

## Narrative Inquiry: The Use of Duolingo Mobile Application as a Supplementary Tool for English Language Learners at The University Level

Nadhifa Anindya Shafa<sup>1</sup>, Zulfi Baihaqi<sup>2</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Education, Unisma, Indonesia, <sup>2</sup>English Education, Unisma, Indonesia

correspondence: [22101073090@unisma.ac.id](mailto:22101073090@unisma.ac.id)

### ABSTRACT

This study explores the use of the mobile platform among university students to be used as a digital tool that helps develop students' English learning performance. In the era of technology that is increasingly developing, of course, we must take advantage of technology. Duolingo is a learning platform that is very popular among students to learn English, not only English students but also beginners can also access Duolingo to learn English from scratch. Utilizing a qualitative narrative inquiry approach, the research focuses on the personal experiences of two English education students who have used Duolingo since high school. The findings prove that the Duolingo platform can significantly develop students' grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and listening skills. However, the platform also has a drawback in that the practice questions are repetitive, and must be done every day to reach the next level. This research highlights the potential of this platform as a tool to help students when they find it difficult to understand English learning, with the condition that they practice regularly every day to get the benefits of the platform.

**Keywords:** Duolingo Platform; English Language Learner; Participants Experience

### INTRODUCTION

New media for English language learning has been created. Duolingo is one such digital platform that helps students in learning languages. Duolingo helps to improve the ability to learn by providing engaging learning services without barriers and fees to enjoy this platform (Ajisoko, 2020). In the era of modern technology, technological developments are very useful for everyone, especially for students. According to Barrs (2011), Technology is everything that humans create to influence their environment, from the personal gadgets used in everyday life to the processes that determine and direct society (as cited in Arigusman et al., 2018). In the digital era, students in Indonesia are increasingly utilizing digital tools to enhance English language learning. Students stated that the large class prevents them from having enough opportunities to practice English in the classroom. The class becomes monotonous, and students become bored (Inayah et al., 2020). In the transition period after Covid-19, many digital learning media have been tried. In addition, the skill-improving language that is quite difficult to learn is speaking. Speaking is interesting to discuss and improve because speaking is a skill that needs to be mastered in language.

One example of such a digital tool is Duolingo, a language-learning app. Duolingo is a useful platform for language learning. This application is the largest platform in the digital world, this platform focuses on the process of learning to speak and grammar (Jaelani & Sutari, 2020). This app is designed to make language learning interesting and accessible, not only for college students but also for secondary students who can use this platform as a medium for learning English. Duolingo offers a dynamic platform for students to improve their English proficiency alongside their formal education. In addition to their official education, students can enhance their English language skills with the

dynamic platform provided by Duolingo. The application allows users to learn English vocabulary, grammar, and pronunciation at their speed with its compact courses and interactive tasks. This flexibility is especially useful in a university environment, where students frequently have many classes and assignments.

The gap from previous research explored the effectiveness of Duolingo as a supplementary tool for English language learning in specific environments. According to Aulia et al., (2020) focused on discussing how to address the gap by exploring students' perceptions and motives for using Duolingo in learning English. Another study investigated the effect of Duolingo's application on eighth-grade students' English vocabulary acquisition in Indonesia. Another study addressed the gap in addressing the impact of internet connectivity on Duolingo implementation in the classroom. The use of Duolingo as a learning platform is also very impactful, especially in learning independently, especially from the advantages. This research explores the use of Duolingo as a supplementary tool for English language learning among university students in Indonesia, examining its impact and the challenges faced during its use. Therefore, the researcher will examine the participant's experience and personal experiences in using Duolingo as an English learning platform.

## METHODS

This study uses a type of narrative inquiry research where research focuses on the personal experiences of participants who have experience learning English through the Duolingo platform. Narrative inquiry is an old study that is still suitable for use today, where telling life stories is commonplace for humans (Clandinin, 2006). Therefore, this research is still very suitable for telling people's personal experiences.

The participants have personal experience learning English using the Duolingo platform, through which Duolingo provides learning features for beginners or improving their existing English skills. This platform is very helpful for some students who want to learn English. Research conducted by Rachels et al. (2017) showed that the platform has good achievements in developing the language learning process. Further evidence according to Guaqueta et al (2018), where Duolingo has a good impact on developing language skills and increasing vocabulary (as cited in Aulia et al., 2020).

The participants, Nailus and Ina are English education students who study in the same learning context. however, these participants have the same perspective on *Duolingo* as an English learning tool, according to (Ina) *Duolingo* has good learning because it can adjust for beginners, so we can learn English as beginners easily, while according to (Nailus) Duolingo has interactive and unique learning than other platforms, because in *Duolingo* learning there are question readers and feedback givers that make learning interesting and more fun.

## RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results of interviews with participants showed that participants often used the Duolingo Platform as a medium of learning English since junior high school, so participants could take advantage of the benefits of using the platform in improving participants' language skills. The following are the participants' experiences of their learning process in utilizing Duolingo as a digital platform.

### Nailus:

Nailus the first participant shared that she has been using the Duolingo platform since middle school, Nailus' perception of Duolingo as an English learning tool. Nailus feels that Duolingo is an

effective platform if used frequently, because according to her, the effectiveness of Duolingo depends on the user, and how often she practices and exercises.

*"Duolingo is an interesting platform for learning languages because it has a funny and interactive learning format compared to other learning platforms. For example, the platform has some funny characters doing the exercises and there is feedback on what we do. Of course, this makes language learning more fun. In my opinion, the effectiveness of Duolingo depends on how much practice we do there because Duolingo has many steps and sections for practice. If we practice a lot using Duolingo, it will effectively improve our English skills".*

The participant felt a significant improvement in their English skills when using the Duolingo platform frequently. In using Duolingo, there are benefits related to learning that help participants in learning, and there are also disadvantages that are felt when using Duolingo.

*"Since I practiced using Duolingo regularly while in the training class, I have experienced significant improvements in vocabulary acquisition, pronunciation skills, and listening skills. In Duolingo, the practice questions will be read out by the character and we can even repeat the questions with different speed levels, this feature helps improve my ability to pronounce English words better"*

*"The disadvantage of Duolingo in my opinion is that Duolingo has a lot of practice steps and sometimes it is repeated in some steps. as a result, if we don't practice regularly, we will take a long time to achieve the improvement in English mastery that we expect".*

In addition, the materials are categorized by theme, such as food theme, greeting theme, etc. They are not categorized by skills such as tenses, nouns, verbs, etc. So we have to practice following the theme. So we have to practice following the given theme, and this also slows down the learning process according to the participant.

### **Nur Minnah**

Then Ina as the second participant shared her personal experience using Duolingo. Ina started using Duolingo when she was in junior high school. According to Ina, the use of the Duolingo platform is very effective to help improve language learning performance, because on this platform beginners can also use it to learn languages.

*"This platform is very good because Duolingo adjusts the level of beginners, and the Duolingo platform is very effective because the questions are prepared like a fun quiz game".*

Ina has also seen a significant development in herself since using this platform to develop language skills. Ina considers this platform useful for language learning because the benefits can be felt well and it is more interesting.

*"After learning to use the Duolingo platform, I think my English skills are more honed and I can answer questions on the Duolingo platform more quickly and responsively. In my opinion, the Duolingo platform adds more interest in language learning because it is not monotonous and not boring. The Duolingo platform has no weaknesses at all, I enjoy every material provided by Duolingo".*

Ina thinks that the Duolingo platform has no weaknesses, it has more benefits to be used as a learning medium for beginner learners or someone who wants to develop their English skills.

The study uses an inquiry-narrative methodology to investigate how the Duolingo mobile application is used as an additional tool for English language learning at Indonesian universities. Data was collected through interviews with two students who have been using Duolingo since junior high school until college level. The majority of participants stated that their grasp of vocabulary and grammar in particular had significantly improved. When speaking and writing in English, they experience an increased sense of self-awareness. Furthermore, the Duolingo app makes students more

motivated to learn because the programs have components similar to games, they feel more motivated to learn English. It is more engaging and instructive to learn with the point, level, and grading systems.

According to the previous study, university students thought that using the Duolingo program to learn English was a good idea. They discovered that it was simple to use, practical, beneficial, and efficient at enhancing their English. Even while Duolingo has certain shortcomings, such as the inability to use the software offline and activities with strange language, overall, the tool's beneficial features have helped students learn (Astarilla, 2018).

Based on the results of the narrative inquiry, participants considered Duolingo as a very useful technological resource to improve English language development, but it needs to increase students' learning motivation. Learning motivation can be developed using the gamification and motivation approach of the Duolingo application.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, currently, in an increasingly sophisticated digital era, various platforms have emerged that can support the learning process, especially language learning. Duolingo is one of the media platforms that is quite helpful in the process of self-development both in class and outside the classroom. As evidenced by the results of this study, show that the use of Duolingo is proven to be effective in developing students' abilities in language learning outside the classroom, especially in grammar skills. Then the results of this study prove that Duolingo also improves participants' speaking and writing skills.

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