Eller College of Management

The University of Arizona

MIS 111 Freshman Honors Showcase

appear.in

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The application to be integrated into curriculum at the University of Arizona is appear.in, a video conferencing website where up to eight people can connect by simply typing in a link. Appear.in requires no membership or downloads, and allows for meaningful but free connections. This application is available all over the world which makes the app universally accessible as long as wi-fi is available. By implementing the app into the study abroad programs and foreign language departments students are able to gain a global experience without leaving campus. Having the ability to make connections is integral to success among college students. Given the digitization of most processes, having the ability to adapt to a changing world is absolutely necessary for advancement. In addition to graduating from the most exemplary school in the southwest students are given a further advantage by graduating with connections along with a degree.
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![Bar Chart: Video Conferencing Applications]

- Skype
- Google Hangouts
- Appear.in

Countries Supported
**Introduction**

Our goal is to help teachers and students leverage the free video-chatting service, appear.in, to connect with one another, as well as with other educators and students around the world. Using the high-quality platform of appear.in, students would easily be able to collaborate on group projects in a secure online room and even be able to bring their professor into the conversation. Additionally, if a student with an excused absence needed to contact a teacher during office hours, appear.in could be used to do that. In the event of a medical excuse, this service would greatly benefit both the student and teacher. On a larger scale, this service could be used by educators to virtually bring guest speakers into class. It could also be used by professors running study abroad programs to interview candidates from around the globe. Conversely, students interested in study abroad or internship programs would be able to contact program coordinators abroad using this service.

We believe appear.in also has the capability to radically transform the educational experience in foreign language classes at the University of Arizona. Through networking, UA foreign language professors could set up a partnership program with professors at foreign universities. Students enrolled in a foreign language class at the UA would be given an international video pal with whom they could converse in French, Spanish, Chinese, etc. The chance to interact with a native speaker of a similar age would be invaluable and because appear.in allows up to eight people in a room, there would be no need for professors to pair up classes of the exact same size. Multiple UA students could converse with a foreign student or vice versa. In either
scenario, the foreign student would get the chance to practice English and UA students could hone their foreign language skills. All those involved in the international video program would get the incredible opportunity to meet other students thousands of miles away and learn about another culture from someone of their generation.

**Product Assessment / Overview**

Currently, appear.in seeks to provide a simple, easy-to-use, high-quality video chatting service that requires no membership, downloads or fees from its users. With the click of a button, a user can create a virtual room and invite others to join by sending the simple pre-generated URL containing an animal and adjective or a URL of their own creation. People can create video conversations in seconds rather than going through the process of downloading and signing up for the same video chatting service and then exchanging usernames. As part of its value proposition, the company provides security and privacy. According to the company’s terms of service, “voice and video communicated in a room is not stored anywhere in our system” and transmission of that voice and audio is “sent directly between the participants in a room and is encrypted (SRTP) with client-generated encryption keys.” For additional security, users are offered the opportunity to register for free membership. All that is required for membership is a username, password, and either a phone number or an email. Appear.in promises to delete all data pertaining to a member upon the termination of membership. Membership comes with the added benefit of being able to claim a room and have it secured so that other people can only enter after “knocking.” When a person “knocks”
on a room, you can see their face and press either “accept” or “decline.” Once a room is claimed the background of that room can be customized with a photo chosen by the owner.

Current markets for this product include individuals wanting to communicate for social reasons, business teams needing to collaborate on projects, and educational programs. Right now, appear.in is marketing to all potential users and its website does not offer suggestions of how the product should be used. Since there is no pricing structure for the product, the company does not offer different kinds of membership for different users or differentiate between different kinds of users in any way.

Appear.in was launched in August 2013 and for over two years now, according its website, it has been operating “as an independent startup within the incubator environment of Telenor Digital.” Telenor Digital calls itself an “entrepreneurial technology community” of Telenor Group, one of the world’s leading mobile operators. Telenor has 196 million mobile subscriptions and primarily operates in three main geographical locations: the Nordics, Central and Eastern Europe, and Asia. Both Telenor Digital and appear.in are headquartered in Oslo, Norway. The company appear.in consists of 14 staff members. It does not currently have any advertisements on its website, nor does it seem to have run any advertising campaigns. The company does have a strong social media presence with pages on Facebook, Twitter, and Instagram where the team posts frequent updates about newly developed features and asks for user feedback. The goal of appear.in is to “create a global video communication service that users love and use frequently.” In its terms of service,
appear.in reserves the right to charge subscription fees to users for ongoing use of the product, so it is likely that in the future appear.in will have a pricing structure.

