

THE STUDENTS' PERCEPTION OF USING DUOLINGO AS A LANGUAGE TOOL FOR LEARNING ENGLISH

Retno Lestari

English Language Department

University of Islam Malang

21801073096@unisma.ac.id

Abstract: This study aims to determine the perception of students majoring in English towards the use of the Duolingo application as a language learning tool to learn English and to find out what aspects of language improve after using the Duolingo application as a language learning tool. The research design of this research is qualitative research. Participants in this study were 28 English students at the Universitas Islam Malang who had used the Duolingo application for more than 40 days. The data were collected by giving a questionnaire and interviewing the students. From the results of this study, most students are agreeing about the statement toward the use of the Duolingo application in their English learning. The results of the questionnaires and interviews obtained by the researcher explained that students agreed that the Duolingo application had many positive effects on students in language learning such as students becoming more motivated in learning and making students practice more and apply their language skills in everyday life. Also, some aspects of a language improve after using the Duolingo application, such as students knowing a lot of vocabulary and memorizing it easily, becoming better at structure and pronunciation, and making it easier for students to improve their English language acquisition. Based on the finding of the study, it is addressed for future researchers. The researcher hopes that further research can examine with a larger sample and dig deeper into other topics related to the use of the Duolingo application and its implementation in English language teaching.

Keywords: Students' perception, Duolingo, language tool, learning English

INTRODUCTION

To enhance students' English skills, various ways can be done to help students learn English. One way is to take English courses or additional classes in their spare time to practice and improve their language abilities. According to Sulistyono (2016), English courses or additional classes in free time are to train and further improve students' English competence or ability. However, in this new era, with the rapid development of technology, it is possible to trade almost every component of human life, including helping and facilitating students in accessing knowledge.

Education in the digital era 4.0 can be very beneficial for the world of teacher and student education by using technological devices as a way to gain knowledge. Currently, the utility of technology is comprehensive within the academic environment which aims to assist enhance the quality of digital learning that can be accessed through

the internet connection for free by all users. Nowadays, students are more interested in learning how to use those technology. The use of technology as a web-based or online learning model in this period was effectively used in combining every face-to-face meeting and online learning meeting. The current school and campus learning process cannot be separated from the role of information technology. This can be seen from the current conditions, the COVID-19 pandemic period is a time when all circumstances cannot be carried out as usual by all groups, including the world of education. It is known that, COVID-19 is a disease that attacks human respiration with acute symptoms. The disease can spread quickly from one person to another through tiny droplets from the nose or mouth that are spread when a person coughs or exhales. Therefore, all activities must be stopped and everyone must wear a mask and keep a distance. This results in learning that cannot be done face-to-face but must be done remotely because it is to break the chain of spreading this virus. Therefore, schools and campuses were innovated by conducting online learning. Utilizing information and communication technology, online learning is carried out using various online media such as Zoom, Google meet, Google classroom, and so on so that learning activities can be continued.

The existence of sophisticated learning media or devices and internet connections can indirectly have a positive impact on the world of education, especially students can easily access the information needed to help substance and material that can be relevant to the learning required. According to Rulviana (2018), the nature of the internet can be contacted at any time, so that students can take advantage of educational applications provided in the internet community at any time according to their free time so that the obstacles they face such as difficulties in finding sources of teaching materials can be overcome. Nowadays, it can be seen that the use of smartphones, computers or laptops has become commonplace among students. These electronic tools provide many applications that can support student learning, including learning about various English skills, if they maximize their use. Several applications on smartphones or computers facilitate students to learn English, such as dictionaries, English idioms, English grammar, etc.

