

Teaching and Learning Vocabulary with Duolingo: Teacher's and Students' Perception of Senior High School 4 Tanjungpinang

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to explore the perspectives of teachers and students on the use of Duolingo for vocabulary learning. The research was conducted at Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang on November 8, 2024. The respondents of this study included one teacher and thirty students from Class Eleven Two Point Two, selected to represent perceptions and the effectiveness of using the Duolingo application. The method employed in this study was a descriptive quantitative approach. Data were collected through questionnaires. The findings revealed that some teachers and students were either unaware of the application or familiar with it but did not use it. One teacher stated that the main reason for not using the application was having never heard of Duolingo before. Additionally, sixty-six point seven percent of student respondents reported that they had never used the application, while thirty-three point three percent indicated they had used it. However, there is a notable interest among students in trying the application in the near future and a willingness to learn using Duolingo if implemented by teachers in the classroom. The conclusion of this study is that, although the teacher and the majority of student respondents had not used the application, they expressed openness and optimism about its potential.

Kata-kata kunci:

Aplikasi Duolingo;

Persepsi Guru;

Persepsi Siswa;

Kosakata.

ABSTRAK

Mengajar dan Belajar Kosakata dengan Duolingo: Persepsi Guru dan Siswa di Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang. Penelitian ini bertujuan untuk mengetahui pandangan guru dan siswa terhadap penggunaan Duolingo untuk pembelajaran kosakata. Penelitian ini dilakukan di Sekolah Menengah Atas Negeri 4 Tanjungpinang pada tanggal 8 November 2024. Responden penelitian ini adalah guru dan siswa kelas XI 2.2 yang berjumlah 30 siswa dan 1 guru, yang dipilih untuk mewakili persepsi dan keefektifan penggunaan aplikasi Duolingo. Metode yang digunakan adalah metode kuantitatif deskriptif. Data dikumpulkan melalui kuesioner. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa ada guru dan beberapa siswa yang tidak menggunakan aplikasi tersebut dan yang mengetahui aplikasi tersebut tetapi tidak menggunakannya. Seorang guru menyatakan bahwa alasan utama tidak menggunakan aplikasi tersebut karena belum pernah mendengar aplikasi Duolingo sebelumnya dan sebanyak 66,7% responden siswa menyatakan belum pernah menggunakan aplikasi tersebut, sedangkan 33,3% siswa yang sudah pernah menggunakannya, namun masih ada ketertarikan untuk mencoba aplikasi tersebut dalam waktu dekat serta kesiapan siswa untuk belajar menggunakan aplikasi Duolingo jika diterapkan oleh guru di kelas. Kesimpulan dari penelitian ini adalah meskipun guru dan sebagian besar siswa responden belum pernah menggunakan aplikasi ini, namun mereka menunjukkan sikap terbuka dan optimis terhadap potensinya.

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Introduction

Language is a conventional, phonetic means of communication. Language can be a construction or the result of human experience. Language is inseparable from life because it has a very important purpose to interact with the lives of others. Language is unique to humans and has meaning, with a clear distinction between linguistic and nonlinguistic aspects. Without language, humans cannot communicate with each other. Therefore, language is a very meaningful and important communication tool. (Maru et al., 2024).

According to Ambara (2020) In Indonesia, English is required to be taught as the primary foreign language subject to students from elementary through university education. English necessitates four language abilities: listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In addition to language skills, students also need to master four elements. These are vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. When learning English, it is crucial for students to acquire vocabulary since it impacts other skills like listening, reading, writing, and speaking. If learners do not grasp vocabulary, they will struggle to comprehend conversations, texts, and reading materials in English. Furthermore, they will struggle to communicate in English.

It is essential that students not only listen to the teacher's instructions but also interact with the learning media that has been used. Therefore, it is necessary to develop learning media that increases students' motivation to learn, especially English. The media to be created will be interactive media. Online education is a decentralized and accessible learning framework that employs teaching resources (educational tools). These tools are accessible through the internet and network-based technologies, and facilitate the process of learning and acquiring knowledge through positive interactions and actions, according to Dabbagh and Ritland (2005). There are several issues that hinder children's English language development. Low vocabulary acquisition is demonstrated during childhood. In addition, uninteresting and non-interactive learning media also have an impact on it. In fact, choosing the right media is one of the factors that support learning success, so media has a very important role in learning success.

