

APPLYING DUOLINGO APPLICATION TO IMPROVE YOUNG LEARNERS' ENGLISH VOCABULARY: STUDENTS' PERCEPTION IN INDONESIA

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ABSTRACT

This study aims to find out the perceptions of young students about using the Duolingo application to increase their English vocabulary. The subjects or respondents in this study were students in one of the elementary schools in Banyuwangi, totaling 17 students. The method used in this research is qualitative. Data collection procedures using questionnaires and interviews. Researchers chose 17 students to collect data through a questionnaire. Based on the results of the questionnaire statements number 1 to 17 students gave positive statements about Young learners' perceptions of the Duolingo application because the results of the combined form data strongly agree (5) and agree (4) show results of more than 50%. Researchers chose 10 students to collect data through interviews. The results of the interview analysis of 10 participants showed that their perception of the Duolingo application for learning English was very positive. Each stated that the Duolingo app was useful to them. Most of the participants stated that the Duolingo application was very fun and easy to use as a medium for learning English vocabulary for young learners. Some students like speaking and story tasks in the Duolingo application. Based on the research results with data through questionnaires and interviews, it shows that young learners agree that the Duolingo application can add to their vocabulary.

Keywords: Young Learner, Perception, English Vocabulary, Duolingo Application.

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INTRODUCTION

English is an international language used to communicate between various countries around the world. for this reason, English needs to be taught from an early age among children, moreover many children are still weak in English. Many children whose knowledge of English is still lacking even though it has been taught since first grade in elementary school, they think that English is difficult to learn. Improving English skills can be started with the smallest thing, namely vocabulary. Having a lot of English vocabulary will make it easier to improve children's learning abilities.

Jumariati (2010) said that student will improve much if they learn more words. Without mastering the vocabulary of the target language, it will be difficult for learners to understand the language where they need to hold an oral or written conversation, to comprehend a text, even to compose a text.

Based on observations and interviews, the teacher said that vocabulary was something that was difficult for students to understand. When the researcher observes to class, teacher only learns in the usual way, such as writing material on the blackboard, writing questions and answering questions, and this method is relatively monotonous for elementary school students.

Copland (2013) stated that "children are more interested in learning language in an environment that is attractive and tends to be informal". One of the attractive and informal ways of learning English is through the media of educational games through smartphone or mobile phones. As mobile phones are practically ubiquitous (Burston, 2014), people now have smartphones for everyday tasks and are used by people of all ages, including with children in education. However, the use of technology in teaching and learning processes is still lacking despite its potential in helping students to develop their skills and learn new vocabulary from foreign languages, especially English.

Connolly et al. (2012) proposed an idea for educators to integrate smartphones as a tool in learning foreign languages by using gamification. It is the use of game-like elements into non-game contexts to enhance user engagement and improve user experiences (Gianneto et al, 2013). The integration of gamification in the educational system aims to render the learning process more captivating and enjoyable for students. Investigations have widely undertaken concerning the use of technology for learning, primarily on gamification's effects (Bal & Bicen, 2017).

Munday (2017) argues that this application has the aim to teach vocabulary and grammar, even this application present combined activity between the skills in word pronunciation and translation and provides the activity of recognizing word from the picture, writing down what is heard, and others.

According to Normadewi (2020), the definition of perception is an activity involving cognitive processes of making sense of an environment containing objects, symbols, or signs. Perception can be described as a person's expectations of objects such as persons, institutions, and institutions. (Akbar 2015) states that those who want to know what the community wants and expects from an institution can do so by knowing the community's perception of the institution. Knowing an individual's perception is a factor in supporting quality improvement efforts.

According to Laufer (1997), vocabulary learning is central to language learning and use. It gives the language its essence. Without vocabulary, speakers of a particular language cannot convey meaning or communicate with each other. As Edward said, vocabulary is an important aspect of language teaching: "Vocabulary is an important element in all language teaching.

According to Thornbury (2002:2), vocabulary refers to words or terms that have meaning in it. Without knowing the word meaning, the speakers cannot understand any information given. Regarding vocabulary knowledge, Nation (2001) mentioned some aspects in vocabulary knowledge with 3 sub-aspects in each. Form (spoken, written, and word parts), Meaning (form and meaning, concept and referents, and associations), and Use (grammatical function, collocation, and constraint on use). However, in this research, only focused on one sub-aspect of each. They cover Form (written), Meanings (associations) and Use (grammatical function).

Teaching is the process of transferring knowledge and some information to students. In teaching vocabulary in elementary school, the teacher must make students have many

words and know their meaning by using creative and innovative strategies. As Cameron (2001: 94) explains that one of several ways of teaching vocabulary is to include structured opportunities for students to make predictions about the meaning of new words when they read a text. Teaching vocabulary is related to knowing the meaning of words. The teacher must teach words related to students' lives by using appropriate strategies, media, techniques, etc. Teachers have to adjust it based on the level of students.

