Heuristic Analysis
Summary of the Competitors

italki

Pros (+)

• Uses simple and direct language that is appropriate for the audience.

• Informs the users where they are in the process and the system status by effectively using visual cues,.

• The ability to filter their search using various categories helps narrow down options.

Cons (-)

• The visual language and info architecture doesn't correspond with the intended message/use, causing unnecessary cognitive load.

• Have to click 2 and look for a button to message the teacher. The button isn't clear and hard to click for right hand users. Need more padding around icon.

• The system failure to verify email forces me to use their mobile app, which is dysfunctional and unusable.

tandem

Pros (+)

• Goes beyond expectations when offering user control w/ their information.

•Always has an exit, cancel, skip, and back button.

• Constantly informs the system status without overwhelming and being redundant.

• Smartly uses color, icons, and simple language to communicate their product.

Cons (-)

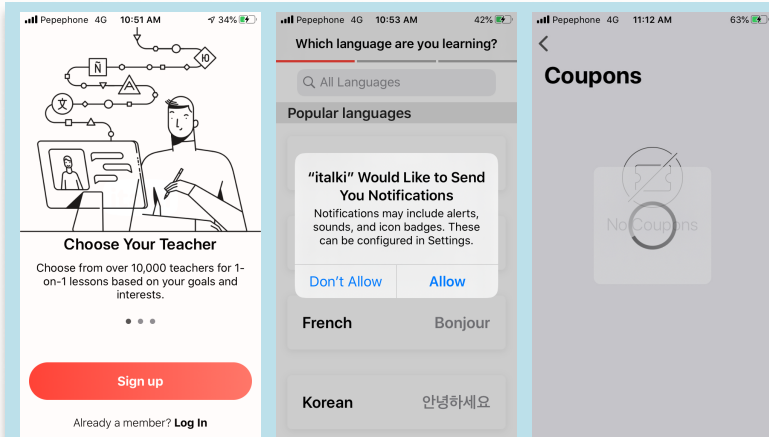• Although phone sign-in is available, there is no create an account w/ phone number.

WordUp

Pros (+)

• Customization options for translation language, order, word size and etc.

• Matches the real world with numeric conventions like "K" for large numbers and good use of percentages to show progress.

• Eye-catching use of skeumorphic design.

Cons (-)

• Lacks directional cues on how to move within the system, especially during the onboarding process.

• Inconsistent visual language when showing word definitions and properties.

• Unable to skip and perform some tasks later durign the onboarding process. If users must, explain why.

• Unable to edit or delete words from the word file.

Overall Scores

italki	tandem	WordUp
42%	92%	63%

iTalki

Overall Usability Score: 42%

Upon entering iTalki, it uses the standard informational slides that are distinguished using three dots, letting users know how many slides there are. The shade variation, although the contrast can be higher, tells you which slide you are on.
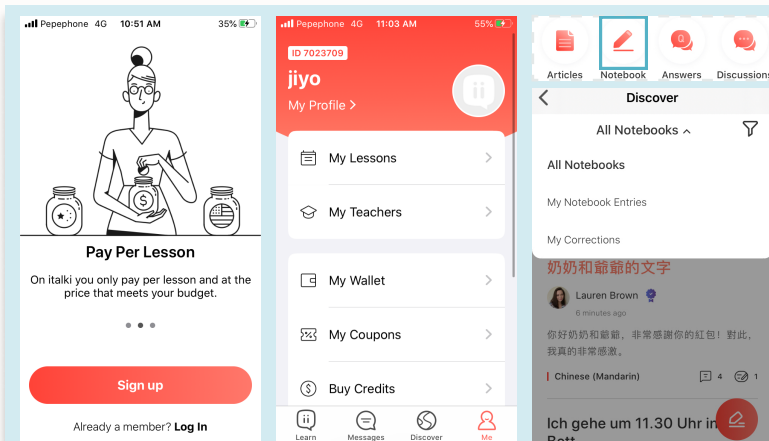
During the onboarding process, it informs the user of how many steps they need to take to finish using the red and gray bars at the top. It updates as the user moves along the process.

When it's loading, the app shows a spinning wheel to show the system is loading the page.

