

THE PERSPECTIVE OF EFL LEARNERS OF USING DUOLINGO IN GAINING ENGLISH VOCABULARY

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Abstract: This research aimed to find the perspective of EFL learners of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. The research design used in this study was explanatory mixed-method with descriptive analysis. The participants of the study were 7th semester English education department students at University of Islam Malang, which 27 students chosen as the sample of the study using purposive sampling. The data of the study collected using questionnaire adapted from two journals and semi-structured interview through online form. From the finding, the researcher found that students have positive perspectives of the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary.

Keywords: Students' perspectives, English vocabulary, Duolingo

INTRODUCTION

The globalization era demand the students in Indonesia to be prepared to face the challenges they may face in the future. Shobikah (2017) stated that as Indonesia is part of ASEAN members, it is essential for Indonesian students to be prepared to master English language in order to face the challenges due to the globalization. In Indonesia, English has known as foreign language. But these days, English is commonly used in daily life as well. Sulyati (2019) also believe that the ability to master foreign language could be the way for Indonesian people to be able to interact with people from different countries. Also, being able to fluent in English could help Indonesian people in getting job, or help Indonesian communicate to people from other countries when they need to. In order to be able to have good English proficiency, students have to comprehend English skills, which include speaking skill, listening skill, reading skill, writing skill, grammar understanding and vocabulary understanding.

Vocabulary is the smallest part of the language. Even though vocabulary is the smallest part, vocabulary is the most important part of the language. As Fatima and Khan (2017) implied that vocabulary is probably the essential part of language that used for interactions and communication in many different levels because the understanding of

meaning of words is needed in all skills, and it is impossible to learn the language without understanding the vocabulary first. Additionally, Wilkins in Goundar (2019) argued that without grammar, the learners may find it difficult to communicate, but without vocabulary, learners cannot convey anything. Even though vocabulary is the smallest part of the language, but vocabulary could be the complicated part of the language. The use of vocabulary in the language, especially English depends on the sentence, or the form of use. Also, there are many synonyms and antonyms which could confuse the language learners. This means that before learning language, it is important for the students or language learners to have good understanding of the vocabulary.

There are many strategies students can use to gain better English vocabulary. Every student has different style of learning, and that also become the reason that every students have different pace in learning and developing vocabulary understanding. Gu and Johnson's in Goundar (2015) said there are at least 4 strategies that could be highlighted in learning vocabulary, there are metacognitive strategies, cognitive strategies, memory strategies and activation strategies. In his recent study, Goundar (2019) also stated that strategies mostly used by EFL learners to gain English vocabulary understanding are words repetition, the use of dictionary, words memorization, words translation and the use of learners' background knowledge to guess the words. Even though there are many strategies could be used, Akdogan (2018) argued that the effectiveness of different learning strategies depends on the situation of the learners.

Another effect of globalization is the development of the technology. These days, internet, smartphones, and other devices available are also supporting education field. Nushi and Eqbali (2017) stated that technology such as smartphones, tablet, PC or such devices have special features that made them practical for language learning; they are easy to carry, connective and interactive. Because of that, seems like there is no limitation for students to study and learn languages, when they have their devices along with them. There are many benefits in learning using technology, one of the benefit is students have their own control in learning. They can personalize their learning time based on their daily activities. Also, due to the outbreak of COVID-19 in Indonesia, the need of using technology as learning media become necessary because students will not be able to learn inside the classroom until undetermined time. In line with the situation, Dutta (2020) in his study found the advantages of using technologies are now much exposed since the outbreak of the virus, because learning using online media was not the priority until the outbreak case occurred. That implies that using technology is helpful for students, moreover in such kind of situation.