Game is an ambiguous term and different game formats have been used by researchers and educators (Hanghøj, 2013). Gamification of education is a developing approach for increasing learners' motivation and engagement by incorporating game design elements in educational environments (Ilaria Caponetto, 2014). Developing approach is a method used to create and evolve the product, service, or result during the project life cycle. Gamification can be defined as the use of game elements in non-entertainment contexts to facilitate learning. The fact that games have many elements that are naturally appealing to teens and adults and have a strong impact on their lifestyle helps introduce additional learning motivation.

Duolingo, a free language learning app developed by Luis Von Ahn and Severin Hacker, launched in November 2011, offering 68 different language courses in 23 languages, with 22 more in development is. Duolingo offers dictation, writing, and speaking practice for users who have reached a certain level. The application is available for iOS, Android and Windows Phone and is designed to help users improve their discussion skills anytime, anywhere. Like a game, learning on Duolingo is designed to be engaging and easy to understand.

According to Munday (2016) Duolingo has several effectiveness, as follow:

- a. Duolingo can be used to increase student activity in the language teaching and learning process. Duolingo has several fun features, so students don't feel bored in the learning a language. It could be because Duolingo incorporates several aspects of gamification in learning, it can motivate and involve students in learning with Duolingo. The material learned for the game is usually difficult to forget, it could be because students happy to learn.
- b. Duolingo can make homework so that apart from studying in class, Duolingo can also support to train students to improve their vocabulary with Duolingo at their home. Based on the research conducted by Munday showed that if students 84,4% agreed that homework with Duolingo was better that other type of homework.
- c. Duolingo can be accessed anytime and anywhere. This language learning media will greatly facilitate the teacher to be implemented inside and outside the classroom. Students can study wherever and whenever they want if the network connection needed.

In relation to the findings above, the study aimed to investigate young learners' perception of Duolingo application vocabulary learning. To guide the study, the researcher raises question how do young learners of English perceive Duolingo application in learning vocabulary?

METHOD

Design

This study employed qualitative case study. A qualitative case study is a research methodology that helps investigate a phenomenon in a specific context using a variety of data sources and conduct research from different angles to illuminate multiple aspects of the phenomenon (Baxter & Jack, 2008). Case studies explore real-time phenomena in their naturally occurring contexts, given that context makes a difference (Kaarbo& Beasley, 1999).

Participants

This research was undertaken in one elementary school in Banyuwangi, East Java, Indonesia. 17 young students in the fifth grade participated in this study. They come from urban and rural areas. The students speak several indigenous language such as Javanese, Osingnese, Madurese and other language. They never use duolingo application in learning vocabulary. Prior to the study, they learn vocabulary through English textbook, online and printed based dictionary as well as google translate.

Data collection method

The students was given a questionnaire via Google form and researcher also interviewed them about their perceptions in learning vocabulary through Duolingo application. The questionnaire and interview were administered and conducted after the researcher completed teaching and learning of vocabulary using Duolingo application.

Data analysis

All collected data from questionnaire and interview were described in detail. To calculate the questionnaire score, the researchers obtained a percentage from each student's questionnaire responses, which is also supported by the description. The researcher uses the Likert Scale for analyze questionnaire adapted from Sugiyono (2014). Here is the formula used to analyze the data:

$$p = f / n \times 100$$

Where p is the percentage of response, f is the number of answer, and n indicates number of sample. The results of the interviews were also explained in detail and listed for each student's response.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

Findings

In the first meeting the researcher started to enter the class to conduct research. First, the researcher did self-introduction and explained about the research. Then the researcher conducted a game quiz to find out how much basic vocabulary the students knew and the result was that some students still had difficulty remembering some of the vocabulary.

Next, the researcher introduced the Duolingo application in learning vobulary. The researcher asked students to download the Duolingo application and explained what to do the first time they used the Duolingo application. The researcher asked students to sign in to Duolingo for School so that the researcher would know about their improvement in using the Duolingo app. In the next meeting, the researcher would do a quiz like in the first meeting so that the researcher knows about increasing vocabulary in children. Then, the researcher asked the students to use the Duolingo application again during the allotted time. In the final meeting of teaching and learning of vocabulary through Duolingo application, the researcher spread out questionnaires and conduct interview to know their experiences in learning vocabulary through Duolingo application.

The questionnaire was given by the researcher through Google form. The questionnaire was a sheet which containing a question about the opinion regarding on the research. The questions which contained in the questionnaire are answered personally. The questionnaires were adapted from Alan (2020). The questionnaires will be distributed to 17 students in fifth grade and the research questionnaires consists of 17 questions that focus on students' perceptions in using the Duolingo application in learning English vocabularies.