Visibility of System Status

Violation Score: 1

It does a great job keeping the user informed of what is happening. The contrast between gray could be higher but it's minor.

In general, the app's vocabulary is simple and direct, similar language a learner could find in a language classroom. It's firendly and not intimidating.
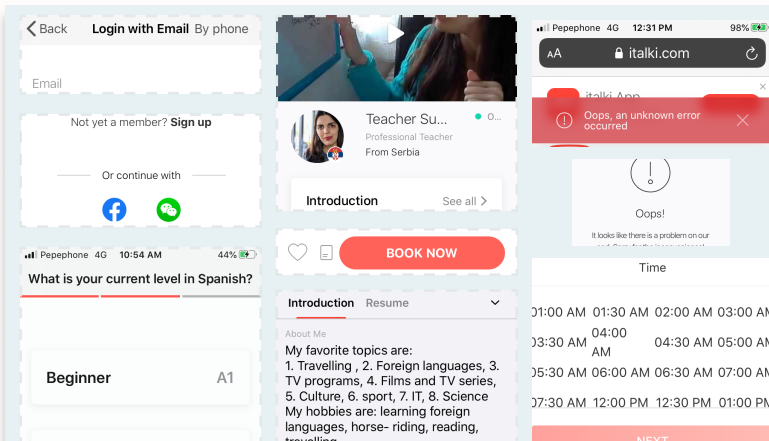
To change one's profile details, you have to click either "My Profile>" but because its placement and use of side arrow resembles a website breadcrumb trail, I didn't think it'd be an "edit" button. Same with the gray picture circle, it's unclear that is an "Edit Profile" button.

The "Notebook" uses an icon identical to "edit" or "write" symbol. The notebook has non-target languages and under "discover" section.

Match Between System and Real World

Violation Score: 2

Language is consistent & simple. Yet choice of putting "Discover" and "Notebook" together is confusing. The visual language is ok.

The sign up page does an excellent job giving the option to go back, sign up using phone, email, or social media. But the freedom to go back stops when you to begin filling out your information.
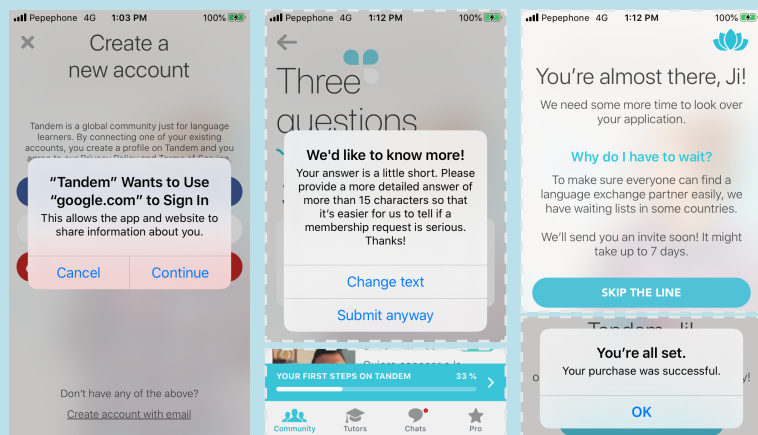
The app provides users the ability to customize and filter their search very well by language, region, price, availability, lesson categories, etc.

However access to messaging a teacher isn't intuitive and the app display for time availability is unreadable, making it frustrating to schedule a lesson. This is the key conversion for the business and it shouldn't be a difficult experience.

User Control & Freedom

Violation Score : 4

The user control is inconsistent. But the biggest issue is email verification, forcing me to use mobile web to schedule a lesson. The mobile app is unusable.

Tandem

The app does a superb job of keeping the user aware of what's happening and why they need more information.