Appear.in is the ideal product for connecting students and educators with other academics around the world due to its accessibility. Unlike its competitors it does not require any downloads, installations, or software updates. The service of appear.in has spread to 196 countries around the world. The product is delivered through its vendor hosted website or the appear.in app. The website operates on all PCs and Macs using the following browsers: Opera, Google Chrome, Mozilla Firefox, or Vivaldi, while the app operates on most new smartphones (Android and iPhone alike) and tablets. Other important features of this product include an option to text chat alongside the video chat. This service can be used by those with disabilities such as muteness or deafness, so that they can be part of the conversation. Text chat can be used to help iron confusion caused by language barriers when international students communicate with one another. It can also be valuable to those collaborating on project and need to share links.
Proposed Instructional Activity

Appear.in is an application that can be applied in several ways here at the University of Arizona to help professors give students new, and unique experiences in the classroom. The areas on campus that would benefit most from applying this video conferencing website are the Foreign Language Department, as well as Study Abroad Office. These two different departments on campus both have a use for connecting on an international level, and this website allows for just that.

Any level of foreign language class would be able to apply appear.in because it has the ability to give students the chance to gain real life experience by connecting with other students from around the world. By being able to talk to peers from other countries students can learn about culture first-hand, and gain insight into how the language is truly spoken outside of the classroom. One way in which a professor might apply appear.in would be to match up with a university in another country and allow each student to connect with a sort of “pen pal” over the internet. This would be a chance for students to practice their language skills with someone who could help provide feedback, and allow for real life usage of their developing secondary language. The activity assigned may be to chat with your pen pal for 15 minutes during a specific week. To get credit, the student would email a screenshot of the video chat to their teacher. This opportunity to develop language skills is one that is necessary for students in foreign language classes. Because of the ease of use that appear.in provides, virtually any student, no matter how technically challenged, would be able to figure it out. Not to mention, that because it is free and accessible from computers, tablets, and
appear.in any student would be able to gain access. By video conferencing with someone who speaks the language fluently, students would no doubt expand their pronunciation, speed, and understanding of the language. Another idea on how to apply appear.in would be to have an expert, or someone who speaks the foreign language talk to the whole class via appear.in and a projector. This would give students the opportunity to hear from someone who has experience with the subject matter to further their education, even if they couldn’t be there in person. Again, because there are no downloads, you could simply send an appear.in link to the guest speaker, and they would need only click the link to start the chat!

By adding appear.in to the curriculum, the professor would be allowing students even more opportunities to succeed. The class would be more effective because the students language skills would be developing, and they would be getting real life experience. Along with that, student’s test scores on the speaking part of exams would likely be higher because they would be getting more practice. As of now, there is little opportunity to study for the speaking part of an exam while getting feedback, but by video conferencing, students would gain that opportunity.

The professor that we talked to is Gerdine Ulysse, a Graduate Assistant in the Department of French and Italian that teaches French 101. The reason that French 101 was selected as a possible class to apply appear.in is because of the developing language skills. Students in this class are just beginning to speak the language and therefore are learning how the pronunciation is different, and how to speak the language in general. By being able to video conference with students in France, or another
French-speaking country, students in French 101 would have the opportunity to start learning what the language looks like in the real world. This activity would improve their pronunciation, and speed, and it would also benefit the french speaking students who might be learning english. Besides that, this activity would also cater to the communicative, integrated, and multiliteracies-based learning system that the Department of French and Italian use to teach their courses. This system is based on the idea that all aspects of the language are important. This means that the different aspects of the language are complementary to one another. So visual, gestural, cultural, and linguistic aspects are all combined in the teaching process to allow for students to gain a well rounded understanding of the language. The use of appear.in fits right into this educational approach, and gives the students even more ways to learn about the language.

This new approach to getting students connected and talking for their foreign language class is one that will change how students are able to practice what they are learning. With this entirely new idea on how to practice their speaking, students will gain not only better language skills, but will also have the opportunity to make international connections with students just like them.

