Students' Perception of Duolingo in Enhancing Vocabulary Mastery

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Abstract

The advent of technology has ushered in a plethora of engaging and innovative online learning tools for English, one of them is Duolingo app standing out as an accessible and effective platform for language acquisition, particularly in English. This study aims to elucidate and observe students' perspectives on utilizing Duolingo software for vocabulary mastery at IAIN Lhokseumawe. Employing qualitative analysis techniques, the research used tests, questionnaires, and interviews to gather data. The non-probability sampling method was utilized, with 20 students from the fifth semester selected as the sample. The study revealed that most students were motivated to enhance their English vocabulary through the Duolingo application. The app provided an easy-to-understand platform, sparking interest and enthusiasm among students for learning new words. Furthermore, Duolingo proved the fact of preventing boredom during learning sessions and fostering novel approaches to learning. The research findings suggest a positive and highly beneficial perception among students regarding the use of Duolingo for enhancing vocabulary while learning English.

Keywords: Students' Perception, Duolingo, Vocabulary Mastery

I INTRODUCTION

Integrating digital learning platforms into education is a concerted effort to enhance the learning experience for students, making it both enriching and enjoyable. The primary goals include simplifying teaching processes, promoting knowledge dissemination, and leveraging various educational tools. Acting as a vital conduit, media serves as the means of information transmission between educational sources and their recipients (Indrasari, Novita, & Megawati, 2018).

As highlighted by Clarke et al. (2001), the rapid growth of the online world over the past decade underscores the transformative impact of digital advancements on education. In a parallel Vein, Naismith, and Corlett (2017) emphasized the indispensable role of technology, proficient management, and robust connectivity as critical success criteria for the successful integration of mobile learning initiatives within educational settings. These technological elements are pivotal in fostering an environment where students can engage dynamically with educational content, ensuring a more interactive and effective learning process. Teachers using new technology have made learning better (Ahmed, 2016). For teaching English vocabulary, it was important for every teacher to use technology in which students mingle with their devices. Using software is a big part of interactive learning that students like. Many students know how to use software and social media, so bringing them for learning is a good idea (Handrianto, Rasool, Rahman, Musta'in, and Ilhami, 2021).

Teachers should find engaging ways to introduce new words and phrases to students. According to Larsen and Freeman (2002), using the right instructional strategy, media, and curriculum design is crucial for teaching learners to use new vocabulary in conversation or written form. As technology continues to rapidly advanced, its integration into the learning process becomes increasingly significant, influencing how people learn (Jaelani, 2020). The majority of students either study English infrequently or do rehearsal once a week in class, often resulting in insufficient English proficiency. Consequently, some individuals feel hesitant to use English in their daily lives. However, vocabulary remains a vital aspect of language acquisition, acting as a bridge between speaking, listening, reading, and writing. Helping students enhance their reading, listening, speaking, and writing skills is crucial, as highlighted by Murcia (2001), because vocabulary is a vital part of language. Students need to build a rich vocabulary and develop all four English skills, then educators need to teach vocabulary appropriately. Without suitable teaching methods, students may struggle to remember and memorize particular vocabulary. In accordance, many educators use technology to assist in teaching and learning English. According to Ewa (2016), game activities have benefits such as making it easier to talk to people and encouraging the use of language in creative and natural ways. In addition, Saputra et al. (2021) noted that incorporating such games can boost motivation, support learner-centered activities and finish the assignment with individual pace in the games attached to their device can assist students to improve their English skills even outside the classroom. To capture students' attention in learning vocabulary, numerous English teachers adopt teaching methods that incorporate prevalent technologies and media of this era. An example is the implementation of the Duolingo application in learning activities, which has become a common tool for vocabulary learning.