During the sign up, when using "google.com" to create an account, it asks the user's permission and equally it lets us know we'll be redirected to a google sign in page if we click, "continue".
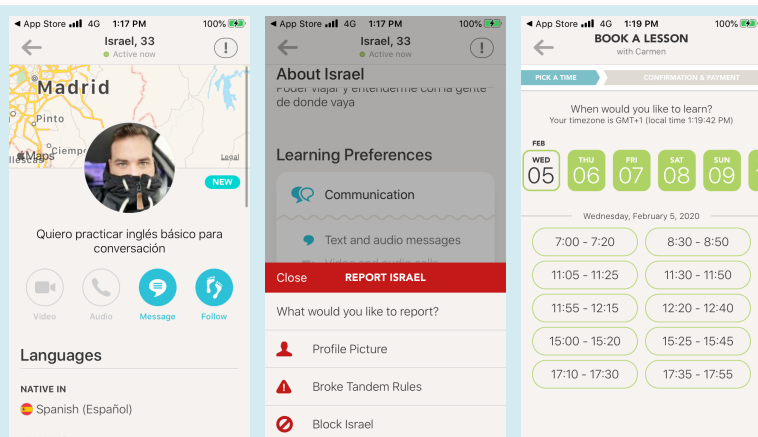
It gives us feedback immediately when they want us to write more, but also gives us the option to submit anyway and move forward.

Notifies us available options of paying to access product immediately.

Visibility of System Status

Violation Score: 0

An examplary model of informing the user without overwhelming. The user clearly understands the what, why, and next steps.

The use of icons for video, audio, message, and follow are clear, in line with the standard visual language. The use of gray and color to distinguish the active and inactive buttons are clear and consistent.
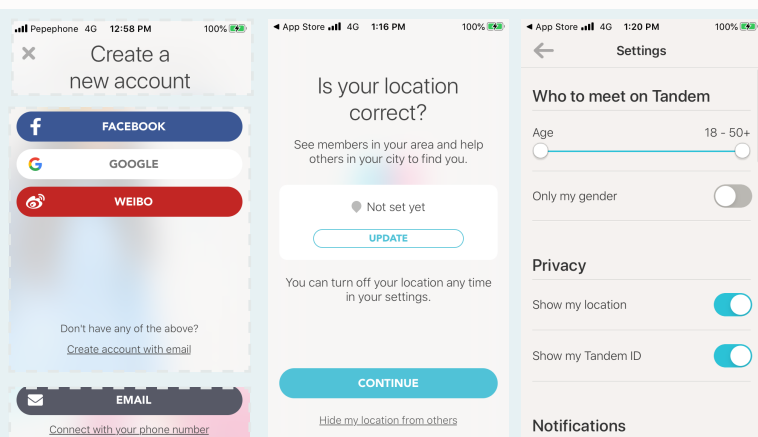
The use of an exclamation mark in the top right corner looks like an information, button. But when clicked, the red banner signifying alert appears. Overall, good use of color and icons.

The booking page uses square shapes, similar to real calendars to reduce the cognitive load. It prevents confusion by telling your current timezone.

Match Between System and Real World

Violation Score: 1

Consistent use of color symbols, language, and icons all throughout. Slight confusions were quickly corrected by clicking the buttom.

When creating a new account, we are given social media options and ability to sign up with email but not with a phone number. But when you go to login, it gives you an option to sign in using a phone number. The freedom to choose phone signup is ambivalent.
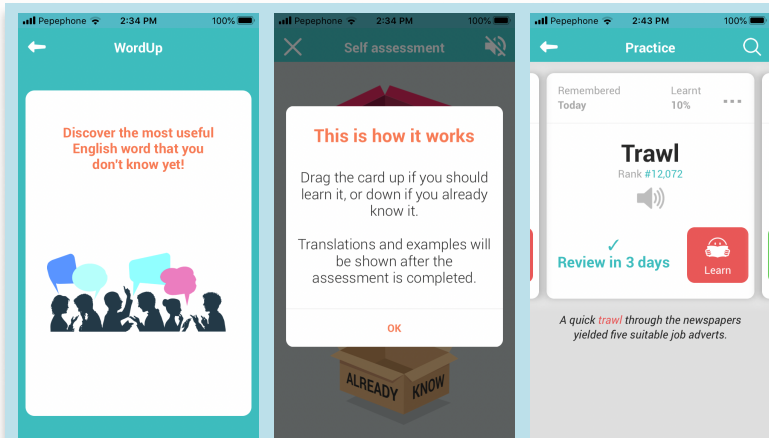
It consistently gives you the option to cancel, skip, and continue when sharing personal information. It goes above and beyond by giving "Hide my location from others" option as well.