Many computer and smartphone applications have been developed for the purpose of learning English, one of which is Duolingo. Duolingo app is one of the modern apps that facilitate language acquisition created by Luis von Ahn and Severin, which is available on smartphones intended for iPhone and Android users. Duolingo was released in November 2011 which targets to teach vocabulary and grammar, even this application provides a mix of abilities in pronunciation, and word translation and provides activities to understand words from pictures, write what listen to, and more. This is the same as the definition from Krashen (2014) as cited in Fauzan and Kasim (2020), Duolingo is a web-based self-paced language teaching program that guides students step-by-step through a sequence of tasks, mostly based on translation. The Duolingo app is a free online educational program that can be downloaded via the Google Play Store. The Duolingo application has many useful features to help students who have difficulty learning English. Because Duolingo comes with several features and lots of practice questions, it can make it easier for students to learn in a fun way. According to Guaqueta (2018), the Duolingo application is a great English learning tool to practice your English skills and make learning English easy. Duolingo offers a model of English courses based on everyday life in a simpler way. This application connects lessons with video games which could construct interest in learning. Plus, Duolingo combines elements from audio, visuals as well as questions about vocabulary and grammar in a very amusing way. This supports the fact that applications on smartphones or computer can be used to assist students in learning English, in addition to increase their desire to study, increase their knowledge in a more cozy and fun way. According to Ahmed (2016), Duolingo has always increased concentration on information leading to user satisfaction. Therefore, Duolingo can be one of the students' choices to help them improve their learning activities.

Furthermore, researchers want to conduct research on the use of the Duolingo application as a language learning tool for English language education students at the University of Islam Malang which coincides with the Covid-19 pandemic. However, each application has advantages and disadvantages in its use. As a result, students have different perceptions about using applications as language learning tools in their English learning process. Therefore, the researcher is interested to conducted this research about students' perceptions of Duolingo application as their English learning tool.

METHOD

Research Design

This research aims to determine students' perspectives about the use of Duolingo application as a language learning tool in English learning. Therefore, the type of approaches that use in this research is qualitative research. The researcher uses a qualitative research approach in order to get deep data where it contains a purpose. This research method was chosen to focus more on understanding social phenomena that occur from the participant's perspective by focusing on a more complete picture of an activity that has been carried out. Then, in this study, the researcher investigates University of Islam Malang students' perspectives related to the use of Duolingo application as a language learning tool in the English learning process.

Participants

The subject of this research was all of the students in English Education department at the University of Islam Malang who have already used Duolingo minimum for forty days. To have this subject, researcher distributed the first questionnaire to find participants who have used Duolingo for more than 40 days to all batches from 2017 to 2021 and distributed it through WhatsApp and got 28 students. After having the subject, then a WhatsApp group was formed to collect participants who had met the criteria. After that, the researchers distributed a second questionnaire that had been validated to investigate further on participants' experiences while using the application. The researcher took 4 participants who had different perceptions of Duolingo from several categories in the questionnaire.

Instruments

To answer the research problems, the researcher used questionnaires and interviews. There are 28 statements in the questionnaire. The closed-ended questionnaire survey was designed and adapted from Inayah, et.al (2020) and Astarilla (2018). The next instrument is the interview as a supporting data to add deeper explanation to the data collection from the first instrument. The semi-structured

interview was developed from a questionnaire adapted from Novitasari, et al (2020). Both of interview and questionnaire have been validated by the lecturer.

Data Collection

This study uses an online questionnaire and online interview because researcher conducted the research during the pandemic era. Therefore, the researcher cannot meet the subject directly because of an appeal not to do face-to-face learning on campus to prevent the spread of the COVID-19 outbreak in Indonesia. To collect the questionnaire data, the researcher used Google Form to make it easier. After that, the researcher distributed the link to Google Form through WhatsApp Group. For the interview, the researcher also used online interview by Zoom application to collect the data from the participants.

Data analysis

There were two instruments in this study. The first instrument was a questionnaire. The questionnaire was analyzed using a formula from Sugiyono (2008). After distributed questionnaires to students, the data obtained were then analyzed. In order to reveal the themes, and the main ideas of qualitative, the data were analyzed as a whole and then converted into numerical data to be compared and evaluated thoroughly. Then analyzed the interview while the data of the interview was analyzed by using three components of analyzing data from Miles and Huberman. After conducting the interview, the researcher transformed data from audio recordings to dialog written form. After the information was collected, the researcher analyzed and categorized the data. Then the data were reduced, to summarizing, choosing the main things, and focusing on essential things in the interview results. Then the researcher made a display of the data. At this stage, the selected data was presented in tabular form. In this study, the data obtained from interviews were presented in narrative form. The last was to draw and verify conclusions from the data that had been obtained. After displaying the data, the researcher made conclusions based on the research questions.