There are many educational applications available for students to download through their devices, and one of them is Duolingo. Duolingo is a language learning application that classified to educational application, released in June, 2012 with 4.7 stars in Play Store and downloaded by more than 100M users worldwide. Duolingo is free to be downloaded, and provides more than 20 languages from worldwide area for learners. There are many features available to help students in gaining English vocabulary such as audio, pictures and colorful interface. Duolingo is the student-centered application which means that students can learn languages outside the classroom or anywhere and anytime they want as long as they have their devices along with them (Baldauf et al., 2017). In line, Bogdan (2016) stated that Duolingo is an easy-access language learning application. In the use of Duolingo, there are several previous researches about the positive result in the use of Duolingo as learning languages. Baldauf et al., (2017) found that students were enjoyed the use of Duolingo as an additional tool to assist learning activity in the classroom. Another study conducted by Ajisoko (2020) showed that the use of Duolingo improve students' score significantly with extended use of Duolingo. Dewangga (2020) also found that the participants in his study have positive attitude towards the use of Duolingo in learning English. In line, Ambara (2020) also found that the use of Duolingo could improve students' vocabulary understanding. Those previous studies showed the positive result of using Duolingo in learning English, which indicated that Duolingo is a helpful learning language application. Therefore, this paper aims to find out the perspective of EFL learners about the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary.

METHOD

The method used in this study is explanatory mixed-method. As Creswell (2014) stated that the use of mixed-method is to get more information in different sights, to find more specific and detailed information in the study. The sequence of explanatory mixed method is the quantitative data collected and analyzed first, then the qualitative data collected and analyzed separately and then the data results connected as the final result of the study. The population of the study was all 7th semester English education department students at University of Islam Malang. As the study focused on finding the perspective, the researcher used purposive sampling method as the method to get the sample of the study. 27 students which already use Duolingo were chosen as the sample of the study.

The instrument of the study were questionnaire which adapted from Astarilla (2018) and Ajisoko (2020) with total of 25 questions related to the study, 2 additional questions

their time length of the students use Duolingo and how they knew the application. And semi-structured interview were used to gain broader sight from the students. The questionnaire spread using Google Form through every class representatives and the semi-structured interview held through WhatsApp Voice Note (VN) because of the limited access due to the pandemic outbreak. The results were analyzed descriptively. The quantitative data from Google Form is in form of percentages for each question items. Each item divided into tables and descriptively analyzed as the result. The semi-structured interview data which collected through WhatsApp Voice Note (VN) were interpreted and connected to the quantitative data result to find the final result of the study.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The questionnaire was distributed on 07 January 2021 to 27 participants of the study through Google form. The total question in the questionnaire were 25 questions which related to Duolingo and 2 additional questions about the length of time students using Duolingo and how they knew the application. The questions in the questionnaire divided into: Easiness of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary, students' motivation in using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary, students' attitudes about using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary, advantages of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary and disadvantages of using Duolingo. To find out students' perspectives, the researcher used Likert scale range from Strongly Agree to Strongly Disagree in the questionnaire.

NO	Question	< 3 month	3~12 month	>1 year	Others
1.	How long have you been using Duolingo?	48.1%	33.3%	11.1%	7.4%

Table 4.1.1 Students' time length using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary

NO	Question	Recommen- ded by lecturers	Recommen- ded by friends	I knew it by myself	Others
1.	How did you know about Duolingo?	22.2%	33.3%	40.7%	3.7%

Table 4.1.2 How students know about Duolingo as tool to gain English vocabulary

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	It is easy to gain new vocabulary using Duolingo.	37%	63%	0%	0%
2.	I think Duolingo enrich my vocabulary.	37%	63%	0%	0%
3.	The use of Duolingo helps me increase my vocabulary understanding.	40,7%	55.6%	0%	3.7%

Table 4.1.3 Easiness of using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I feel Duolingo can increase my motivation in learning English vocabulary.	22.2%	74.1%	3.7%	0%
2.	I feel motivated to play Duolingo when I find my friends get higher score than me.	25.9%	63%	11.1%	0%
3.	I feel Duolingo gives me opportunities to enhance my English (skill and vocabulary) outside the classroom.	51,9%	48,1%	0%	0%

