

## **DUOLINGO: AN ENCHANTING APPLICATION TO LEARN ENGLISH FOR COLLEGE STUDENTS**

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### **Abstract**

Technology in learning is increasingly used as a medium, especially in learning English. This rapid development has also significantly impacted the gamification concept, which has begun to penetrate digitally. Duolingo, the game-based world's wildly popular language-learning app, is one of those impacts. This paper aims to find out the use of Duolingo in learning English by college students. The method of this study is qualitative, with a questionnaire as the instrument to collect the data. The participants are students from several universities in Indonesia. The study reveals that, Duolingo is considered an application that greatly supports college students in learning English and is an application that has effective innovation amid the rapid development of technology.

**Keywords:** Duolingo, language, learning, media

### **Introduction**

Media is something that connects between the source and the receiver. Three kinds of media are visual, audio, and video (Indrasari, Novita, & Megawati, 2018; Megawati, 2018). Media has a role as a source of student learning to get information from the teacher. Media is a means of guidance for teachers to achieve quality learning objectives and increase student motivation in Learning. Media is an instrument that converts information from resources (Hikmah, 2019). Based on this definition, learning media is something that can channel learning material so that it can stimulate students' interests and thoughts.

Learning media is a tool or can also be called a complement used by teachers in communicating with students. The tool is called educational media, while communication is the delivery system. Learning media helps learners construct knowledge in various institutions providing world education. Technology makes the learning process more fun and different, both different in learning the same thing but in a new way (Prayudi et al., 2021). When teaching English, interesting technology is needed as a means of learning because technological developments make the world of education have to adapt along with the development of technology.



Technology in education is believed to be effectively used in learning and engaging students (Picton, 2019). Every day everyone involves in technology activities, especially in helping to learn languages and knowledge. Most of our reading and writing is accessed through technology from websites, blogs, and social media. Technology facilitates the learning process, besides making it easier for someone to dig deeper so as not to focus on just one thing. Technology makes a person not bored or monotonous when learning because information delivery through technology looks more sophisticated and varied.

Technology plays an important role in improving learning techniques and methods. One method is to use smartphone apps. Tons of online language-learning apps can be downloaded on smartphones. The most popular application is Duolingo. Duolingo is a free online language learning program that helps users learn some languages using the web and applications (Garcia, 2013). Duolingo was developed by Luis von Ahn, Ph.D., and Severin Hacker, Ph.D., in November 2011. Its practical and interesting operation makes learners more interested in using it. Game-based Learning is the concept of this application. According to Purwanto and Syafrayadin (2023), 80 percent of Duolingo's operation is transcribing, pronunciation, and translation. The effectiveness of Duolingo has also been recognized by various previous studies.

According to White (2017), Duolingo is a web-based learning program that allows everyone to participate in inexpensive language instruction since they interact in a foreign language. In addition, the interesting game-based concept also makes learners feel at home to learn foreign languages with this application. Tahir and Wang (2017), Stated that games that involve lesson goals have the potential to make learning more engaging, intriguing, exciting, and focused on learners, hence increasing its effectiveness. Duolingo has many features that include images and sounds that are very interesting and seem fresh. In addition, the simple and elegant interface is also one of the conveniences of using this application. Finally, this study aims to determine the college students' perceptions of the Duolingo application in learning English.

### ***Duolingo***

Increasingly sophisticated technology allows us to learn anywhere and anytime. We do not need to go to the course because we can learn languages through our devices online. Many language learning apps are available online; one of the most popular is Duolingo. Duolingo is a language learning software that can be accessed via PCs, gadgets, etc., for free, which provides courses in more than 23 languages and has around 200 million users (Jašková, 2014). This application is a game-based platform intended for learning various languages. Krashen (2014) explains Duolingo as a website-based software that guides students through various translation-based challenges. Duolingo can be used on mobile or computer devices. This application can be operated on Android, iOS, Windows, and the web.

English language skills, including listening, speaking, reading, and writing, are all taught in the Duolingo system (Fibula, 2020). Learners can choose their preferred level based on their pre-test when signing up for Duolingo (Eqbali, 2017). The Duolingo application is very flexible because it can be accessed anywhere and anytime and used outdoors and indoors (Astarilla, 2018). This Duolingo application is easy and simple without registration, like a course, so every learner can

immediately learn lessons by clicking Start (Nushi & Eqbali, 2017).