According to Wiyati & Amelia, (2022) although vocabulary mastery is a very important aspect of learning English, in reality, there are still many students who have difficulty in mastering vocabulary. One of the main causes is that the often uninteresting and monotonous methods of teaching vocabulary in the classroom can make students lose interest and motivation. This will ultimately affect the effectiveness of learning and result in students having difficulty understanding English texts and expressing words orally. This condition shows the importance of using more interactive and innovative learning media. In this case, technology-based applications can help overcome boredom in the vocabulary learning process.

According to Ajisoko (2020) one app that is gaining popularity in language learning is Duolingo. This app is designed as a language-learning platform that can be accessed for free by anyone who wants to learn a new language. Duolingo as one of the popular language learning apps is proven to be able to provide a more interesting learning experience through the use of game-based learning methods or gamification, thus making the learning process more fun. One of the aspects that Duolingo emphasizes is vocabulary mastery, from basic vocabulary to more complex vocabulary, with a variety of exercises that include reading, writing, listening, and speaking. The current generation of students, who grew up in the digital era, tend to prefer learning methods that utilize technology, as it is considered more interesting and relevant to their lifestyle. With that, Duolingo becomes one of the tools that can be used in schools to help students in mastering vocabulary.

The integration of technology in modern education is crucial, with one aspect being language learning apps like the Duolingo Application, which captivates educators' interest. This app offers a range of features and intriguing content to enhance vocabulary. Certain earlier studies indicate that the

Duolingo app is quite effective for students in building vocabulary and other language competencies, though there remain varying opinions about its application in classroom teaching and learning practices. The perspectives of educators and learners regarding the utilization of the Duolingo App in the educational process are still mostly unexamined. Therefore, in the next section, this study aims to seek information on the views of teachers and students of SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang regarding the use of the Duolingo application in teaching and learning vocabulary.

Method

This research employed a descriptive quantitative method to explore the perceptions of teachers and students regarding the use of Duolingo to enhance vocabulary mastery. The study involved 30 students from class XI 2.2 and one teacher, selected using the Convenience Sampling technique based on accessibility and willingness to participate. Data were collected through a closed questionnaire dominated by Likert scale questions, supplemented with non-Likert questions to gather additional insights. The data were analyzed quantitatively by calculating the percentage of responses to identify patterns and trends in perceptions. $P = F/T \times 100\%$. Description: *P* (Percentage), *F* (Frequency of responses for each category), *T* (Total number of samples).

Results and Discussion

This study analyzed the perceptions of students and teachers regarding the use of the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary among class IX 2.2 students at SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang. In the first step of this survey, demographic data of the respondents were collected to provide an overview of the profile of the participating students. This information is essential for understanding the respondents' background and offering context to the overall survey results. The demographic data includes details such as age, gender, and frequency of using the Duolingo application. These factors are critical in interpreting how the students engage with the application and their learning outcomes. The data is presented in the table below to facilitate a clear and structured analysis. This table serves as the foundation for the subsequent discussion of the findings.

Table. 1. Demographic Information

Demographic Aspects	Categories	Total	Percentages
Gender	Female	16	3.3%
	Male	14	46.7%
Ever heard Duolingo	Yes	10	33.3%
	No	20	66.7%
Have used Duolingo	Yes	2	6.7%
	No	28	93.9%

In accordance with the previous Table 1, this survey involved 30 students of SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang, consisting of 53.3% female and 46.7% male. The age range of respondents was 16-18 years old, with the majority of students not familiar with the Duolingo application. This demographic information suggests that the survey results are relevant for understanding the patterns of educational technology use among secondary school students.

In accordance with the data presented in Table 1, this survey involved 30 students from SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang, comprising 53.3% female and 46.7% male respondents. The age range of the participants was between 16-18 years old, highlighting a typical demographic for secondary school students. Interestingly, the majority of the students reported being unfamiliar with the Duolingo application prior to the survey. This demographic information provides a valuable context for interpreting the survey results, particularly in understanding the initial exposure and adoption of educational technology among students. Furthermore, it underscores the potential barriers to integrating new learning tools in classrooms. These insights can guide future efforts to enhance digital literacy and improve the effectiveness of educational applications in similar settings.