Table 4.1.4 Student's motivations in using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Learning English vocabulary using Duolingo is Interesting	40.7%	55.6%	0%	3.7%
2.	I think Duolingo is helpful to improve my English skill (moreover, my vocabulary understanding)	44.4%	55.6%	0%	0%
3.	I feel Duolingo is useful to practice my English skill (moreover, my vocabulary understanding)	40.7%	55.6%	3.7%	0%

4.	I believe that my achievement is possible to increase after the use of Duolingo	18.5%	74.1%	7.4%	0%
5.	I think using Duolingo develop self-learning skill among students because we can measure our progress on Duolingo	33.3%	63%	3.7%	0%

Table 4.1.5 Student's attitudes about using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	I think Duolingo's features are variative, interesting and useful	33.3%	63%	0%	3.7%
2.	By using Duolingo, learning English vocabulary is enjoyable and fun.	33.3%	63%	0%	3.7%
3.	I practice translating words and sentences through Duolingo	11.1%	66.7%	22.2%	0%
4.	I think it is convenient to practice English through Duolingo since I can access it anytime and anywhere	40.7%	59.3%	0%	0%
5.	I think Duolingo is easy to access whether from my mobile phone or my laptop	29.6%	70.4%	0%	0%
6.	I think Duolingo is an effective way to improve my English skill anytime and anywhere	40.7%	59.3%	0%	0%

Table 4.1.6 Advantages of using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary

NO	Questions	Strongly Agree	Agree	Disagree	Strongly Disagree
1.	Learning English vocabulary using Duolingo is boring.	0%	7.4%	77.8%	14.8%
2.	Duolingo didn't help me in gaining English vocabulary.	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
3.	It is difficult to gain new vocabulary using Duolingo.	3.7%	3.7%	74.1%	18.5%

4.	Duolingo didn't give any advantage for students to learn English vocabulary.	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
5.	Using Duolingo didn't motivate me learning English vocabulary.	0%	0%	66.7%	33.3%
6.	It is not convenient using Duolingo to learn English vocabulary anytime and anywhere.	0%	3.7%	77.8%	18.5%
7.	I feel it difficult to access Duolingo whether from my phone or laptop.	0%	3.7%	70.4%	25.9%
8.	I prefer using conventional way than using Duolingo	0%	25.9%	66.7%	7.4%

4.1.7 Disadvantages of using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary

Beside the questionnaire, the semi-structured interview was conducted through WhatsApp by using Voice Note (VN) with 5 questions to 5 students which already use Duolingo to gain deeper data result. The first question is about their duration of using Duolingo: how long the students have been using Duolingo and how much time they spend when using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. The answers were varied, some of the students used Duolingo for a long time and some were new users of Duolingo. The time students spent in using Duolingo was different in each person. Even so, they had similarities in a certain point, where they spent around 10 to 15 minutes every day to complete the daily course provided in Duolingo. In the second question, the researcher asked the students which feature in Duolingo they like the most. Their favorite features varied from the audio, daily streak, quizzes, and level. But most of them stated that they like the "Level" feature provided by Duolingo because it challenged them to learn English often in Duolingo. The third question, researcher asked them about the reason they liked the features. They liked the features because it helped them motivated in gaining English vocabulary using Duolingo. The fourth question focused to find the students' opinion about the use of features in Duolingo and all of them showed a positive result. They agreed that by using Duolingo, they gained better English understanding. The last question asked students about their perspectives about the use of Duolingo as a tool to gain English vocabulary understanding better. All students

showed a positive attitude in which they agreed that using Duolingo is helpful and learning using Duolingo is enjoyable.

As the result showed the positive perspectives in the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary, the study were in line with several previous studies. Table 4.1.1 shows data of the students about how long they used Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. The result shows that students were the user of Duolingo even before the study conducted, and majority of them already use Duolingo at least 1 to 3 months, some of them used Duolingo in range of 3 to 12 months and some of them used Duolingo more than one year.

Question in table 4.1.2 shows the result of how students knew the application. The result presented that most of the students knew the application by themselves and some of them were recommended by lecturers and friends. This means that they knew and used Duolingo because of many sources of information and recommendation.