**Feasibility / Design Assessment**

Our product, appear.in, is the emolument of the work of currently 14 individuals. According to appear.in “it operates as an independent startup within the incubator
environment of Telenor Digital." Telenor digital has been “working with in-house
development of communication products based on WebRTC since 2012.” The reception
of the app to our group was positive as the foundation of business is constructive
communication. By being able to utilize an app that is not only free but, accessible on
multiple platforms we have the opportunity to connect multiple parties around the world.
Their ultimate goal is to “create a global video communication service that users love
and use frequently.” We as a group shared the same vision for the app as we saw it as
an opportunity to provide diverse experiences for students without them leaving the
classroom. By creating connections, whether they be on a national or international level,
students have greater opportunity for growth and development.

Instructional Assessment

We interviewed Professor Ulysse in the department of foreign language and
Professor Wilson in the college of Agriculture and Life Sciences. In terms of integration
we wanted to implement it into their respective study abroad programs rather than a
class as a video conferencing application would be an asset to the advancement of
those programs. The interviews we conducted and the initial pitch for the product were
received positively by the respective parties. It has become apparent that in an
increasingly digital world educators look for application or technology to integrate into
their classrooms in order to motivate and interest their students. The feedback we
received was also positive as the zero cost factor of appear.in was attractive to both
professors. Their only concern was that the app could only accommodate up to eight
appear.in different windows. They explained that because of this, they would not be able to rely on the app to conduct class but, they would have to use it for one-on-one discussions. Despite this issue both professors discussed ways that it could be integrated into their curriculum. When asked how she would use the application Professor Ulysse answered that she could use it to update a student if they miss class so that they would not be behind when they returned. She added that the app would be applicable to group projects and students could use it as a tool for completion and connection when schedules do not allow for a personal meeting. The final use she suggested would be to host a guest speaker without having them travel. This would allow her to provide a new experience for her students without any expenditures for either party. Professor Wilson appreciated the product as well and envisioned using it to conduct interviews with students from Australia that are interested in participating in his programs. Due to its limitation in the amount of people the app can host he also suggested putting students in direct communication with each other. Their feedback was appreciated and validated what we had envisioned appear.in being used for.

**Technical Assessment**

The most attractive component of appear.in is its ease of use. In order to operate appear.in you need a web enabled phone or device. To access it off of a computer you need either Firefox, Chrome, or Opera as web browsers. These requirements are the only ones that need to be met in order to access appear.in. In comparison to other video conferencing apps that require an account and an amalgamation of different
requirements appear.in is straightforward and simple to use.

**Operational Assessment**

Users could learn about this product through proper marketing and broader use. Given the popularity of video blogs and YouTube tutorials they could place the product into one of these episodes by a well-known “YouTuber.” In class tutorials could also be offered, which would not be difficult to host as the app itself is extremely accessible and easy to use. If you were trying to communicate with someone in an older demographic who is unfamiliar with video conferencing apps it is easy for them to click a link rather than negotiate other applications that require membership and/or profiles. The most positive quality of appear.in is that it requires no cost. You do not need to have paid membership to access all of the amenities of the application. If you would like to “own” a room you have to create a free account that requires minimal personal information and no credit card or method of payment. If the company chose to discontinue the product alternative video conferencing application exist. However, many of them require some monetary commitment or access to personal information.

**Economic Assessment**

As aforementioned, appear.in does not require any monetary investment. A “premium” version of the site does not exist. Any utility offered by the site is offered to any user at no cost. No rights are necessary to acquire before appear.in is used in a
appear.in classroom. The only cost associated with using the application is paying for access to the internet via wi-fi. The browsers necessary to operate the application are also able to be downloaded at no cost.

**Risk Management**

The main competitors of appear.in are skype, google hangouts, and oovoo. The most distinct differences between these different video conferencing applications are the amount of people that can be supported and the cost. Unlike appear.in, a user has to pay to use the premium features on skype. Alternatives do exist for appear.in, however if access to premium features is needed then an expenditure is to be expected.

