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**EXAMINING THE ROLES OF DUOLINGO APPLICATION**

**AS A LEARNING TOOL IN PROMOTING**

**EFL LEARNERS’ AUTONOMY AT MA YUPPI**

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**Abstract:** This study aims to explore the role of the Duolingo app in increasing students' English language learning independence. Data was collected through interviews with five participating students over two weeks in May 2024. The results showed that the majority of students enjoy using the mobile app to learn English because it is effective, fun, and allows learning anytime and anywhere. Some students highlighted that the app provides engaging content such as text, audio and video which enhances their learning experience. Most students know Duolingo from teachers, social media such as Instagram, and personal use. Their first impressions of Duolingo are very positive, mainly due to its attractive design and fun learning experience. After using Duolingo, students feel that the app is effective in helping them expand their vocabulary and understand basic grammar. Duolingo's interactive and engaging design also increases their motivation to learn. Students feel motivated by the daily targets and reward system in Duolingo. Gamification features such as points, levels and daily streaks make them more eager to learn every day. Most students use Duolingo to prepare for study abroad in the hope of strengthening their English skills so as not to face communication difficulties. The features most appreciated by students are the immediate feedback and the variety of language courses. Duolingo helps students learn independently by providing a variety of topics, flexible access, and a structured curriculum. Some students report significant improvements in listening, speaking, and vocabulary skills after using Duolingo. Features such as points, levels, streaks, feedback, daily challenges, and listening and vocabulary exercises are what motivate students to continue learning the most. This research shows that Duolingo can increase students' learning independence by creating a fun and challenging learning environment and providing flexibility in the learning process

**Keyword :** Duolingo, EFL Learners, Autonomy

**INTRODUCTION**

The development of Information and Communication Technology (ICT) is currently very rapid, especially in the Industrial Revolution 4.0 which involves students from the Millennial generation and generation Z. Online learning systems require special attention. According to the Minister of Research Technology and Higher Education of the Republic of Indonesia, Prof. Mohammad Nassir, in the National Dialogue "Indonesian Success" on Higher Education both public and private, stated that future learning has no space limit (borderless)

Today, learning does not have to be done in the classroom using printed materials, but can be done with electronic media often called e-learning. This generation of students is very skilled in using technology. Current technological advances make it easier to find information in education and the information provided is more extensive. The rapid development of science requires advanced technology to access more comprehensive information. One of the technological developments in education is learning using electronic media or e-learning.

In this digital era, technology has penetrated into various aspects of life including education. One of the increasingly popular learning tools is the Duolingo application which opens the door to foreign language learning with an interactive and accessible approach. However, in the midst of this rapid technological development, there are still many educational institutions that have not fully utilized the potential of technology in the learning process.

In many schools, especially in environments where technological collaboration is not yet fully underway, it is still common for English teachers to rely on conventional methods such as lectures and written assignments. This approach may be less effective in building learning independence in students which is an important skill in acquiring good language proficiency.

Learning independence is one of the important aspects in English language learning. Learning independence can be defined as the ability of students to learn actively and responsibly without the help of others. Learning independence is important for students because it can help them learn effectively and efficiently.

This study aims to examine the role of Duolingo application as a learning tool in promoting EFL students' independence at MA Yuppi. The researcher conducted a pre-survey at the school and saw that students were still having difficulties in learning English. This was due to the fact that English teachers at the school were still using simple methods in teaching, namely lectures and without technological collaboration. Teachers only use textbooks and practice questions. This method is less effective because it makes students uninterested in learning the material and also easily bored.

Where traditional methods are still dominant, it is important to understand the extent to which technology integration, specifically through the Duolingo app, can affect students' ability to control their own learning process. By identifying the barriers that schools that have not yet implemented technology may experience, this research can provide valuable insights into how to integrate digital learning tools in environments that may be resistant to change.

Previous research examining the role of the Duolingo app as a learning tool in promoting English language learning independence has generally had limitations such as less complex research designs, small samples, and non-representativeness.

**METHODOLOGY**

This study employs a qualitative research methodology, specifically using a case study design. This approach is selected for its ability to provide an in-depth understanding of complex issues and generate detailed insights into the role of the Duolingo application in promoting learner autonomy. According to Creswell & Guetterman (2018), qualitative research focuses on understanding and interpreting social phenomena through the collection and analysis of non-numerical data, making it ideal for exploring the subjective experiences of individuals or groups​**.** The study relies on both primary and secondary data. Primary data are collected through interviews with five students from class XI at MA Yuppi, located at Jl. Soreang-Banjaran Km.2 Cingcin Soreang Kab. Bandung. Secondary data are obtained from various sources such as journals, books, articles, reports, and websites relevant to the research topic. These secondary sources provide additional context and support for the primary data. Data analysis employs thematic analysis, a qualitative method used to identify, analyze, and report patterns or themes in the data. This method is flexible and suitable for analyzing different types of qualitative data, providing a deeper understanding of the role of the Duolingo application in promoting learner autonomy.

**FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

In the interview sessions, students responded to 13 questions aimed at uncovering their perceptions of using the Duolingo application to enhance learning autonomy. These questions explored various aspects of their experiences, aiming to understand how effectively Duolingo supports their independent learning and encourages self-directed study habits. Key insights from these interviews highlight the application’s role in fostering autonomous learning behaviors among students.

1. General Perception of Learning English with Mobile Apps
   1. Most students enjoyed using mobile apps for learning English, finding them effective and fun. They appreciated the flexibility of learning anytime and anywhere, the engaging content (such as text, audio, and video), and the increased motivation and engagement these apps provided.
   2. For example, Student 4 mentioned that learning English with mobile apps can be an effective and fun way to improve English skills, while Student 1 highlighted the ability to learn anytime and anywhere. Student 2 appreciated the diverse content types that made the learning experience more interesting and memorable.
2. Familiarity with Duolingo

Students were familiar with Duolingo through various channels, including teachers, social media (e.g., Instagram), and personal use. This familiarity contributed to their positive first impressions of the app, mainly due to its attractive design and enjoyable learning experience.

1. Motivational Features of Duolingo
   1. Students identified specific features of Duolingo that motivated them to learn English independently:
      * Points, Levels, and Streaks: Visual rewards and achievement systems motivated students to maintain consistency in learning.
      * Daily Challenges, Listening, and Vocabulary Exercises: Setting daily goals and offering diverse exercises kept students engaged and motivated.
      * Quizzes, Tests, Audio, and Visual Exercises: Periodic evaluations helped students monitor their progress and stay motivated.
2. Effectiveness of Duolingo's Features
   1. Speaking exercises, which involved pronouncing words and phrases, significantly improved students' pronunciation and intonation.
   2. Listening exercises with transcripts and vocabulary exercises were also effective in enhancing students' listening comprehension and vocabulary skills.

Discussion

This research was conducted to examine the role of Duolingo in promoting English language learning autonomy based on students' perceptions, with two primary research questions:

1. The role of Duolingo as a learning tool in promoting EFL learners' autonomy.
2. The use of Duolingo by students to enhance their learning autonomy.

Data collected from five respondents over two weeks in May 2024 revealed several key points:

* Increased Motivation and Engagement: Mobile learning, facilitated by apps like Duolingo, can significantly increase students' motivation and engagement in learning a foreign language. The flexibility and diverse content offered by mobile apps enable more personalized and effective learning experiences.
* Role of Teachers and Media: Teachers and social media play a crucial role in introducing educational technologies like Duolingo to students, accelerating their adoption and effective use.
* Autonomous Learning Behaviors: The features of Duolingo, such as points, levels, streaks, daily challenges, and periodic quizzes, encourage autonomous learning behaviors by providing motivation, flexibility, and the ability to self-assess progress.

Overall, the findings support the theory that mobile learning technologies can enhance the autonomy of EFL learners by providing flexible, engaging, and motivational learning tools​

**CONCLUSION**

The study concludes that the Duolingo application significantly enhances the autonomy of EFL learners at MA Yuppi. The application's interactive features, such as word games, listening exercises, and a point system, make learning engaging and less monotonous. The flexibility to study anytime and anywhere fits well with students' busy schedules, allowing them to integrate language learning seamlessly into their daily routines.

Students appreciate Duolingo's user-friendly interface and gamification elements, such as points, levels, and rewards, which provide additional motivation to continue learning. The gamified approach makes learning enjoyable and encourages students to persist in their studies, striving for higher levels and rewards.

Duolingo supports autonomous learning by offering daily and weekly challenges that keep students engaged and motivated. The app's learning track record feature allows students to monitor their progress and set and achieve their own learning goals. Immediate feedback after exercises helps students quickly identify and correct mistakes, reinforcing their understanding of the material.

The wide variety of course topics and themes allows students to expand their language knowledge according to their personal interests and needs, increasing their motivation to learn independently. Routine use of Duolingo has shown improvement in students' English language skills, particularly in vocabulary development, basic grammar understanding, and listening and speaking skills.

Overall, Duolingo's combination of flexibility, interactivity, and gamification, along with its comprehensive and personalized approach to language learning, significantly contributes to the development of learner autonomy among EFL students at MA Yuppi. The app's ability to make learning enjoyable and effective encourages students to take control of their learning processes, fostering independence and self-motivation essential for long-term success in language acquisition​

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