![ilocalapp logo]

Focus Group Report

Introduction

In April 2016 focus groups were held in all ILOCALAPP institutions with the aim of getting feedback and comments from participants on the functionalities, the interactions, and the flow of the application that we are developing (in terms of how and when offering contents and activities). The goal of the focus groups was progressing in the definition and the design of the functionalities and the services that our app will provide.

This report is intended to find concrete hints for progressing in the definition and design of functionalities and services.

Institution	Date	Participants
Unibo	27 April 2016	8 (international students; past, present and future Erasmus students), 5F +3M.
AMU	20 April 2016	16 (international students, mostly participants of Polish language course for foreign students)
ULapland	19 April 2016	11 (international, many of them were exchange students, but some also degree students), 10F +1M.
CES	20 and 27 April 2016	6 Overseas students and 10 Erasmus/mobility students, 10F +6M.

After the introductory remarks (presentation of the project and the participants, explanation of what the focus group was intended for), the discussion focussed around six topics:

1. Content organisation;
2. App usage;
3. Usage frequency;
4. Interface, icons vs language of instruction, presentation video, progress check;
5. Cultural areas;
6. Interaction with other learners, with native speakers.

Topic 1 - Content organisation

Students were presented the following issues with the aid of some visual examples:

- Content can be divided into 3 categories, the user has to select: "in the place", "daily activities", "culture".

- Notification is related to geolocalisation.
- Our app is not organised as an app for language learning (in units) but as content (and service) supporting mobility.
- Learning is a "side-effect".

The following considerations are relevant:

- Integrate with Google Maps, include information on public transportation, events and points of interest (link to existing apps).

- The possibility to select different typologies of itineraries would be a plus.

- Have language tips of immediate use, context-related, 'how-to' phrases, include survival (picture) dictionary, have the possibility of voice recording, pop-up translation and pronunciation guide.

- Include warning about dangerous places, pharmacies, hospitals, and also citizenship/immigrant services.

- Culture both in terms of places, monuments but also as a concrete way of living. Include fun facts. Have the word/phrase/proverb/saying of the day.

- Exploit the idea of bookmarking places to go back, useful vocabulary, handy expressions.

- Have exercises and tasks both before and after visiting a certain place.

- Offline availability is important.

Topic 2 - App usage

Students were presented the following issue with the aid of some visual examples:

- The usage of the app can be of 3 possible types, related to 3 different periods: before going to the place, during the stay, and maybe after.

The following considerations are relevant:

- ➢ Before going to the place, it is useful to start to know the language and the place, to have communication tips, and to get used to the app

- ➢ The emphasis is during the stay, here the app is mostly important

- ➢ After the stay, it could be useful to keep the language alive, to update information for future users

Topic 3 - Usage frequency of the app

Students were presented the following issues:

- Shall users be required to spend x minutes per day with the app?
- Notification system: when, how much, how?
- The users can feel (too) pressured but on the other side they may want to be encouraged to use the app. What is the balance?

The following considerations are relevant:

- There should be no obligation, the app shouldn't force the users, but some information could work as motivation (if you spend xx minutes, you may expect...).

- The rhythm of usage may vary and be higher at the beginning.

- The users should be free to decide and modify the level of notification.

- Simplicity and easiness are the most important feature. High efficiency is important (it shouldn't be slow but it shouldn't be battery-consuming as well).

- Stimulation, motivation, including game-like elements is quite important.

- Interactiveness (interacting with other peole ans/or with the app) was considered important by some groups and not important by others.

- To really learn something with the app is important. Some feedback would be appreciated. And positive reminders could be beneficial.

- Commercials are annoying. Technical problems can be annoying as well. Being forced to do a minimum of activities is also disturbing.

Topic 4 - Interface

Students were presented the following issues with the aid of some visual examples:

- Icons vs language of instruction? Both?
- Shall we have a presentation video?
- How do we monitor progress?
- Shall we use gamification ("game-like elements") to monitor and show the progress of the user?

The following considerations are relevant:

- There should be a combination of icons and language of instruction, with priority to images.

- The user should have the possibility to change the language of instruction/the language linked to the icons (English in principle but then they could switch to local language)

- A tutorial (presentation video) could be useful but it should be simple and concrete, in local language (to get familiar with the sound) with English subtitles. For some people the video is not practical and we'd better rely to external link or FAQs.

- The "game-like elements" are useful to stimulate and to monitor progress.

Topic 5 – Cultural areas

Students were presented the cultural areas that we imagined to include in the app:

- Art and Literature
- Cuisine
- Environment and Nature
- Habits and lifestyle
- History and traditions

- Movies
- Music
- Politics and Religion
- Sports

In general students agreed with the suggested cultural areas. Some areas were considered more relevant than others, but they are all worthy being included.

Some concrete suggestions apply to all ILOCALAPP cities, for instance:

- Include cultural dos and don'ts

- Have activities/tasks culture-related

- Link to cultural/social events

Other suggestions are culture-specific and may be exploited by the interested task-force(s).

Topic 6 - Interaction

Students were presented the following issues:

- Is interaction with other learners and/or with native speakers relevant?
- How can interaction be organised, facilitated?
- We can link to existing social media. But we cannot assure that social media are actively used (see the E-LOCAL facebook group), can we? How?

Two complete opposite positions emerged from the focus groups: interaction was considered important in Bologna and Coimbra and not relevant in Poznan and Rovaniemi.

YES because it is important to interact with both with native speakers and other learners, existing networks should be exploited and users should app the possibility to create events within the app, and also to develop tandems.

NO because there are other means/tools/channels/strategies for interaction, so it is not needed within this app.

Conclusion

The focus groups proved to be useful, fruitful and also enthusiastic in all ILOCALAPP institutions. The discussion brought concrete suggestions and hints. The collaboration with future users is crucial for developing our app.