expressions related to basic areas (e.g. basic personal and family information, shopping, local geography, employment); can communicate in simple and routine tasks requiring a simple and direct exchange of information on familiar and routine matters; can describe themselves and their immediate environment in simple terms as well meet their immediate needs.
- *Level B1 speakers* can understand the main points of clear standard input on familiar matters regularly encountered at work, school, leisure, etc.; can handle most of the situations that arise frequently while travelling in the country where the language is spoken; can produce simple connected texts on topics which are familiar or of personal interest; can describe experiences and events, dreams, hopes and ambitions as well as briefly give reasons and explanations for opinions and plans.

The level A1 has 60 exercises that are designed in such a way that learners without previous knowledge, or with minimal knowledge of Slovene, can successfully do them, thus gaining key communication competences at entry level. The level A1 exercises focus primarily on basic vocabulary, which is essential for successful communication in the Slovenian language. The majority of these exercises are performed by matching and choosing the correct answer, as the level A1 learners normally have no or minimal knowledge of Slovenian. We have avoided using type-in exercises, as such tasks suit better learners at higher levels.

The A1 level exercises have been, within the possibilities of the app, designed to enable learners to develop grammar skills and acquire basic vocabulary.

The grammar exercises cover the following topics:

1. *The Present Tense form of verbs (regular and irregular forms) in singular and plural*: introducing basic verbs, essential for survival communication, i.e. be, have, study, buy, call etc. (sl. *biti, imeti, študirati, kupiti, telefonirati*);
2. *The feminine and masculine forms of nouns and adjectives*: certain exercises draw attention to the feminine and masculine forms of nouns and adjectives, e.g. to recognize the feminine suffix *-a*, to fill in missing feminine/masculine forms, etc.;
3. *The 1st declension nouns in singular in the accusative, locative and instru-*

mental case: the cases are not treated systematically but in typical phrases, e.g. *Grem v šolo.*, *Sem pri banki.*, *Vozim se z avtobusom.*, etc., used on the app mostly in multiple-choice exercises;

4. *The 1st declension nouns in singular in the nominative case*: the nominative case of singular and plural nouns is introduced – the dual is left out at level A1 as basic communication is possible without the dual forms.

Exercises for vocabulary acquisition and expansion cover the following topics:

1. *Personal identity and presentation*: the exercises contain vocabulary and patterns that enable learners to introduce themselves, their family and give personal data (name, surname, gender, address, city, country, telephone number, e-mail address, languages mastered);
2. *Greetings*: learners get familiar with formal and informal Slovenian greetings, e.g. good morning, hello, goodbye, good afternoon, etc. (sl. *dobro jutro, živijo, nasvidenje, dober dan*, etc.);
3. *Nationality and countries*: exercises contain vocabulary needed to describe the European countries near Slovenia and their nationals;
4. *Numbers*: exercises include numbers from 1 to 100, and are introduced to a counting pattern up to a million;
5. *Time and days*: vocabulary exercises introduce the names of the days of the week, while only the basic pattern of giving time is presented, i.e. the hour and minutes, e.g. It's nine and thirty (sl. *Ura je devet in trideset minut.*);
6. *Computer and e-mail parts*: the basic parts of the computer and an e-mail are presented, e.g. mouse, keyboard, message, subject, etc. (sl. *miška, tipkovnica, sporočilo, zadeva*, etc.);
7. *Abbreviations of academic titles*: only scientific and academic abbreviations for university employees are included, e.g. *dr.*, *asist.*, *izr. prof.*, etc.;
8. *University and college matters*: the basic vocabulary is presented, like premises, studies and employees, e.g. administration, dean, lecture hall, hallway, etc. (sl. *referat, dekan, predavalnica, hodnik*, etc.);
9. *Travel*: introduces vocabulary and patterns linked to buying tickets, booking, bus schedule, etc.