FINDINGS

The researcher used Google Forms, WhatsApp, and Zoom applications as a tool to collect data. This finding aimed to answer the research problem of this study.

Researchers used two instruments to collect data. The first was a questionnaire. There were 24 questions about the point of view of English students after using the Duolingo application. These questions had been shared with 28 students using Google Forms and shared via WhatsApp groups. The second data collection was done by using interviews through the zoom application. Interviews were conducted with four participants individually at different times. After the answers to the questionnaires and interviews were collected, the researcher analyzed them in depth in the form of percentages and transcripts. There were some data that can be explained:

Table 1: New learning tool

Statement	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%
I'm trying to find additional learning tool when I have trouble in learn English.	43%	50%	7%	0	0
I'm excited to use new learning technologies like the Duolingo app because it was interesting.	39%	50%	11%	0	0

From the result above, it can be concluded that most students when experiencing difficulties in language learning tried to find suitable additional learning tools to improve their learning abilities and most students were very enthusiastic about using new language learning technologies such as the Duolingo application because it was interesting.

Table 2: Easiness and usefulness of learning through the Duolingo app

Statement	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%
I use the Duolingo app because it suits my learning style.	29%	50%	21%	0	0
I am comfortable using the Duolingo app because it provides a balance of activities (for example, The practice questions are grouping according to the student's ability level).	39%	54%	7%	0	0

I use the Duolingo app because it provides activities that encourage sufficient communicative and meaningful practice.	25%	53%	18%	4%	0
I understand the material in the Duolingo app because it provides information/materials/questions that are easy to understand.	28%	61%	11%	0	0
I like the activity in the Duolingo app, the activities promote creative, original and independent responses.	18%	61%	21%	0	0
I must focus on practicing the skills that I need and Duolingo app provides the appropriate material for the user.	25%	39%	36%	0	0
I really like using Duolingo app because it make English learning more enjoyable and interesting.	32%	47%	21%	0	0
I easily understand the language used in the Duolingo app; it is adjusted to the ability level of students.	32%	57%	11%	0	0
I don't find it difficult when operating Duolingo app because the app is easy to use even for the beginner user.	29%	53%	18%	0	0
I really enjoy the Duolingo app because it allows me to study whenever and wherever I am.	36%	57%	7%	0	0

From table 2, the results of the questionnaire that most students answered strongly agree and agree that Duolingo was very useful for improving learning abilities. Duolingo suits their learning style, the features were also easy to use, and they found it convenient when practicing English through Duolingo because they can access it anytime and anywhere. In other words, the participants had no problem with Duolingo's features and access to learning English. and also, most students agreed that the Duolingo application was useful in learning English in several aspects. Nearly half of the participants agreed that Duolingo's features were useful, convenient, and fun. Then, they also agreed that Duolingo was useful to improve their English skills. This meant that most students felt that Duolingo can be used to improve their English outside the classroom anytime and anywhere.

That conclusion is also supported by the answer of the participants. The second respondent stated that *“I think the Duolingo application is good because it is easy to use and the difficulty can be adjusted according to our abilities, we can choose according to*

the level, and also have friendly UI (user interface).” He also stated that “I like to use Duolingo because it can be used anywhere and anytime.” As supported by the fourth interview that she said “It is a good application that is flexible and enjoyable with complete features, so it's fun if we learn while playing”.

Table 3: Language improvement through the use of Duolingo

Statement	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%
I often practice reading and writing through Duolingo app.	21%	29%	43%	7%	0
I often practice listening and speaking through Duolingo app.	18%	39%	36%	7%	0
I often learn grammar or structure through Duolingo app.	21%	39%	36%	4%	0
I often practice translating words and sentences through Duolingo app.	14%	36%	39%	11%	0
Based on my experience using Duolingo app enrich my vocabulary.	21%	61%	18%	0	0

It can be seen from table 3 that Duolingo can be used as a tool to practice their reading, writing, listening, and speaking skills. Apart from that, they can also learn grammar and translate through Duolingo. Another point was that 82% (a combination of strongly agree and agree) agree that this application can help them to enrich their vocabulary. It can be supported by the statement of the four participants. There are several aspects that were felt by the participants to improve, but from participants in the interview thought that their vocabulary mastery had improved greatly after using the Duolingo application.