In an era of rapid technological advancement, the way we approach education has evolved significantly. One of the most notable innovations in language learning is the Duolingo application. Since its inception in 2011, Duolingo has transformed the landscape of language

education by offering an accessible, engaging, and effective platform for learners around the globe. Learning a second language through Duolingo is a useful method. All teaching activities are suggested incorporate specific learning platform in teaching activities to ensure student learning. These components include monitoring progress, maintaining motivation, providing feedback, and emphasizing vocabulary, as outlined by Garcia (2013). Duolingo, a free online language-learning service, utilizes innovative methods to facilitate language acquisition through web and app-based activities. The platform offers various ways for learners to engage with the language, promoting understanding, generating interest, and making the learning process enjoyable. Duolingo allows language enthusiasts to select from a range of languages and provides feedback on earned points, observed patterns, and time spent on learning.

According to Munday (2016), Duolingo stands out as a modern application where 80 percent of its functions involve tasks related to translating, transcribing, and pronouncing words. The app incorporates gamification elements to motivate and assist students. Researchers have acknowledged the effectiveness of Duolingo in English teaching activities, as noted by Krashen (2014), who describes it as an app-centric language learning tool guiding users through various tasks, predominantly in English. Additionally, White (2017) highlights Duolingo as a cost-effective web-based language learning software that facilitates accessible language training for individuals through communication. This essay explores the significance of the Duolingo application in contemporary language acquisition, highlighting its impact on accessibility, user engagement, and the democratization of education. Considering the previous background, therefore this study aims to answer the following question: what is the students' perception of Duolingo in enhancing their vocabulary mastery?

II METHOD

This study utilized quantitative research, which, as defined by Sugiyono (2015), involves investigating a specific population or sample and commonly employs a purposeful sampling approach. In this research, questionnaires were distributed to individuals who had utilized Duolingo for English language learning to gather their perspectives. IAIN Lhokseumawe students was the subject of this study. This study involved fifth-semester students. 20 individuals from fifth-semester students at IAIN Lhokseumawe were selected as a sample.

The survey questions aim to gauge students' sentiments regarding the effectiveness of Duolingo apps in vocabulary study. The survey comprises five Likert Scale questions with response options ranging from Strongly Disagree to Strongly Agree. The questionnaire consists of 17 items, with questions 1-5 focusing on the most efficient method for vocabulary acquisition, 6-9 addressing Duolingo's drawbacks, 10-11 exploring students' engagement, 12-15 assessing Duolingo's benefits, and 16-17 probing into students' motivation. Additionally, the interviews are conducted to gather more in-depth insights from students about their perceptions of using Duolingo as a tool for teaching and learning vocabulary.

III RESULT

This chapter describes the research results. The students' perceptions of using the Duolingo application as a medium for learning vocabulary include the following five aspects: Effective tools for learning vocabulary, student interest in the Duolingo application for learning vocabulary, student motivation for learning vocabulary, advantages of Duolingo, and disadvantages of Duolingo discussed below.

1. Interactive Tool for Learning Vocabulary

In this part, there were five statements. The results of the study are described below. The participants agreed that Duolingo is an interactive tool for providing vocabulary in learning English. It was indicated by the questionnaire result which mentioned that 92% of the participants agreed to the first statement above that Duolingo was easy to use in learning English. In the statement number 2, 82% of the participants agreed that Duolingo was easy to use in learning English vocabulary. The statement number 3, showed 90% the students agreed that Duolingo can be accessed anywhere and anytime to learn English. Another statement was number 4, 87% the participants agreed that English vocabulary questions in Duolingo were interesting. Furthermore, in the statement number 5 showed that 92% of the participants agreed that English vocabulary questions in Duolingo were easy to understand. It means that the students' perceptions were positive.

One of Duolingo's most compelling features is its accessibility. Traditional language learning often requires enrollment in expensive courses, private tutoring, or immersion programs, which can be financially prohibitive for many individuals. Duolingo democratizes language education by providing a high-quality platform that is free to use. While the app does offer a premium version with additional features, the core functionality remains available to all users without cost. This approach ensures that people from diverse socioeconomic backgrounds have the opportunity to learn new languages, breaking down financial barriers and fostering inclusivity.