The level A2 has 188 exercises that are designed for users who met

linguistic and communication objectives at the level A1 or speakers of other inflectional Slavic languages, which have grammatical case in their language system. The majority of level A2 exercises deal with grammar (typing-in the correct forms of nouns, adjectives, or verbs). We have devised nearly all the exercises as type-in exercises, because this was the only template, which we were certain to function properly on the app. The level A2 exercises enable users to check and consolidate their grammatical knowledge for the following:

1. *1st declension nouns*: at the level A2, exercises deal with feminine, masculine and neuter nouns of the 1st declension, as these are mostly non-specific (other declensions are discussed in the level B1 exercises);
2. *Singular and plural*: exercises for nouns with adjectives and exercises for verbs are prepared only for singular and plural because dual, a specific characteristic of Slovenian, proved to be one of the most difficult forms to master in Slovenian;
3. *Distinguishing between accusative (where to) and locative (where)*: both accusative and locative cases can be followed by the same prepositions (*v, na*), so an exercise to raise awareness between the two cases was included;
4. *Adjectives*: adjectives are not treated independently but are acquired together with nouns;
5. *Verb expressing present, past and future activities*: tenses are not complicated in Slovenian, so all tenses are covered in the exercises at the level A2, however irregular verbs are mostly excluded;
6. *Impersonal verbs – the infinitive and the supine*: in Slovenian, the infinitive ((*želim*) *delati*, (*moram*) *delati*) is used next to modal verbs, and the supine ((*grem*) *delat*) is used after verbs of motion. Because the rule is simple, exercises are included at the level A2.

Exercises for acquiring and expanding the vocabulary are included in the grammar exercises tailored to each domain, whereas the following topics are discussed separately:

1. *Personal identity and presentation*: covers the necessary vocabulary for personal presentations and talking about interests, while refreshing the distinction between the genitive and the accusative;
2. *Numbers*: users learn to spell out numerals up to a hundred;

3. *Time*: at the level A2 only the basic forms of time expressions are included, e.g. 10.45 is ten and forty-five minutes (sl. *deset in petinštirideset minut*), but not fifteen minutes to eleven (sl. *petnajst minut do enajste*) or a quarter to eleven (sl. *četrt do enajste*);
4. *Abbreviations of academic titles*: masculine and feminine forms of academic titles are learned (e.g. *lektor* and *lektorica*, *asistent* and *asistentka*);
5. *Seasons*: emphasises the distinction between nouns e.g. winter (sl. *zima*) (what) and adverbs, e.g. in the winter (sl. *pozimi*) (when);
6. *Holidays*: as part of recycling, users are asked to discover the dates of important holidays in Slovenia and identify the difference between various forms: What is the date today? Today is the Eighth of February. On which day do we celebrate Prešeren's Day? Prešeren's Day is celebrated on the Eighth of February. (sl. *Kateri dan je danes? Danes je osmi februar. Katerega dne praznujemo Prešernov dan? Prešernov dan praznujemo osmega februarja.*)

The level B1 contains 89 exercises that expand exercises at level A1 and A2 in terms of content and grammar, while also focusing on more difficult grammatical issues and peculiarities of the Slovenian language. Sample exercises show peculiarities in word stress, use of the dual, and the two possible case forms in the declension of names of countries and regions ending with suffixes *-ska* or *-ška*. Sentences used can be slightly longer, within the technical possibilities of the app, but still comprehensible for users who had already gained level A2 proficiency. The level B1 exercises can be of various types, but multiple-choice and type-in exercises predominate. The level B1 exercises include the following topics:

1. Users/learners of Slovenian definitely have the most problems mastering the *dual forms*. B1 exercises, therefore, expand their knowledge from levels A1 and A2 by introducing the use of verbs in the dual form for all three genders and persons, in the affirmative and negative forms. The exercises include names of Slovenian and European cities and nationals, thus linking to the vocabulary at levels A1 and A2.
2. At the beginner's level, users only learn regular forms of declensions for *nouns of masculine, feminine and neuter gender*. The intermediate level also includes irregularities, e.g. the feminine nouns *doktor* with *-j-* (*doktorja*), deletion of schwa in the noun *minister* (written with

