

## ESP LEARNERS' PERCEPTIONS ON USING DUOLINGO

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### ABSTRACT

The implementation of technology in education was really helpful. The development of technology has increased the number of intriguing and fresh online resources for English learning. The Duolingo app makes learning languages, particularly English, simple, convenient, and efficient. The presence of Duolingo app offered ESP learners to learn basic English independently. There were several previous researches which explore more about the use of Duolingo for learning language, particularly English. Therefore the aim of this research was to see and analyze ESP learners' opinion on the implementation of Duolingo in order to strengthen their basic English. This was a qualitative research which took sixtyone ESP learners as the informants. The data of this study was ESP learners answers on the use of Duolingo. The data were gained by distributing an online and open ended questionnaires to ESP learners who took randomly. The findings were ESP learners enjoyed learning basic English through the exercised offered by Duolingo. Because its offering to practice English skills in daily. Then, they can learn English as if they learn with the real native speakers. The Duolingo program allows students to acquire vocabulary in English, which includes in several features such as gamification.

**Keywords:** *Duolingo, ESP learners, perception*

### 1. INTRODUCTION

Duolingo is a popular language-learning platform and mobile app that offers free and paid language courses (Purwanto, 2023). It was developed by Luis von Ahn and Severin Hacker and was launched in 2012. Duolingo's primary goal is to make language learning accessible to people around the world. Duolingo includes some key features such as 1) gamified learning which uses a gamified approach to language learning, turning lessons and exercises into fun and interactive activities. Learners earn points, gain virtual rewards, and progress through levels as they complete lessons, 2) Multiple Languages which offers courses in a wide variety of languages, making it suitable for learners interested in learning popular languages like Spanish, French, German, and English, as well as less common languages, 3) Bite-sized Lessons which are designed to be short and manageable, allowing users to practice their language skills in small increments, 4) Adaptive Learning which the platform adapts to a user's learning pace and proficiency level. It offers personalized exercises and reviews to help learners improve their weaknesses, 5) Duolingo Plus which offers a premium subscription called Duolingo Plus, which provides an ad-free experience, offline access, and other additional features. 6) Community Features which users can connect with friends, join clubs, and compete with each other on leaderboards, adding a social element to the learning process. 7) Certification which offers language proficiency certification for some languages, which can be used for job applications or educational purposes (Freeman et al., 2023). Duolingo has gained popularity due to its user-friendly interface, accessibility, and the fact that it offers language learning for free (Nushi & Eqbali, 2017). While it may not replace traditional language education entirely, it can be a valuable tool for beginners and intermediate learners looking to build or improve their language skills, especially their vocabulary (Abdulloh, 2021).

ESP is learning English for specific needs which reflecting the real life learning situation, the analysis has made to give the professional the similar condition and situation of the specific working that learners interested in (Khalik, 2014). ESP was designed based on the assessments of the importance English in particular needs and purposes. Hence, learning ESP was different from EGP (English for General Purposes). ESP offers learners to learn English skills practice based on

particular domain (Fitria, 2020), however learners need to sharpen their vocabulary, language structure and grammar in basic forms (H Haratikka & Arseto, 2021) in order to support the specific needs. Therefore, to sharpen those, learners can learn independently by utilizing Duolingo. According to Nguy Van (2023) the presence of technology changed the way of learning and teaching process. The use of technology contribute a good nuances in order to support English learning especially for ESP learners. It will improve teaching and learning process because the pedagogical strategies change. Thus, learning ESP would be more efficiently for learners since English is categorized as a foreign language in Indonesia. English is considered a foreign language in Indonesia, however, it is widely taught and used for various purposes, it is not one of the country's official languages. Bahasa Indonesia is the official language of Indonesia and serves as the lingua franca for communication among the diverse population of the country (Ridwan, 2018).