All pages have a "back" arrow button, allowing you to freely move about within the app. It gives user control to decide their privacy.

User Control & Freedom

Violation Score: 0

Aside from small ambiguity of phone number sign up, the app goes above and beyond to give users control to customize their experience.

WordUp

Overall Usability Score: 63%

Aside from the "back" button that is shown as an arrow, there's no sign as to what to do. It fails to inform the user the where they are and what to do by visual cues like arrows, dots, or a progress bar.
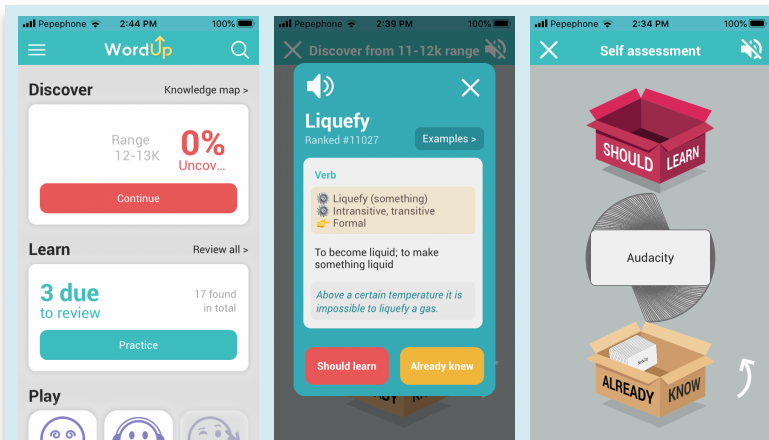
I didn't realize I was in the self-assessment until it ended. The process and the reason for doing this wasn't clear.

On the practice page, the target word is used in a sentence. There are actually two examples for each word but I didn't know that until I accidentally swiped the sentence.

Visibility of System Status

Violation Score: 2

Lack of directional cues on how to move within the system can improve. Explanation of what & why before an action is needed.

The homepage uses clear and simple words to distinguish the difference, like "Discovery" and "Learn". But the use of 11-12K word range is confusing because it doesn't explain how those ranges are defined. Is it defined by frequency of use inferred from second image's, "Ranked #11027"?
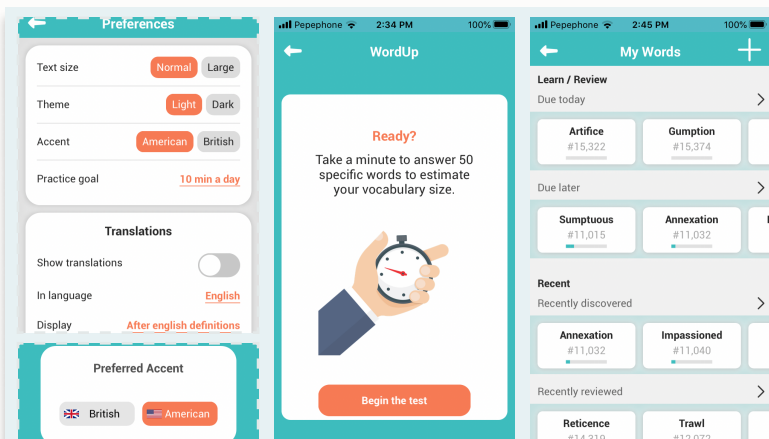
The visual language isn't consistent. While the "play" audio button is follows the visual convention, the gear next to the definition and word properties is strange.

Boxes are cute skeumorphic designs. Wording could be more precise.

Match Between System and Real World

Violation Score: 1.5

While the numeric conventions and skeumorphic designs attempt to bridge the system and reality, it can improve on Info display.

It provides great customization text size, theme, of audio accents between British English and American English, the control of seeing the definition their native language as well, and decide which one is displayed first.

There is no option to skip steps during the onboarding process which can be frustrating, especially when you have way of knowing what's happening next.

You can add words that you haven't seen in the "Discover" list by using the plus symbol. But you can't edit or delete the words.

User Control & Freedom

Violation Score: 1

While providing a lot of customization options with translation and word size, the users lack the power to skip some steps or delete the words in their words file.