- an -e: *minister – ministra*), extension of the noun *dom* in the dual and plural forms: with -ov- (*dom – domovi*) ...
3. Some nouns show irregularities in certain forms – the suppletion of noun *človek* in plural (stem *ljud-*), mixing of singular and plural stems (nominative *človeka*, genitive *ljudi* ...).
 4. The irregular declension of the feminine noun *gospa*.
 5. Some nouns only have the *plural form* (e.g. *očala, vrata* ...), the exercises also include plurals of Slovenian or foreign geographical names, e.g. *Brežice, Trbovlje, Firenze, Benetke*.
 6. *Names of countries and regions* ending in -ska or -ška, which have two inflexion forms and show irregularities among feminine nouns. With the question 'where' (sl. *Kje?*), the correct inflexion form uses the suffix -em, e.g. *na Hrvaškem, na Madžarskem*; while with the question 'about what' (sl. *O čem?*) the correct inflexion form uses the suffix -ski, e.g. *o Primorski, o Koroški* ... Users select the correct form according to the context.
 7. Formation of the *feminine forms* from masculine nouns is very interesting or difficult due to different suffication options (e.g. using the suffix -ka in forming the feminine form *šudentka* from the masculine noun *šudent*, or using suffix -ica in forming the feminine form *lektorica* from the masculine noun *lektor*). Learners also learn to form the feminine forms from names of nationalities.
 8. Learners acquire the vocabulary regarding the names of countries and regions by forming *adjectives* for traditional Slovenian dishes, derived from the names of regions/countries.
 9. Users of Slovenian struggle with *transcription of numerals*, especially in the case of more complex consonant sets, e.g. *šestinšestdest* is often misspelled as *šestinšesdeset*.
 10. Some verbs have *irregular forms* in the Present, Past and Future Tense, e.g. *metati – mečem, reči – je/bo rekel/rekla*; similarly in the imperative mood, e.g. *teči – teci*.
 11. Speakers of other/South Slavic languages *stress* incorrectly those words, which are phonemically related/similar, due to the negative linguistic transfer. Exercises for acquiring/refreshing the correct stress placement offer the incorrect solution, very commonly used by Slovenian learners, and the correct solution, i.e. the correctly stressed word.
 12. Words with *different meanings but a similar sound or spelling* can cause difficulties even to Slovenian native speakers, e.g. *trenirka* (en. sweat

suit) – *trenerka* (en. female coach). App users identify the correct meaning of these terms from the context.

Advantages and Shortcomings of the App

In the following paragraphs, the authors wish to present the advantages and shortcomings of the Slovenian language learning exercises devised for the LanGuide app based (also) on the results of two questionnaires: the questionnaire *Learning languages with the LanGuide App – Feedback Form*,³ a survey for the app testers and the LanGuideSLO⁴ survey prepared by Pavletić, Šumenjak, and Volk for testing the Slovenian module.

The users filled in the survey *Learning languages with the LanGuide App – Feedback Form* after they had finished testing the app. The questionnaire asked the users for demographic data, user's experience feedback and evaluation of the various features in terms of the teaching approach adopted, as well as their assessment from a linguistic point of view (for more information on the questionnaire see Načinović Prskalo et al., 2022 and Čebroň & Sorgo, forthcoming). The survey was filled by 181 users, 11 answers relate to the Slovenian module. More users tried to test the app for the Slovenian language but were unable to do so due to various, mainly technical, reasons. Therefore, the authors of the article made a shorter *LanGuideSLO* questionnaire to determine why users were not able to test the app. The *LanGuideSLO* questionnaire first asks demographic questions and later focuses on the reasons why users were not able to test the app. The questionnaire was filled by 28 users, 64% of which were not able to install the app as they used the IOS operating system, 29% were able to install it but the app did not work, and 7% were not able to install the app at all.