English is taught as a second language in Indonesian schools, and its use is often associated with education, business, tourism, and international interactions (Alrajafi, 2021). Despite its widespread use, English remains a foreign language in the sense that it is not the native or official language of the country. Bahasa Indonesia holds the primary position in terms of official status and day-to-day communication for the majority of Indonesians, especially in STIE Bina Karya. In fact, students' General English mastery were still lack. Thus, students' English proficiency were in low categorized there. It proved through the high level of speaking anxiety whenever they were challenged to use English for classroom activities such as presenting their report/ assignments (Sari & Iswahyuni, 2019) or answering questions given by the lecture (Haya Haratikka & Sony, 2022). In order to increase students' English competence which supports English for Specific Purposes (Ghafar, 2022), the lecturer obligated the students to access Duolingo started from the easy/beginner level until what level she or he can finish along that semester. The utilizing of Duolingo can not be separated with the use of smartphones among students. It became a ubiquitous learning way. They can utilize it outside the classroom without any lecture. So, the noisy sounds will not distrub anyone.

Improving these English language skills can enhance one's ability to communicate effectively in both personal and professional settings (Tridinanti, 2018). Depending on learners' goals and needs, learners may focus on developing specific English skills to achieve proficiency in various aspects of the language. Improving English skills, like any language proficiency, requires consistent effort, practice, and a structured approach (Kim et al., 2019). There are some effective strategies to increase English skills, such as 1) Immersive Environment: Surround yourself with the English language as much as possible. Watch English-language movies, TV shows, and videos, listen to English music and podcasts, and read English books, newspapers, and magazines. Exposure to the language is crucial for improvement, 2) Take English courses or enroll in English language courses, whether in a traditional classroom setting or online. These courses can provide structured learning, grammar lessons, and opportunities for practice and feedback, 3) Practice regularly is key to improvement. Dedicate time each day to practicing different skills, such as reading, writing, speaking, and listening. Set aside time for vocabulary and grammar exercises. 4) Conversation Partners which find native English speakers or language exchange partners to practice speaking and listening with. Engaging in real conversations is one of the most effective ways to improve fluency. 5) Grammar and vocabulary drills which regularly review and practice English grammar rules and expand larners' vocabulary. There are many books, websites, and apps designed for this purpose, 6) Engage in online communities or join English-language forums, social media groups, or language learning communities. Participating in discussions and interacting with others can help learners improve their written communication skills. 7) Language Apps and resources which utilize language learning apps and websites like Duolingo, Memrise, Babbel, or Rosetta Stone. These platforms offer interactive exercises and lessons. In this research, the researchers went deeper through the use of Duolingo application in order to support ESP learners basic English proficiency in STIE Bina Karya English. Therefore, this research problem was

formulated into: What are learners' perception in utilizing Duolingo enhancing their English proficiency?

## 2. IMPLEMENTATION METHOD

This was a qualitative research. Descriptive qualitative approach was used in education field more frequently (Loeb et al., 2017). To gain the data, this study was distributed open-ended online questionnaires to get informants' opinion after utilizing Duolingo. The questions were formed to determine how ESP learners feel regarding to the use of Duolingo apps to improve their basic English proficiency. This study was conducted to learners of English for Specific Purposes in STIE Bina Karya Tebing Tinggi as the informants. This research took sixty one informants randomly who were in ESP class. Then, the collected data were analyzed through thematic analysis. Thematic analysis were conducted through several steps: first, getting familiar with the data, next, generate initial codes, then, discover the theme, after that review and check the theme, then, define and name the theme, and the last, report the final data (Nowell et al., 2017).

## 3. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

This part was going to describe the research findings explanations. These parts explained the duration of accessing Duolingo per day, the interesting thing from accessing Duolingo, effectiveness of Duolingo, the most favorite skill offered by Duolingo, and the most favorite lesson offered by Duolingo. To make the informants easier to understand how to answer, questionnaires were formulated in Bahasa Indonesia. There were five key aspects of ESP Learners' interpretations when utilizing Duolingo as an instrument in order to learn basic English independently. Table 1 described the duration of accessing Duolingo per day.

Table 1. The Duration of Accessing Duolingo per Day

No	Duration (in minute)	Number of informants
1	2,5 – 5 minutes	10 informants
2	6 – 15 minutes	30 informants
3	16 – 25 minutes	13 informants
4	26 – 35 minutes	8 informants

Source: informants (2023)

The word duration here showed how long learners intencity attracted by the learning process using Duolingo per day. As seen on table 1, there were thirty informants who access Duolingo between six to fifteen minutes. This was the most duration which the informants tend to access Duolingo. Then, there were thirteen informants who accessed Duolingo between sixteen to twenty five minutes. Besides, there were ten informants who access Duolingo between two and half minutes to five minutes. Meanwhile, there were eight informants who tend to access Duolingo between twentysix to thirtyfive minutes. However, this was the long duration but only less informants who accessed Duolingo in it. In fact, the informants did not access Duolingo everyday due to the assignments' deadline from other lectures. This was the reason why the informants access Duolingo took longer duration in one day so they can achieve the last stage of Duolingo they have to finish. They could access it twice or three times a week as long as the notification they got was still save their achievements before (not yet frozen automatically by the system). Table 2 described the number of informants who access Duolingo everyday.