2. Students' Interest in Duolingo Application in Learning Vocabulary

In this part, there were two statements. The result of the data are described below. The students agreed that learning English by using Duolingo application was interested. It was shown that 99% of participants agreed that they were interested in learning by using Duolingo because made them easier for understand the meaning of English vocabulary well. Another statement is number 11, 91% participants agreed that learning by using Duolingo gives them opportunity to be more active in learning. It means that the students' perceptions were positive.

From the above results, students are interested in learning English using the Duolingo application, and participants agreed that learning using the Duolingo application provides them with the opportunity to be more active in learning.

Duolingo's gamified approach to language learning has set a new standard for user engagement. The application incorporates game-like elements such as points, levels, and streaks to motivate users and make learning enjoyable. This method of gamification not only keeps users motivated but also encourages consistent practice, which is crucial for language acquisition. The use of interactive exercises, such as translation tasks, listening comprehension, and speaking drills, helps learners develop a well-rounded skill set. Additionally, the app's

adaptive algorithms tailor the difficulty of exercises to the user's proficiency level, ensuring that the learning experience remains challenging yet manageable.

3. Students' Motivation for Learning Vocabulary

In this part, there were two statements. The results of the data are described below. The students agreed that duolingo can motivated them in learning English. The result of the statement number 15, showed 92% students agreed that they feel motivated learn by using duolingo. The result of statement number 16, showed that 89% students agreed that Duolingo made them feel excited in memorized English vocabulary. It means that students' perceptions were positive. Based on the above results, Duolingo can increase their motivation to learn English, and participants felt more motivated and excited to learn English Vocabulary after using Duolingo application.

Duolingo's integration of technology into language learning extends beyond its gamified interface. The app utilizes data-driven insights to continually improve its teaching methods. Through sophisticated algorithms, Duolingo tracks users' progress, identifies common areas of difficulty, and adjusts the curriculum to address these challenges. This adaptive learning approach ensures that users receive personalized feedback and targeted practice, enhancing the effectiveness of their language acquisition journey. Additionally, the application's regular updates and feature enhancements reflect ongoing research and advancements in language learning methodologies.

4. The Advantages of Duolingo

The social aspect of Duolingo is another important feature that sets it apart from traditional language learning tools. The app fosters a sense of community through leaderboards, language clubs, and discussion forums. These features encourage users to connect with others who share their language learning goals, providing opportunities for social interaction and mutual support. This sense of community not only enhances motivation but also creates a supportive environment where learners can share resources, tips, and experiences.

In this part, there were four statements. The results of the data are described below. The students agreed that Duolingo can boost them to learn English. The result of statement number 16, showed that 92% of students agreed that they feel more motivated to learn by using Duolingo. The result of statement number 17, showed that 77% of students agreed that Duolingo made them more excited in memorizing English vocabulary. It means that students' perceptions were positive. Based on the above results, students said that Duolingo brings benefits to their English learning, participants agreed that learning with Duolingo helps them apply their English skills in daily life.

5. The Disadvantages of Duolingo

Duolingo is a popular language-learning app that offers a gamified approach to learning new languages. While it has many advantages, such as accessibility and a user-friendly interface, there are also several disadvantages that users might encounter. In this part, there were four statements. The result of the data would be described below. Participants generally held divergent views on various aspects of Duolingo's weaknesses. However, there was a notable consensus on one particular statement. The questionnaire revealed that 47% of respondents agreed with statement number 6, indicating that they found Duolingo lack of speaking practice.

Duolingo provides limited opportunities for users to practice speaking in a realistic setting. Although the app includes speaking exercises, they are often too simplistic and do not mimic real conversational dynamics. As consequences, there is no feedback on pronunciation. The app's speech recognition technology is not always accurate, and users may not receive proper feedback on their pronunciation. This can lead to the development of incorrect habits that are difficult to correct later on.