The question point 1 to 3 in table 4.1.3 which consisted of questions about the easiness of using Duolingo shows that most of the students stated their agreement about easiness in using Duolingo to gain vocabulary. This result is in line with the study of Bogdan (2016) which stated that Duolingo is an easy-access language learning application that could be used on any device. In sum, the use of Duolingo is easy and accessible for EFL learners to gain English vocabulary.

Based on the overall data from questions 1 to 3 in table 4.1.4 about students' motivation in using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary, students were agreed that using Duolingo could motivate them in gaining English vocabulary and using Duolingo gave them opportunities to enhance their English skill and vocabulary. Also, the majority of the students agreed that they feel motivated to use Duolingo when their friends get higher score than them. Baldauf et al., (2017) found that gamification learning style could expand student's motivation, action in learning language, enhance their result in learning, support their social ability, and affect their behaving way. Additionally, the result also in line with the study of Huynh & Iida (2017), which found that the "winning streak" that available in Duolingo could help learners gain more motivation in learning languages. It can be concluded that students are motivated to learn English vocabulary by using Duolingo.

Table 4.1.5 consisted of questions 1 to 5 which describe about students' attitudes about using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. From the overall data researcher found overall data that participants have a positive attitude towards the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary because the majority of them find that using Duolingo is helpful, and useful to them, and they believe using Duolingo, they could develop their self-learning skill

as well. This result is in line with the previous study by Ajisoko (2020) that by using Duolingo, there is an improvement in students' score. Also, Akdogan (2018) found that the use of games in learning vocabulary could help learners gaining more vocabulary because they enjoy learning the language and it helps them understand the learning material. To conclude, this indicated that participants have a positive attitude towards the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary.

Questions 1 to 6 in table 4.1.6 present the result of the advantages of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. From the overall data, the majority of the students agreed that they feel the advantages of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary such as variation of features, enjoyable and fun application to use, and accessible anywhere and anytime. Baldauf et al., (2017) stated that Duolingo could be classified as a gamified learning style. This means that using Duolingo could gain learners' interest since the application was in the design of a game. Furthermore, Duolingo is a student-centered application in which students can learn their target language using their devices anytime and anywhere as long as they have their devices with them (Baldauf et al., 2017).

Question 1 to 8 in table 4.1.7 shows the data of disadvantages of using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. More than half of students disagreed and strongly disagreed that the use of Duolingo is boring, difficult, or did not motivate them in gaining English vocabulary. Also, they disagreed about the inconvenience of using Duolingo to gain English vocabulary. The data result showed that most of the participants did not face any difficulties or disadvantages in using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary.

In line with that, the qualitative data from the semi-structured interview also shows that most of the participants indicated positive perspectives towards the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. In conclusion, the result of quantitative data and qualitative data showed that EFL learners showed positive perspectives in using Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

The study conducted to find the perspectives of EFL learners in gaining English vocabulary. The research method used in the study is explanatory-mixed method with descriptive analysis. The result from both quantitative and qualitative data showed that students have positive perspectives about the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. And the results were supported by previous studies and theories. This indicated that using Duolingo could help students in gaining English vocabulary understanding better.

The suggestion for the students is as the result showed positive perspectives about the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary; it would be great for students, especially the beginner of English learners to try learning English using various learning media including Duolingo because Duolingo provides great features for students or language learners to help them gain better English vocabulary understanding. Also, students can try use Duolingo as their learning source outside the classroom so that they could expand their English vocabulary understanding more than just learning inside the classroom.

The suggestion for further researcher, it is important to be noted that this study has limitation which this study only focused to find the students' perspective in the use of Duolingo in gaining English vocabulary. This limitation could be expanded by further research in other different area of study. The further researcher could try to conduct study on grammar use in Duolingo, the barriers in using Duolingo or other part of skills in English skills.

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A handwritten signature in blue ink, consisting of a large, stylized initial 'E' followed by several vertical strokes and a final flourish.

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