Table 2. Informants' Daily Accessibility

No	Informants' Daily Accessibility	Number of Informants
1	Yes	23 informants
2	No	38 informants

Users need to access Duolingo as they daily exercises (Utami, 2020) (no skip) or their last achievement scores will be frozen automatically when they ignore it more than a week or their last series of acquisition values will not be added at the next day . Table 2 showed whether the informants access Duolingo everyday or not. It explained that not all informants access Duolingo everyday since they have to make their assignments from other lectures. As the result, they spent more time at the next day when they access it. There were twenty three informants who accessed Duolingo everyday. And there were thirty eight informants who did not access Duolingo everyday. They accessed it when they have sparetime and possible to access it. Still, they enjoy learning through Duolingo interesting features. Table 3 described users' opinion on the interesting thing offered by Duolingo.

Table 3. The Interesting Thing of Duolingo

No	The Interesting Thing from Duolingo	Number of Informants
1	Learn English become simpler through simple words	10
2	Having dictation and reading story book which increase English conversation	2
3	Learning by playing	6
4	It's fun to learn	7
5	Easy to memorize/learn English vocabulary	19
6	Language structure	3
7	English grammar	3
8	Typing/writing more to understand English	2
9	Listen more	2
10	Pronunciation	2
11	Easy to learn by beginner, in addition it offers league internationally and domestically	3
12	Offering many languages to learn	1
13	Refresh a memory of English	1

Duolingo was equipped with several features which learning English was in form of gamification. From sixty one answers from the informants, the researchers classified them into thirteen categories. The most answers showed that Duolingo offered learners to learn and memorize English vocabulary. There were nineteen answers which told that Duolingo makes learners easy to learn and memorize English vocabulary. This finding was similar to Ajisoko (2020) that Duolingo apps improved university students' vocabulary. All informants in this research agreed that Duolingo helps them memorizing English vocabulary.

Table 4. The most favourite skill in Duolingo

No	Skills	Number of Informants
1	Speaking	23 informants
2	Listening	14 informants
3	Writing	12 informants
4	Reading	12 informants

Since Duolingo was provided by gamification features, learners could experiences their English learning process through playing with their smartphones. Table 4 showed informants prefer to train their speaking skill through Duolingo. Learners' speaking skill was trained more within Duolingo. Duolingo speaking part required learners to copy and repeat what the native speaker



says. After listening to native speaker, learners will copy and repeat the same sound after that. Then, the learners also asked to pronounce the English words correctly. This model enable learners to learn how to speak and listen the correct English words at the same time. This findings were supported by previous research by KARMIATI & Kurniawati (2018) which found that Duolingo improve students' listening ability. Duolingo consists of several sections per unit. There were speaking, listening, dictation, exercices in many forms, writing or typing, and many more. Table 5 described some favourable sections in Duolingo.

Table 5. Duolingo's Section that Attract Informants more

No	The Attractive Duolingo's Section	Numbers of Informants
1	Speaking	8 informants
2	Reading story book	7 informants
3	Unit 3 (animal, time, place, plural)	5 informants
4	Unit 1 (basic phrase, basic sentence)	6 informants
5	Typing/writing	10 informants
6	Listening	8 informants
7	All section	3 informants
8	unit 10 (things, people, comunity)	1 informants
9	Unit 5 (clothes, present tense)	2 informants
10	Sentence building	1 informants
11	League	2 informants
12	Conversation	2 informants
13	Fill the missing word	1 informants
14	Unit 9 (color)	1 informants
15	Translation	1 informants
16	Matching	1 informants
17	challenge	1 informants
18	Unit 2 (common phrase, food)	1 informants