The authors of this article evaluated critically the results of the surveys, based on their personal observations. The shortcomings of the app can roughly be divided into two types, i.e. those related to technology and those related to content.

Technical Shortcomings

1. The fact that the app was not accessible for all types of operational systems has proved a major technical shortcoming of the app according to both surveys (the official *Learning languages with the LanGuide*

³ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/e/1FAIpQLSctMQISg8zcok2SEi-Zg0oZZl1T51wKpbiH1yKugFqoW99_3w/viewform?fbzx=2149545419454557096.

⁴ https://docs.google.com/forms/d/1QMclLi_ammV8Mz6dPokrfJTgoU8ouk2tUbUtkvw47GQ/edit.

App – Feedback Form survey for app testers and the *LanGuide SLO* survey prepared by Pavletić, Šumenjak, and Volk for Slovenian testers). The Slovenian language was tested by 39 users altogether. 28 users were not able to download the app, out of which 64% were not able to install it as they use the iOS operating system, while the rest were not able to install or run the app.

2. The exercises were displayed randomly by the app even though some of them were planned to appear one after another, because they were related to previous exercises and formed a comprehensive unit.
3. Exercises could include a short explanation about the aims of each exercise and what grammar rules needed to be mastered for completing the task. Grammar tables should also be available to users as a short-cut visible in each grammar exercise. Such tables can be helpful for users.
4. The instructions for individual exercises should be displayed at all times, as it is distracting to search for them continuously.
5. At the beginning of the project, it was not clear what type of exercises would be supported by the software, thus, by the app was finalized, we had already prepared numerous exercises that were later not included, because of technical limitations of the app. Consequently, we decided to predominantly design exercises of three types: type-in, multiple-choice and matching exercises. For this reason, reading and listening comprehension exercises, as well as those for independent text production are still missing. Such types of exercises require the app to enable suitable mechanisms for multiple answer selection and can check the answers.
6. For the same reason, the majority of exercises focus on grammar, as it was not clear whether the app would support using images, videos, and sound tapes. The lack of multimedia usage possibilities is definitely a content-related shortcoming of the app.
7. The exercises should also be accessible from the desktop computers as smartphones often offer poor visibility, thus some users prefer using computers to smartphones. We suggest establishing both mobile and desktop versions of the app in the future.
8. All the instructions for the exercises are in Slovenian, due to the original agreements among project partners, which proved to be hardly appropriate, especially for non-Slovenian speakers. According to surveys, this resulted in users not being able to do the exercises and therefore the English translations will be added in the future.

Name the components of the e-mail. Use the words from the box (sl. *Poimenujte sestavne dele elektronskega sporočila. Uporabite besede iz okvirja.*).

subject line (sl. *zadeva*) attachment (sl. *priponka*) e mail address (sl. *elektronski naslov*)
salutation (sl. *nagovor*) send (sl. *pošlji*) e-mail body (sl. *sporočilo*) greetings (sl. *pozdrav*)
signature (sl. *podpis*)