**Legal/Regulatory Assessment**

What is potentially most attractive regarding appear.in is the amount of privacy allowed to users. According to the University of Arizona, FERPA (The Family and Educational Rights and Privacy Act) is designed to protect the privacy of a student’s educational record. Any conversations or media that is transferred through appear.in are not stored within the site. An added privacy feature would be the element of “knocking.” In order to enter a chatroom owned by another user a user must knock. When this occurs, the owner of the chatroom is given a “virtual peephole.” The owner of the room is able to access a live version of whomever is attempting to enter the room.
This prevents people from being in the chatroom that are not supposed to be. With these safeguards a student’s privacy is protected. Appear.in also encourages inclusivity.

The application adheres to the Americans with Disabilities Act because it accommodates for anyone with either hearing or sight impairments. Appear.in uses a web cam to create connections but, there is a chat setting that you could also use in order to communicate. With these utilities someone who is blind or has limited vision could use the webcam to communicate as you can listen to and talk to a person while a person with hearing impairments could use the chat setting in order to communicate with somebody. This makes appear.in universally accessible as accommodations can be made for someone with with visual or hearing disabilities as well as motor or cognitive disabilities as it could be easily set up by someone else and only requires the user to click a link. Since data is not stored within the site any intellectual material is not at risk for being shared or posted. The information necessary to create an account within the website is also limited. The only information required by appear.in is an email and a password. Therefore, a student is not at risk for a breach in privacy.

**Next Steps/Future Work**

When looking at the future use of this product, it is a very easy application to implement into a classroom setting. One of the most attractive features is that anyone
appear.in and everyone could open their web browser and use the app. Unlike other commonly used video chats like Skype, Facetime or even Google Hangout, Appear.in is free, and requires no account or download necessary application. To implement it in the future would be a very easy and simple task. A teacher could prompt their student by telling them of the app, explain in very short order how to access and use the site and then the students could use it with ease.

The next step really would be to market it, and make the product well known not only on a college campus and on the internet as well. It is just as useful, if not easier to use in some instances than many other popular apps. It comes at a disadvantage, however, because of its relatively new status and the lack of such companies as Google, Microsoft or Apple backing them like the other popular chats do. This could change if marketed properly. The instructor with whom we spoke to, unsurprisingly, had never heard of appear.in. This is a major drawback in trying to get teachers and professors to use in their class. Most people don’t trust things they haven’t had experience with or haven’t heard of. An option to get this product out in the open would be to introduce it ourselves. We could use appear.in on our projects and groups assignments, and by doing so, we could introduce it to other students. Overtime this may start a sort of “grassroots” adoption by the students at the University of Arizona. We could assume that as the popularity grows amongst the students this could trickle up the pyramid to the TA’s and professors who would be interested in using something that is already popular among the students. This is a process that could take a very long time however. Though if looked at from an impartial view, because of the simplicity and
Appear.in is a very useful application for many reasons of which include, the
ease of use, no account or login required, and with the option of up to eight people in
the chat. These features make the product a very useful tool that can be used in not
only a social setting but an educational format as well. As expressed in great detail in
this paper, appear.in can be useful in the classroom setting. Students can video chat
among each other when they are assigned group projects, thus making collaboration
easier. Additionally, if they are taking a foreign language class the benefits of being able
to chat one on one with someone from another country will improve their class
performance. Much of the feedback we received from the professors with whom we
spoke with echoed these sentiments. The benefits of such are too difficult to ignore, not
only can students connect with other students from other schools, cultures and nations
but network across the work and gain connections around the world with the help of
appear.in. Such ideals are the foundation of society, with the implementation of
technology in classrooms and around campus in general, it makes sense as to why
professors are excited about adding new things to their classrooms. If they can reach
their students in an easier way they can get them to learn more, and learn the material
to share. It should be far more popular than it is, and it should be a staple of the education
system here at the University of Arizona.
Bibliography


Appendices

Appendix A

The faculty members interviewed were Professor Gerdine Ulysse and Professor Tom Wilson. Both professors believed that we could implement our application, appear.in, in their classes at The University of Arizona. Some specifics that both professors touched on were the privacy with accessing accounts, the versatility in using the application in different places around the world, and that the application was free for everyone. Students specifically in French class could use this application to both study abroad without leaving the university and to hear from global guest speakers. Professor Ulysse believed that connecting her own French students with actual students in France would be a way to enhance the education of her students. Likewise, Professor Wilson believed that he could use this application in his classroom to interview students for programs as well as connect students together for group projects. The concern of both professors was that this could be used with a limit of eight students in a single chat. However, the professors believed that connections should be more personal with fewer students.