Duolingo provides several types of exercises for learners stated by Nushi & Eqbali (2017). The first is the translation exercise which means that in this exercise students or learners translate their knowledge into the language they want to learn and vice versa. The second exercise or practice is matching. In this practice, Duolingo provides a picture and the learners have to match the picture with the word provided or vice versa. The pairing exercise is the third exercise that Nushi and Eqbali mentioned in their study. In the pairing exercise, an equal number of words from two languages are provided, and learners must pair them appropriately. The fourth is listening practice which means in this practice, Duolingo plays a short phrase in the language you want to learn, and the learner has to type the phrase correctly. The fifth exercise is speaking where the learners listen to phrases from the learned language and then speak what has been heard.

Besides all those practices, Duolingo also provides a feature to go back to any lesson level learners want, even after they have answered all levels correctly (Nushi & Eqbali, 2017). Besides that, Nushi and Eqbali (2017) also explain that grammar is not available in Duolingo app as it only enhances language learning targets with vocabulary-focused exercises. However, grammar learning is still available in this app by simply indicating whether the learner's answer is correct or incorrect after answering.

### ***Learning English***

In Indonesia, English is a foreign language and a global language. English is very important because it can provide access to learners to be competent in their future careers. English can be linked to the global events of globalization happening today. As time goes by, more and more people start to master English, which becomes an important factor in getting a job and achieving success (Andayani, 2022).

Language is also referred to as a source of communication (Dutta, 2020; Grieve, 2015). Students who can communicate well in a language, especially English, will gain many advantages, not only advancement in science but also in politics, even daily life. Learning English provides opportunities for cultural exchange and understanding. As English is spoken in many countries worldwide, learning English can connect individuals with people from different backgrounds and provide opportunities to learn about diverse cultures. This shows that it is very important for us to have a strong command of English to make professional efforts to get good academic results.

There are four English skills that students must master, namely speaking, writing, listening, and reading skills. Speaking is divided into accuracy and fluency categories (Parmawati & Inayah, 2019). In this case, someone who speaks English must use the right vocabulary and pronunciation. The purpose of learning sentence accuracy is to get used to the correct pronunciation or sentence structure. While fluency is fluency in intonation pronunciation, organizing the flow of conversation so that a person can express or convey sentences with the correct intonation. According to Morgan (2019), speaking is important because it is an asset to becoming a professional in various fields. Then, writing is a skill that involves creativity (Wardiani et al., 2021). English language skills are writing. Writing is one of the important skills to have and learn because it is a productive skill with the

process of using symbols, such as the alphabet, and punctuation to communicate something with good sentences in a paragraph. Writing is a form of communication to share ideas, feelings, and thoughts. Writing is not only about the correct use of symbols but also about communicating the writer's ideas to the reader. Based on the statements above, it can be concluded that writing is basic knowledge of what is in the mind and then poured into a form of writing. In this case, knowledge is not only in the form of words but can also be everything in the mind. One's knowledge can be seen when it is poured into writing. Listening, learning to listen will significantly improve our speaking skills (Ningrum, 2022). Listening is one of the skills that someone must learn. For example, due to a lack of listening skills, it will cause the listener not to be able to understand what is conveyed to the speaker. Listening skills are an activity where a person uses a listening device, the ear, to get information. This is an interactive process in which actively receives and organizes meaning and then responds to oral messages in which the listener uses knowledge to understand the message. Listening is also the basis for the development of all skills. It is the language capital or the main key to receiving messages effectively, a combination of hearing what others say and psychological involvement with the person speaking. Listening is about listening to the other person and understanding what someone is saying. If someone knows what the speaker is saying, someone will respond with a verbal or non-verbal response. In every activity, a person cannot be separated from the conversation. When they have a conversation, they are talking and listening. In education, it is not surprising that listening skills are equivalent to speaking skills. When students are in class, they will listen to the material delivered by the teacher. Good listening skills are a means to succeed in communication, especially in the process of learning languages, especially English.