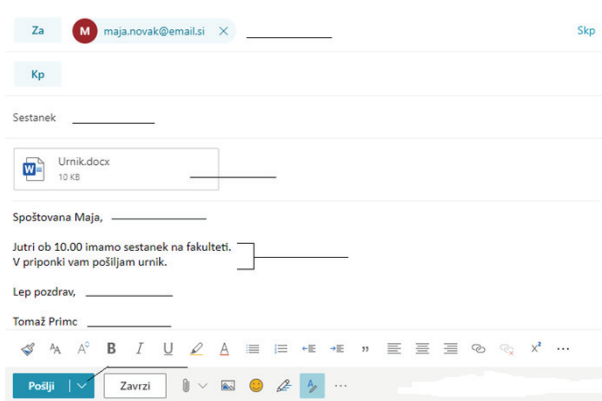


Figure 5.1

Example of an Exercise at the Level A2

Content-Related Shortcomings

1. One of the main shortcomings in terms of content are too many grammar exercises, this fact is also conditioned by the technical shortcomings of the app.
2. As a result, the exercises tend to be dull and serve mainly to consolidate and develop grammar, which is an important component of language courses, but definitely not the only one, hence exercises for listening, reading, and written communication are missing.
3. Grammar exercises should also include exercises on adjective comparison, exercises for practising the difference between the genitive and accusative case, reviewing the difference between the locative and accusative case, use of modal verbs, the imperative mode and personal pronouns in the 1st, 2nd and 4th case.
4. The exercises are not equally represented at different levels; most of them suit the level A2, however, many A2 exercises could be used at the level A1, which we intend to change in the future.

In figures 5.1, 5.2, and 5.3 you can find examples of exercises suitable for all three levels that could not be included in the app.

Comments on the Exercises. These exercises could be included in the app, but with limitations. They should first be adapted to a suitable type of exercise

Put the contents of the email in the correct order (sl. <i>Povežite vsebino elektronske pošte v pravilnem vrstnem redu</i>).	
Recipient: tecajnik@gmail.com (sl. <i>Prejemnik: tecajnik@gmail.com</i>)	1
Thank you and best regards, (sl. <i>Hvala in lep pozdrav</i> .)	2
I would like to inform you that the LanGuide project team will meet on Monday, March 1, 2021, at 10:00. (sl. <i>Obveščam vas, da bo sestanek projektne skupine LanGuide v ponedeljek, 1. 3. 2021, ob 10.00.</i>)	3
Please confirm your presence by Monday, February 22, 2021. (sl. <i>Prosim, da do ponedeljka, 22. 2. 2021, potrdite svojo prisotnost.</i>)	4
Sender: languide@fhs.upr.si (sl. <i>Pošiljatelj: languide@fhs.upr.si</i>)	5
I am sending you all the necessary documentation related to the project and the planned topics of the meeting in the attachment. (sl. <i>V priponki vam pošiljam vso potrebno dokumentacijo v zvezi s projektom in predvidene teme sestanka.</i>)	6
Dear Asst Prof Maja Novak, PhD, (sl. <i>Spoštovana doc. dr. Maja Novak!</i>)	7
LanGuide Team (sl. <i>ekipa LanGuide</i>)	8
Subject: Meeting (sl. <i>Zadeva: Sestanek</i>)	9

Figure 5.2 Example of an Exercise at the Level B1

Find and correct the mistakes in the text (sl. <i>V besedilu poiščite in popravite napake</i>).	
Pošiljatelj: languide@fhs.upr.si Prejemnik: tecajnik@gmail.com Zadeva: Sestanek Poštovana docent doktor Novak Maja! Obveščam vas, da bo sestanek projektne skupine Languide v ponedeljek, 1.3.2021, ob 10.00 uri. V priponki pošljam vam vso potrebno dokumentacijo v vezi projektom i predvidene teme sestanka. Prosim da do ponedeljka 22.2.2021 potrdite svojo prisutnost. Hvala in lep pozdrav, ekipa Langudie	

Figure 5.3 Example of an Exercise at the Level B1 (the exercise cannot be translated due to the specifics of the language and exercise)

(A1 and A2 drag and drop), and then shortened, as the app does not support lengthy texts, i.e. does not show them correctly. The app furthermore does not support drag and drop exercises with graphic material, therefore the exercise for A1 should be changed by converting the graphic material

into text. In that case, it would be best to use type-in templates, requiring learners to independently type in words or names of individual parts of an e-mail. Because the app does not support exercises for correcting mistakes, the B1 exercise should be completely transformed and a new type of exercise should be added to the app selection – correcting mistakes.