Table. 2. Students have used Duolingo before

No.	Questions	SD	D	A	SA
1	The Duolingo app helps improve English vocabulary skills.	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$
2	Duolingo app is very easy to use to learn English vocabulary.	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-
3	The features of the Duolingo application are quite interesting and adequate in providing vocabulary practice.	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$
4	You feel more motivated to learn new vocabulary by using the Duolingo app.	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$
5	You prefer learning vocabulary using the Duolingo app over traditional methods (such as textbooks)	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$
6	The vocabulary taught in the Duolingo app is relevant to your daily life	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$	-	-	$\times 100 = 3.33\%$

Based on the results of data processing from 30 respondents, it was found that only 2 respondents had used the Duolingo application, while the other 28 respondents had never used the application so it was not relevant to questions related to the application. Therefore, the analysis was carried out based on data from these 2 respondents.

In the first question, "The Duolingo application helps improve vocabulary skills in English", 1 respondent strongly agreed (3.33%), and 1 other respondent disagreed (3.33%). For the second question, "Duolingo app is very easy to use in learning English vocabulary", 1 respondent agreed (3.33%), and 1 other respondent disagreed (3.33%).

Furthermore, in the third statement, "The features in the Duolingo app are quite interesting and adequate in providing vocabulary practice," 1 respondent strongly agreed (3.33%), and 1 other respondent disagreed (3.33%). The same thing happened with the fourth statement, "You feel more motivated to learn new vocabulary by using the Duolingo app," where 1 respondent strongly agreed (3.33%), and 1 other respondent disagreed (3.33%).

On the fifth statement, "You prefer learning vocabulary using the Duolingo app over traditional methods (such as textbooks)," 1 respondent strongly agreed (3.33%) and 1 strongly disagreed (3.33%). Meanwhile, for the sixth statement, "Vocabulary taught in the Duolingo app is relevant to your daily life," 1 respondent strongly agreed (3.33%) and 1 strongly disagreed (3.33%).

This result shows that there are mixed perceptions among the 2 respondents who have used Duolingo. However, it should be underlined that this data cannot be considered representative of the entire population because the number of respondents who have used the Duolingo application is very small.

Table. 3. Students who never used the Duolingo application

Categories	Percentage
Reasons for not using Duolingo	
Don't know about Duolingo App	89,3%
No Learning App required	0%
More comfortable with other Methods	7,1%
Not interested	3,6%
Interest in using Duolingo	
Yes	75%
No	25%
Willing to learn using Duolingo	
Yes	92,9%
No	7,1%

The survey results show that the reason students have not used the Duolingo application is the lack of knowledge about the Duolingo application. Of the 30 students who did not know, there were 28 students. There are 25 students who claimed not to know about the existence of the Duolingo

application with a percentage of 89.3%. Meanwhile, 2 students feel more comfortable using learning methods such as classes or books with a percentage of 7.1%. Then 1 student stated that they were not interested in using it with a percentage of 3.6%. There is no hope for students who feel that learning apps like Duolingo are not needed.

However, there is a high level of interest in trying this app. A total of 21 students with a percentage of 75% expressed interest in trying Duolingo in the near future, while 7 students with a percentage of 25% were not interested. In addition, when asked about the willingness to learn using Duolingo, the majority of 26 students, i.e. 92%, indicated their willingness, and only 2 students 7.1%, were not willing.

Furthermore, the survey results of the teacher of class XI 2.2 at SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang show that the teacher has never used the Duolingo application to teach English vocabulary. The teacher stated that the main reason for not using the app was that she had never heard about the Duolingo app before. However, the teacher also expressed a positive view on the potential of this app as a solution for students who have difficulty learning vocabulary.

Teachers believe that learning applications such as Duolingo can support vocabulary learning by providing a more interesting and interactive learning experience. In addition, teachers expressed their interest in participating in training if a training program is available that specifically discusses the use of Duolingo in the classroom learning process.

The low usage rate of Duolingo among students is one of the main obstacles. Most students (89.3%) admitted that they had never used the app because they were unaware of its existence. This factor shows that the lack of information regarding the Duolingo app is a major barrier to its use.