Furthermore, statement number 7 saw 49% of participants expressing disagreement, implying that Duolingo was considered useful for learning in a classroom setting due to overemphasis on gamification. Duolingo uses a gamified system where users earn points, badges, and streaks for completing lessons. While this can be motivating, it can also lead to a focus on maintaining streaks and earning rewards rather than truly understanding and retaining the material. The app sometimes encourages users to find shortcuts to complete lessons quickly, which can undermine the learning process. For instance, users might rely on pattern recognition to guess answers rather than genuinely learning the material.

On the other hand, statement number 8 stood out with 88% of participants strongly agreeing that Duolingo became challenging to use without an internet connection. This indicates a widespread difficulty among students when attempting to learn through Duolingo in the absence of internet connectivity. Although Duolingo offers some offline features, the majority of its content and functionalities require an active internet connection. This can be problematic for users who do not have consistent access to the internet. Without a stable connection, learners might miss out on daily lessons, practice sessions, and the ability to track their progress.

The offline mode available on Duolingo is limited in scope. Users can only access pre-downloaded lessons, which means they must plan ahead to download content when they have internet access. This can be inconvenient, especially if a user forgets to download lessons before losing connection. Many of Duolingo's features, such as the interactive exercises and leaderboards, require a stable connection to function properly. When the internet connection is slow or unreliable, these features can lag, fail to load, or crash, disrupting the learning experience.

Duolingo's speech recognition exercises, which are a crucial part of practicing pronunciation, also rely on the internet. A poor connection can lead to inaccurate assessments or delays in feedback, which can frustrate learners and hinder their progress. If the internet connection is lost while completing lessons, there is a risk that progress will not be saved properly. This can result in users having to redo lessons, which can be demotivating. Additionally, without an internet connection, the app cannot sync with the server, meaning that progress made offline might not be updated in real-time, leading to inconsistencies in progress tracking.

Regarding statement number 9, 41% of students disagreed that Duolingo posed challenges in learning English vocabulary. Suggesting that, for the majority, the application presents difficulties in this aspect. Duolingo often focuses on vocabulary and basic sentence structures. This can be effective for beginners, but it lacks depth in grammar, idiomatic expressions, and cultural nuances that are crucial for language mastery. As learners progress, they may find that Duolingo does not provide the advanced content needed to achieve fluency in applying vocabularies. The lessons become repetitive, and the app fails to cover complex grammar, diverse vocabulary, or advanced reading and writing skills.

These findings were also reinforced by corresponding statements derived from interview results. This indicates, Duolingo often teaches words and sentences in isolation,

without providing enough context for how they are used in real-life situations. This can lead to difficulties when trying to apply what has been learned in conversations or written communication. It leads the hypothesis, language is deeply tied to culture, and Duolingo's approach often neglects this aspect. Users might learn how to translate phrases but miss out on understanding the cultural significance or appropriate usage of those phrases

IV DISCUSSION

1. Effective Tool for Learning Vocabulary

Based on the results, researchers found that Duolingo is an effective means of teaching vocabulary when learning English. Participants felt that Duolingo was easy to use for learning English and that it was easy to understand and learn English vocabulary because it could be used anytime and anywhere. One of the plans to use Duolingo is to facilitate students to master new vocabulary through games so that they do not get bored in learning, and one of the straight games that can be contested for this purpose is Duolingo. Based on Duy (2018). Duolingo has one of the essential features, namely Badge. It is characterized as a requirement to obtain goals, make progress, and achieve results in a learning environment.