Advantages

We see the main advantage of the LanGuide app in its existence, as there are not many apps specific for learning Slovenian. It includes grammar exercises which can, with teachers' help, present a solid basis for refreshing knowledge, preparing for exams, etc. When eliminating its technical shortcomings, namely its accessibility on all types of mobile phones, the main advantage of the LangGuide app is the possibility of its usage on mobile phones, which is especially useful if one cannot use a computer.

Improvement Suggestions

The suggestions for improvements of the app can also be roughly divided into two types, i.e. those related to technology and those related to content.

Technical Improvements

1. The first and most important improvement suggestion is to make the app accessible for all mobile and desktop operating systems, thus providing a better experience for all users (some of them prefer working with a computer while others prefer smartphones).
2. The exercises should be displayed in the order set by the author and not randomly chosen by the app as is the case now. A thoughtfully arranged structure of exercises, as opposed to random exercises, is much better for learning a language as it allows users to gradually build their knowledge in terms of grammar and content.
3. The visual image of the app should be graphically and chromatically refined, the instructions highlighted, bubbles with instructions or tables added, and a list with exercises order included. A simpler way of downloading the app to smartphones would also contribute to a better user experience.

Content-Related Improvements

1. Exercises should also have a description indicating what the exercise is testing and its objectives, as well tables with certain grammatical

- forms (for example, when testing grammatical cases, a user should have the possibility of looking at suffixes and declension rules at all times).
2. Adding exercises for listening, reading, and written communication would improve the app, because it is crucial that all communication skills are developed equally when learning foreign languages.
 3. In Slovenian, the placement of stress is not fully predictable and stress must be learned along with new words. In order for learners to acquire correct sentence stress, recordings of correct pronunciation need to be included in the app.
 4. Learners at the level B1 can understand texts from domains of their interest and grasp the basic point of texts related to their professional/study fields. To achieve these goals, the app should include exercises, which check reading comprehension.
 5. Exercises for testing and developing listening comprehension should also be included, as learners at the level B1 can already express their opinions and give advice on selected topics, and especially take part in everyday conversations.
 6. Exercises reviewing text formation principles (written and spoken) are needed to achieve the objective of describing experiences, events, dreams . . . as well as opinions or plans in brief, and should be added to the app.
 7. When writing a text independently, learners often make spelling and/or grammatical mistakes. Exercises that help users correct/eliminate the most common spelling and/or grammatical errors would certainly be interesting and useful. Such exercises should be based on a corpus of frequently occurring errors in texts produced by the app users.

Conclusion

Mobile apps and e-learning systems will not be able to supersede or replace the traditional way of learning foreign languages – in a classroom with textbooks and teachers – they can however play a crucial role in enhancing gained knowledge, developing communication competences, and gaining command of foreign languages interactively. In addition to all the advantages mentioned above, such apps are, unlike traditional forms of learning, always available everywhere and it is not surprising that their number is increasing. In the present article, the authors made an effort to evaluate the Slovenian language guidance app developed within the LanGuide project.

The process of developing the exercises brought forth numerous technical and content-related limitations that resulted in including on the app a limited range of exercises (match, type-in, multiple choice) of limited length and scope, while ordering of the exercises according to didactic principles was not possible (randomly selected by the app). One of the shortcomings of the exercises is the fact that users mostly develop grammar abilities, while communication activities – listening, reading and independent writing – are very limited, as they are not enabled by (or have numerous restrictions in) the app. We agree with the opinion of the users who tested the app that the instructions should be easily accessible and visible while doing the exercises, without constantly returning to the instructions icon. A short explanation of the tested exercise and a text describing the aims of each lesson, along with a brief presentation of the basic grammar features would enhance understanding of the structure and functioning of the Slovenian language and have a positive impact on the overall learning experience. Users would, moreover, benefit from tables presenting grammar rules, which should be accessible at their fingertips, as a shortcut in the grammar exercise. We believe that the app is a suitable accessory complementing traditional learning, but consider it less appropriate for independent learning of the Slovenian language.

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