Table 5 showed several sections in Duolingo that attract the informants most. Duolingo engaged learners to learn independently using easy things surround us as the material such as animal, time, place, things, people, comunity, clothes, color, and food. Learning English will be more enjoyable when learners practice the tasks by exercising the skills such as speaking, reading, writing, and listening directly within the simple exercises such as matching, fill the missing words, translation, sentence building, and conversation. Learners enjoy more English learning when they learn experience the real English with the native speaker in Duolingo. This finding was similar to previous research done by Camille Davalos Perez (2020) which found that due to its emphasis on facilitating simple information access and mobility, mobile-based language learning has a positive effect on language education. Students who use this application can use the internet to learn the target language whenever and wherever they want. Moreover, Doulingo challenged users to have competition among Duolingo users. They can see whose achievements was the highest and who was the best among them. This was kind of motivation to be better in learning process. According to (Legaki et al., 2020), Gamification is being used more and more in educational settings to boost student enthusiasm and, as a result, learning outcomes.

#### 4. DISCUSSION

Based on the obtained data, the researchers found that Duolingo offered users to practice their English skills obiqituously. There were several reasons why Duolingo is suitable for Indonesian students. First, duolingo is accessible. Duolingo is easily access to anyone with a smartphone or computer. It has a user-friendly interface that makes it easy for people of all ages

and backgrounds to start learning a new language. After that, Duolingo was compiled with gamification. Duolingo employs gamification techniques, making language learning feel more like a game. Users earn points, unlock achievements, and compete with friends, which can be motivating and fun. Then, its language varieties. Duolingo offers courses in a wide range of languages, including less commonly taught languages, which can be a significant advantage for learners. So learners can learn through self-taught. Next, is its convenience. Learning on Duolingo is convenient because users can study at their own pace and on their schedule. This flexibility is especially appealing for busy individuals. And Duolingo is affordable. Duolingo offers a free version with ads, and a paid version called Duolingo Plus. This cost-effective approach means that users can access quality language instruction without breaking the bank.

Moreover, Duolingo can help increase a user's vocabulary in a foreign language. Duolingo is a popular language learning app that offers a gamified approach to language acquisition. Duolingo has some methods to improve vocabulary. Duolingo offers lessons that are well-organized and cover a range of language-learning topics, including vocabulary. Each lesson gradually and methodically teaches new words and phrases. The software uses spaced repetition techniques, which involve revisiting words and phrases in subsequent classes to help students learn and retain new information. Learning vocabulary in context on Duolingo makes it simpler to comprehend how words are used in everyday circumstances. Better retention and comprehension may result from this. Duolingo provides audio workouts to help users improve their pronunciation. This improves verbal comprehension and communication skills in addition to vocabulary. However, it's important to note that while Duolingo can be a valuable tool for language learning and vocabulary expansion, it may not be sufficient as the sole method of language acquisition. Effective language learning typically involves a combination of resources and activities, including speaking with native speakers, reading books and articles, and watching or listening to content in the target language. So, while Duolingo can certainly help increase vocabulary, it's often best used in conjunction with other language learning methods to achieve a well-rounded language proficiency.

The Duolingo program is incredibly innovative for learning English, and many students were agree when asked whether using the Duolingo program was an efficient way to learn English. When using the Duolingo app, students are inspired and eager to learn English. The Duolingo application is more convenient to use anywhere and at any time. These findings show that students were enthusiastic about using the Duolingo app and value the convenience and adaptability it offers. These findings support earlier research on the benefits of mobile language learning. The latest findings are in line with several earlier research on mobile-assisted language learning that included students (Astarilla, 2018).

## 5. CONCLUSION

Duolingo offered users to learn English independently through technology. Although reading, writing, speaking, and listening are important components of language, this research showed that combined skills can better represent how a language is used in real life. Effective use of language requires several skills simultaneously. Learning English will be memorable and full of excitement when learners experience the learning process directly. Learning by doing is an excitement process to learn basic English for ESP learners. Duolingo popularity among students is undeniable because of its accessibility, gamification, variety of languages, convenience, low cost. It's important to note that while Duolingo can be a valuable tool for language acquisition, it should ideally be used in conjunction with other resources to achieve fluency. Developing speaking and listening skills, as well as gaining cultural context and real-life application of the language, may require additional resources and experiences. Nonetheless, Duolingo can be an effective and convenient starting point for Indonesian students looking to improve their English or learn other languages..

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