And the last is Reading is one of the four skills that students must master. Reading skills help someone think critically and solve problems because reading a lot gives a person a lot of knowledge (Ningsih et al., 2019). Improving reading skills can positively impact aspects of one's performance. Reading can also increase knowledge (Fitri & Zainil, 2018). Learning English is not something new, especially for students. Reading is an activity of understanding the text being read and then connecting it with their previous knowledge. The activity is carried out because the reader wants to get information from the text. When doing the reading process, readers connect the words they read in written form so that at the end of the reading session they know what conclusions from the reading they have read. Based on the above statement, it can be concluded that reading is one of the exercises dominated by the eyes and brain in the hope of getting the message conveyed by the author. We can do reading skills anywhere and anytime. Reading has a purpose: to understand a text's content. Readers usually use their way to get the information they expect. Some of them read very slowly and carefully when reading. Meanwhile, some of them read quickly. It is based on what they like to do in reading for pleasure.

Based on the previous research by Nurshim (2022), that Duolingo is very helpful in learning vocabulary because this application is easy to use, interesting, fun, and free without ads. However, Duolingo requires an internet connection to access the materials.

## Method

The method used in the research is descriptive qualitative. Qualitative research focuses on interpretive and naturalistic, which is an approach to the subject matter of language (Aspers, 2019). Qualitative descriptive research has been used in various fields, including education. The participants in this research are students from various universities in Indonesia who use Duolingo as their learning media. A total of 50 participants have filled out questionnaires for this study. The instrument used to obtain research data on student perceptions of using the Duolingo application is a questionnaire. The questionnaire was adopted from previous relevant studies. The questionnaire provided in the form of questions consisting of four categories: regarding efficient methods in using Duolingo (Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023), language skill practice (Inayah et al., 2020), Duolingo's disadvantages (Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023), and Duolingo's benefits (Docan-morgan & Nelson, 2015; Purwanto & Syafryadin, 2023).

## Findings and Discussion

### Findings

There are 15 questions in the questionnaire in the form with four answers namely, strongly agree, agree, disagree, and strongly disagree. The participants can choose 'strongly agree or agree if they agree and 'disagree or strongly disagree' if they don't agree. There are 4 categories to identify what the student's perception of the Duolingo application is, it can be positive and it can also be negative, the results from the questionnaire can be seen in the table below:

Table 1. Efficient method in using Duolingo

Efficient method in using Duolingo	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Duolingo is easy to use in learning English.	50	78%	18%	0%	4%	100%
Duolingo can be accessed anywhere and anytime to learn English.	50	84%	12%	0%	4%	100%
The app helps me to arrange sentences in English.	50	54%	40%	2%	4%	100%

Table 1 shows that Duolingo is very efficient in learning English. 78% of participants strongly agree that Duolingo is easy to use, and 18% agree. In the second statement, 84% of respondents strongly agreed that Duolingo can be accessed anywhere and anytime to learn English. Then, in the third statement, 54% of respondents thought that the app helps me to organize sentences in English.

Table 2. Language skill practice

Language Skill Practice	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I can increase my vocabularies using Duolingo	50	74%	22%	2%	2%	100%
I can improve listening using Duolingo.	50	66%	28%	4%	2%	100%
I can improve reading using Duolingo	50	72%	20%	4%	4%	100%
I can practice translating words and	50	78%	14%	6%	2%	100%

sentences using Duolingo.						
I can learn grammar or language structure using Duolingo.	50	52%	44%	2%	2%	100%

Table 2 shows that Duolingo is very helpful in improving language skill practice. 74% of participants strongly agreed that Duolingo could increase vocabulary using Duolingo. In the second statement, 66% of respondents strongly agreed that Duolingo could improve listening skills. In the third statement, 72% of participants strongly agreed that Duolingo could improve one's reading skills. Then, in the fourth statement, 78% of dominant respondents strongly agreed that Duolingo could help translate English. And in the last statement, 52% of respondents strongly agreed that Duolingo could learn grammar and language structure.