I think my vocabulary has improved a lot because if you have a lot of vocabulary, it will make it easier for learn English. [P1]

For me, my vocabulary has increased the most, and like listening and other aspects have improved quite good. [P2]

For the aspects, I think it's still about vocabulary, for other aspects it's more like just follows. [P3]

In my opinion, my vocabulary has increased, so over time, I become more confident in speaking. [P4]

Table 4: Improving Student Learning Motivation Through the Use of Duolingo

Statement	SA%	A%	N%	D%	SD%
I am looking the learning materials that I need and Duolingo app facilitates the learning needs that appropriate for the user.	14%	61%	21%	4%	0
I like the content in Duolingo app is relevant to my needs as an English language learner.	21%	54%	21%	4%	0
I really enjoy using Duolingo app because the subject and content of the materials is interesting, challenging and motivating.	32%	50%	14%	4%	0
I don't get easily bored of using Duolingo app because there is sufficient variety in the subject and content in Duolingo.	11%	50%	36%	3%	0
I believe that using the Duolingo app will improve my learning process to be more effective.	18%	71%	11%	0	0
I raise my interest in further English language study after using the Duolingo app.	11%	57%	29%	3%	0
I prefer practice English using Duolingo app in the smartphone than another media/ other app because it is more fun and enjoyable.	25%	25%	39%	11%	0

From the data above, it can be concluded that most students agreed with the statement that students enjoyed learning using the Duolingo application because Duolingo provided learning materials that suit students' learning needs. The subject and content of the Duolingo application kept students interested, challenged and motivated. With the diversity of content in the Duolingo application, they were not easily bored while studying and they believe Duolingo can increase interest in learning languages so that learning activities become more effective.

In conclusion, although there were some drawbacks to using the Duolingo application in learning English, the positive aspects provided more benefits for student learning activities. Finally, the results of the questionnaires and interviews explained that most students had a positive perception of using the Duolingo application in learning English. They agreed that this was an effective application to help improve their English skills and help increase their motivation in learning English.

DISCUSSION

Based on the findings above, after collecting and analyzing the data, the researcher conducted an in-depth discussion to answer the main research problem in this study, namely to find out students' perceptions of using the Duolingo application as an English learning tool and to find out which aspects of the English language that improved in learning. The finding of the data questionnaire and interview in this study indicate that students' responses show positive perception towards the use of the Duolingo application in learning English has many benefits to support students' learning process. They agree that the Duolingo application can be a way to increase their motivation to learn English, because Duolingo application is sufficient application for learning new languages and the features offered by Duolingo application make the student felt enjoyed and comfortable learning when use it. Furthermore, majority of the students agreed that using Duolingo in learning English was an effective and interesting way. This is in line with previous research by Raihan (2019) which agreed that the application of the Duolingo application can stimulate students' motivation to learn English and can improve students' learning outcomes. The students can improve their language knowledge not only in school but they can also use the Duolingo application as an additional aid in learning whether at home or wherever they are.

The second research question is about what aspects of language are improved by students in learning English using the Duolingo application. Almost all questions in the questionnaire and the interview received very good responses. From the results of the data, most students sense that by using the Duolingo application in learning English, their knowledge and vocabulary mastery increased. The finding above in line with the results of Siregar (2019) which agrees that the Duolingo application can improve students' vocabulary mastery and can motivate students to be involved in language learning. Further findings are also related to research conducted by Anna et.al (2016) which states that Duolingo application contributes to improving students' vocabulary, pronunciation and grammatical structures. It can be said that Duolingo application provides many positive aspects in students' English learning so that some aspects of their English language acquisition improve.