Despite the low usage rate, the findings related to student interest suggest there is a great opportunity for Duolingo to be widely used. A total of 75% of respondents expressed interest in trying the app in the near future, even though they had never tried it before. In addition, 92.9% of respondents stated that they are willing to use Duolingo if teachers integrate it into the learning process. These results show that teacher engagement plays an important role in increasing the use of learning technology. Based on a study, teachers play an important role in increasing students' interest in educational technology and can influence their willingness to actively participate in the learning process (Anisa Dwi Tiara et al., 2021).

As for students who have used Duolingo, their perception of the app is generally positive. They consider that the app is easy to use, the features are quite interesting, and the instructions in the app are easy to understand. This is in line with the study conducted by Awab Abdulloh in his review article, which states that gamification features in learning apps can increase students' enthusiasm and make the learning process more interesting (Abdulloh, 2021). One of them also agreed that using the Duolingo app can help them improve their vocabulary. This is also evident in the research conducted by Geminastiti Sakir & Nur Aziza Syamsuddin, that Duolingo is able to improve students' vocabulary due to several factors such as the app being suitable for their learning style, its features being easy to use, and it is suitable for indoor and outdoor learning. (Sakir & Syamsuddin, 2023).

Based on data from two students who have used Duolingo, there are some obstacles they experience. One student revealed that learning on the Duolingo application tends to be repetitive so the student feels there is no improvement in his learning. While another student stated that sometimes the Duolingo application displays many advertisements that require the student to wait to remove the advertisements, as well as frequent notifications to update the application. This shows that although Duolingo can be a useful tool in the learning process, some aspects such as annoying ads and lack of improvement in learning materials can reduce its effectiveness. This feedback is important to consider how Duolingo can be customized to improve the user experience, either through ad removal options or the development of more in-depth materials.

In the feedback from those who have used Duolingo, one respondent stated that the visuals confused him. Another respondent suggested that students should practice answering questions in Duolingo more often to avoid forgetting. This shows the importance of improving the clarity of visual content in the app and the need for features that can help students maintain and develop their skills

consistently.

Students who have never used Duolingo also gave various expectations regarding the development of the Duolingo application, such as having entertainment and games in it to avoid boredom in using the application and some students also hope that this application can educate them about new things they don't know and can help develop their English skills. In addition, there are students who want Duolingo to simplify the learning process and really help them learn, which shows that there are high expectations of the app's ability to support students' learning.

In terms of suggestions for online learning, some students expressed their views in this regard such as the expectation that the learning process should be explained in more detail and that the instructor should have a good understanding of the field being taught before providing the material. This suggests that while apps like Duolingo have potential, limitations in online communication and teaching may hinder their effectiveness.

Overall, the findings suggest that the use of the Duolingo application at SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang has the potential to support the improvement of students' vocabulary skills. However, effective implementation requires efforts from the school and teachers in raising awareness and training regarding the use of this application. With the right steps, Duolingo can become one of the new strategies in English learning at school. In addition, there are students who prefer face-to-face learning because they feel that they are not familiar with the Duolingo app, not all students can understand online lessons. Some students also expressed the need for clearer listening audio quality, highlighting the importance of improving the quality of audio material in the app to support more effective learning.

In addition, the teachers' perception of the use of Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary at SMAN 4 Tanjungpinang was also explained. Based on the data obtained, one of the teachers gave his perspective on the use of Duolingo in the teaching context. Although this teacher had never heard of or used Duolingo before, the response was very positive regarding the potential of this application in improving the quality of learning, especially for students. This teacher stated that Duolingo can be an effective and engaging tool for language teaching as it incorporates technology-based learning that is fun and interactive.

Conclusion

From the results found and explained by the researcher, it can be concluded that students who have used the Duolingo application have a positive perception of this application. They find it helpful in learning new vocabulary in a more interesting and interactive way than traditional methods. The vocabulary taught in the app is also considered relevant to daily life, thus supporting a more practical understanding. Although teachers and most of the student respondents have never used this app, they show an open and optimistic attitude towards its potential. Teachers believe that apps like Duolingo can be a solution to help students who have difficulties in learning English, especially vocabulary. It was then found that one of the main obstacles is the lack of information and training on the use of these apps among teachers. Therefore, it is recommended that schools and app developers provide more extensive training and socialization to ensure the app can be used optimally by all parties involved.

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