Table 3. Students' responses about Duolingo

Duolingo Responses About Duolingo	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
Duolingo is less useful for learning in the classroom	50	10%	22%	50%	18%	100%
The activities on the app are not interesting.	50	8%	6%	50%	36%	100%
Duolingo in learning English is boring.	50	8%	4%	44%	44%	100%

In the third table, the researchers found that many participants disagreed with the statements given. According to the results, 50% of respondents disagree that Duolingo is less useful for classroom learning. In the second statement, 50% of respondents disagree that the activities in Duolingo are not interesting, and 36% strongly disagree. This means that the activities in the Duolingo app are interesting. In the third statement, 44% of respondents disagreed that Duolingo is boring, and another 44% strongly disagreed about this statement, indicating that learning using Duolingo is not boring.

Table 4. Duolingo's benefit

Language Skill Practice	N	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree	Total
I am interested in learning to use Duolingo, because it makes it easier for me to understand the meaning of English vocabulary properly	50	58%	36%	4%	2%	100%
Learning using Duolingo gives me the opportunity to be more active in Learning.	50	56%	36%	6%	2%	100%
Duolingo gives me space to be more active and skilled in using English.	50	54%	40%	2%	4%	100%
The Duolingo app is a very innovative for learning English.	50	62%	32%	2%	4%	100%

In the fourth table, the results show that Duolingo is useful in learning English. 58% of respondents strongly agree, and 36% agree that Duolingo is interesting because it is very easy to understand vocabulary. In the second statement, students

mostly agreed that Learning using Duolingo allows them to be more active in Learning, with a percentage of 56% strongly agreeing and 36% agreeing. In the third statement, 54% of respondents stated that Duolingo gives them space to be more active and skilled in using English, and the other 40% agreed. Then, in the fourth statement, 62% of students strongly agreed that the Duolingo app is very innovative for learning English, and 32% agreed.

### ***Discussion***

The results of the questionnaire showed that students gave a positive response to the Duolingo application. According to Astarilla (2018) findings, that the Duolingo application is very flexible because it can be accessed anywhere and anytime and used outdoors and indoors. The results of the efficient method of using Duolingo showed that participants gave the perception that using Duolingo was an efficient medium and helped students in improving students ability to compose English sentences. Duolingo allows users to use it anywhere and anytime, even though they are doing outside activities. This perception is supported by the opinion (Purwanto & Syafrudin, 2023) that Duolingo is a modern game media that is very effective for learning English. This effectiveness helps participants in learning English.

In the results of the questionnaire table from language skill practice, the researcher found that using Duolingo helps students improve their language skills. Besides that, Duolingo also helps improve other language skills such as listening, reading, and grammar and provides opportunities to increase English vocabulary further. According to and stated Pham (2022), this perception supports Duolingo's ability to improve English language skills, especially expanding vocabulary, and most users can operate optimally.

Then students' perception of Duolingo, the participants gave positive responses to the use of Duolingo. The app is considered not boring to use and useful for classroom learning. Duolingo is also an app with interesting activities to participate in. Inayah et al. (2020) also stated that because they can use Duolingo outside of class and learn independently, students are interested in it. This means that students can get interesting features and an independent time and place to learn with the application.

The results of Duolingo's benefits also show that students are enthusiastic about using Duolingo, as seen from the percentage in Table 4, namely the benefits of Duolingo. Duolingo is considered very useful in English learning activities. Students stated that they were more active and freer in using this application. In the table results, it can also be concluded that Duolingo is an innovative application in facilitating its users in learning languages.

Based on these results, Duolingo is very useful for students who are learning English. Overall, students positively responded to the use of Duolingo from the aspects of effectiveness, improvement of language skills, and usefulness. Duolingo is a modern application that has many benefits and provides facilities for mastering the English language (Habibie, 2020). Duolingo shows effectiveness as an English learning media seen from the ease of operation, its availability to be accessed anywhere and anytime, and improving students' ability to compose English sentences.

## Conclusion

This study aims to determine students' perceptions of using the Duolingo application, which is used as a medium for learning English. This study concludes Duolingo is an effective learning media because its features provide convenience for users and can be accessed anywhere at any time. The conveniences make students easy to improve 4 English language skills, namely, reading, listening, speaking, writing, and make it easy to increase their vocabulary. Interesting and not boring features are also factoring in students using Duolingo as their learning media. Technology that is very rapid in its development makes Duolingo one of the innovations considered effective in language learning.

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