CONCLUSION

Based on the finding and the discussions from the previous chapter, the results were shown that almost all participants gave positive responses, most of the students agree toward the using of Duolingo application in terms of usability, blending, control, connectivity, mobility, content, and cost based on students' experience after using the Duolingo app. The Duolingo application is an English learning tool that can provide many benefits in language learning. First, the Duolingo application can increase students' learning motivation so that the duration of learning becomes longer and more effective; second, the gamification system offered by Duolingo application makes students more active in doing each task in the Duolingo application, by learning to use the Duolingo application regularly, it allows students to practice and apply the knowledge of English they have gained from the Duolingo application into their daily lives.

By using the Duolingo application for language learning, several aspects of language are improved, including become better at pronunciation, understands the rules of grammar and mastering the English component. The aspect that is experiencing the most rapid improvement is the students' vocabulary mastery ability because with many programs in Duolingo application that contain word games, it makes it easier for students to know vocabulary and can memorize vocabulary so that students' vocabulary mastery increases.

For the findings of this research, the researcher suggests the English teacher can use language learning application such as Duolingo application as a language learning tool that can support and help student to motivate them in learning English process. The researcher also suggests the students can use the Duolingo app to practice and improve their language learning process. For future research, the researcher hopes that further researchers can examine with a larger sample and dig deeper into other topics related to the use of the Duolingo application and its implementation in English language teaching.

REFERENCES

Astarilla, L. (2018). University students' perception towards the use of Duolingo application in learning English. *Prosiding CELSciTech*. 3, 1-9.

- Bahjet Essa Ahmed, H. (2016). Duolingo as a bilingual learning app: a case study. *Arab World English Journal (AWEJ)*. 7(2), 255- 267. <https://dx.doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol7no2.17>
- de Castro, A. P., da Hora Macedo, S., & Pinto Bastos, H. P. (2016). DUOLINGO: An experience in English teaching.,. *Journal of Educational & Instructional Studies in the World*, 6(4).
- Fauzan, F., & Kasim, U. (2020). Exploring the implementation of Duolingo media for assignment in learning English. *English Education Journal*, 11(2), 288-301.
- Guaqueta, C. A., & Castro-Garces, A. Y. (2018). The use of language learning apps as a didactic tool for EFL vocabulary building. *English Language Teaching*. 11(2), 61-71. <http://doi.org/10.5539/elt.v11n2p61>
- Inayah, N., Yusuf, Q., & Fibula, N. (2020). Exploring undergraduate students' perception toward the use of Duolingo in learning English. *Humanities & Social Sciences Reviews*. 8(3), 76-85. <https://doi.org/10.18510/hssr.2020.839>
- Novitasari, I., & Purnamaningsih, I. R. (2022). Students' Perception of Using the Duolingo Application as an Online English Learning Medium. *Professional Journal of English Education*. 5(3), 535-543. DOI: <http://dx.doi.org/10.22460/project.v5i3.p535-543>
- Nuralie, A. (2019). Relationship between using duolingo application as a learning media and learning independence with students' english communication ability. Unpublished thesis. Semarang: Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Semarang.
- Raihan, P. (2019). Student Learning Independence Analysis Using Duolingo Applications in Language Courses English in Class VIII SMP Negeri 1 Sabang. Unpublished thesis. Banda Aceh: Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Keguruan(FTK), Universitas Islam Negeri Ar-Raniry Darussalam Banda Aceh.
- Rulviana, V. (2018). Implementasi Media Edmodo Dalam Mata Kuliah Pengembangan Kurikulum Sekolah Dasar. *Refleksi Edukatika: Jurnal Ilmiah Kependidikan*. 8(2). DOI:10.24176/re.v8i2.2361.
- Siregar, S. (2019). Improving student's vocabulary mastery through duolingo game at ninth grade of MTs Al-Ittihadiyah Laut Dendang (Doctoral dissertation, Universitas Islam Negeri Sumatera Utara).
- Sugiyono, D. (2008). *Metode Penelitian Kuantitatif, Kualitatif, dan R&D*. Bandung: ALFABETA, cv.
- Sulistyo, A. (2016). Manajemen pembelajaran kursus bahasa Inggris pada lembaga international language programs Semarang. Unpublished thesis. Semarang: Fakultas Ilmu Pendidikan, Universitas Negeri Semarang.

Approved by

Advisor I

Nuse Aliyah Rahmati S.Pd., M.A.
NPP. 120103198332263