2. Students' Interest in Duolingo Application in Learning Vocabulary

Based on the results, the researchers found that participants were interested in learning with Duolingo because it was easy to use and it gave them the opportunity to learn more actively. This perception is supported by Wijaya, Yufrizal, and Kadaryanto (2015), who showed that after using Duolingo, students enjoyed games more, found them more interesting, and became more active than before. The app is designed to be fun and engaging, and it uses a variety of methods to help users learn new vocabulary. One of the things that makes Duolingo so effective is its use of gamification. The app is designed like a game, with points, badges, and leaderboards to help users stay motivated. This gamification can be especially effective for students who do not have internal motivation to learn vocabulary.

3. Students' Motivation for Learning Vocabulary

Based on the results, researchers found that 5 out of 5 participants felt that Duolingo increased their excitement and motivation during the learning process. This perception is supported by Munday (2015) who states that Duolingo incorporates aspects of gamification into learning, which can motivate and engage learners in learning using Duolingo. Duolingo, a free language learning app, has become extremely popular in recent years and its effectiveness in improving vocabulary acquisition has been the subject of numerous studies. The app's playful approach, interactive exercises, and personalized learning experiences help motivate students to learn vocabulary. By turning vocabulary learning into an engaging, challenging, and personalized experience, Duolingo encourages students to engage in learning, ultimately leading to improved vocabulary acquisition.

4. The Advantages of Duolingo

The results showed that participants had a positive impression of using Duolingo because they were able to easily learn English vocabulary at home and had a deeper understanding of the content. This view is supported by Muddin (2018) who states that in

addition to classroom learning, Duolingo can also be used to help students practice improving their vocabulary at home, as Duolingo can create homework assignments. The app's effectiveness in improving English skills has been substantiated by numerous studies, highlighting its significant contributions to language learning. Duolingo's gamification strategy is a key factor in its success. By incorporating game-like elements such as points, badges, and leaderboards, the app transforms vocabulary acquisition into a fun and engaging experience. This gamification approach appeals to learners' innate desire for competition and achievement, motivating them to continue learning and striving for improvement. The app's adaptive nature, adjusting to each user's learning pace, further enhances the motivational aspect, ensuring that students are constantly challenged and engaged.

5. The Disadvantages of Duolingo

Based on the results, researchers found that some participants felt that using Duolingo made them feel more positive about the learning process. Additionally, researchers also found that most people find it difficult to use Duolingo when there is no internet connection. This perception is supported by Muddin (2018), who argued that since Duolingo is an online media learning, its implementation in the classroom is difficult in the absence of an internet connection. However, in addition to the advantages of Duolingo, there are also disadvantages. Duolingo works as long as you have an internet connection. In terms of mobile technology, connectivity refers to how mobile devices can connect wirelessly using various cellular and wireless access technologies such as GPS, EDGE, GPRS, GSM, 3G, 4G, WiMAX Wifi, WLAN, etc. Additionally, the Duolingo application is useless if you live in a remote area without internet access.

V CONCLUSION

The study utilized a quantitative research approach, involving a purposive sampling method to gather the perspectives of fifth-semester students at IAIN Lhokseumawe who had used the Duolingo app for English language learning. The survey and interview results indicated that students had a positive perception of using Duolingo to enhance their English vocabulary. They found it to be motivating, exciting, and effective in preventing boredom during learning sessions. This aligns with previous research that has highlighted the benefits of integrating technology, such as Duolingo, into language learning. Overall, the study suggests that Duolingo is perceived as highly beneficial for learning English vocabulary, particularly among university students. They found it to be motivating, exciting, and effective in preventing boredom during learning sessions. While some participants found it challenging to use without an internet connection. In conclusion, the Duolingo application represents a significant advancement in language learning by making education more accessible, engaging, and inclusive. Its affordability, gamified approach, extensive language offerings, data-driven improvements, and community features collectively contribute to its effectiveness as a language learning tool. As technology continues to shape the future of education, Duolingo's impact serves as a model for how digital platforms can enhance learning experiences and bridge gaps in access to knowledge. By offering a comprehensive and user-friendly platform, Duolingo plays a crucial role in the ongoing quest to promote global communication and cultural understanding.

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