The result of questionnaire. 64.7% strongly agree and 35.5% agree that Duolingo is easy to use for learning English 58,8% strongly agree and 41,2% agree with this statement, indicating unanimous agreement among all students regarding the ease of using Duolingo for learning English vocabulary. 70.6% of students strongly agree and 29.4% agree that the Duolingo application can be accessed anywhere and anytime for learning English. Point 4 states that 23.5% of students strongly agree and 76.5% of students agree with the statement, suggesting that all students are interested in English vocabulary questions on the Duolingo app. The percentage also indicates the same as point 5: all students agree that Duolingo questions are easy to understand. Point 6: 23.5% strongly agree, 76.5% agree, all students think Duolingo is fun for learning English. Point 7 states that 47.1% of students strongly agree and 41.2% agree that the Duolingo app is highly useful for classroom learning. 5.9% of students are unsure about this. Students agree that Duolingo is useful for learning in the classroom. 5.9% strongly agree and 35.3% strongly agree that Duolingo is difficult to use without an internet connection. 29.4% of students are undecided, while 23.5% disagree and 5.9% strongly disagree. The researchers found that over half of the students do not find the Duolingo app difficult to use without an internet connection. Specifically, 29.4% strongly agree and 70.6% agree with this statement. All students agree that Duolingo makes learning English vocabulary easy. The percentage supports the same as point 10. 11.8% of students are undecided, but over half agree that using Duolingo allows them to be more engaged in learning. Point 12 shows that 41.2% of students strongly agree and 58.8% agree with that statement, meaning all students agree that Duolingo makes learning English at home easy. 35.3% strongly agree and 58.8% agree that using Duolingo helps them memorize new vocabulary, similar to point 13. But 5.9% of students are unsure about this statement, so over half of the students agree that Duolingo helps them understand English learning material more deeply. 15% of students strongly agree with the statement, while 64.7% agree. Additionally, 17.6% of students are unsure. Over 50% of students agree that using the Duolingo app helps them apply English in everyday life. Specifically, 23.5% strongly agree and 64.7% agree that the app motivates them to learn English. But 11.8% of students are unsure about that. Over half of students agree that they are more motivated to learn English with the Duolingo app. Point 17 indicates that 35.3% strongly agree and 64.7% agree with the statement, suggesting that all students agree that Duolingo helps them become more passionate about learning English vocabulary.

The data collected from interview was transcribed and then concluded to obtain the data needed. The researcher will ask 8 questions to the respondents, the question in interview adapted from similar previous researcher by Alan (2020). The researcher modified the questions because it helps the researcher to get information about things to be studied. The researcher will be used mobile phone as instrument to record the data from the interviewers. The researcher chose 10 out of 17 students to conduct offline interviews at school. The reason the researcher chose 10 students out of 17 students was because the interview process was limited in time and several students answered almost the same questions.

Discussion

Research findings from both questionnaires and interviews have been shown and explained to answer the research problems of this study. The data displayed is in the form of questionnaire analysis results and interview transcript analysis. Based on the results of the questionnaire analysis, it can be concluded that the majority of students showed positive statements regarding the use of the Duolingo application to increase English vocabulary. This conclusion drawn based on an analysis of the frequency of their responses to each category of statements contained in the given questionnaire.

The findings of the study agrees with previous research findings (Ilaria Caponetto, 2014). which shows that the Duolingo application is a helpful application since it increased students' willingness to complete the assignment using Duolingo media and their language abilities in learning English. Thus, young learners' perceptions of the Duolingo application really help them increased their vocabulary. The students gave positive feedback that the Duolingo application had a great effect on their English vocabulary.

The findings of the study also revealed that all participants indicated that they had a positive perception about using the Duolingo application to learn English. All participants stated that the Duolingo application was very useful for increasing English vocabulary for young learners. The participants stated that the Duolingo application was very interesting to use because the Duolingo application was fun and interesting, and there were many interesting tasks, especially speaking and story tasks. This evidence confirm the previous conducted by Munday (2016).

CONCLUSION

The present study showed that the majority of young learners felt positive in using the Duolingo application to learn English vocabulary. Although some of them were unsure (doubtful) about some of the statements, the percentage that gave 5 (strongly agreed) and 4 (agreed) was still higher. Furthermore, the interview analysis of 10 participants showed that their perception of the Duolingo application for learning vocabulary was very positive. The Duolingo application was useful for them in learning vocabulary. The participants stated that the Duolingo application was very fun and easy to use as a media for learning English vocabulary for young learners. Some students like speaking and story tasks in the Duolingo application. Overall, it can be concluded that the Duolingo application can help students to increase their English vocabulary and also motivate them to learn English.

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