

How *Duolingo* Enhances English Learners' Vocabulary and Skills

R. Adeline Fauzie
Perbanas Institute
Jakarta, Indonesia
adelina@perbanas.id

ABSTRACT

In this era of technology, innovations have developed rapidly and massively. Programmers create learning English applications, and the applications can be used by people who want to learn English independently. One of learning English applications offered and is quite popular among English learners is *Duolingo* Application. The writer also uses *Duolingo* to learn foreign languages, and the writer introduces *Duolingo* application to English learners who have not known about it or who have never used it. The writer thinks that if English learners are not surrounded by people who care about English and like sharing information, then these English learners will not be able to have the idea that in fact many good applications for learning English are available and are able to use for them to learn English independently. Therefore, the writer is interested in introducing *Duolingo* applications to many people, especially English teachers and learners, especially those who have no idea at all about *Duolingo*. This study will show the audience the look of *Duolingo* and activities available on the application. The activities on *Duolingo* can be done independently because it is user friendly and is interesting to use by anyone. By using *Duolingo* application English learners can increase their English vocabulary and to exercise their English skills. The writer finds that using *Duolingo* application is very fascinating, and the design of activities will motivate English learners to use it to learn English independently.

Keywords: Duolingo, English learning, vocabulary acquisition, gamified learning, mobile language learning

INTRODUCTION

English as an international language and the language of communication is still learned by many people all over the world. People learn English not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. The process of learning English now can be done much more easily than in the past when technology has not been developed like now. In the era of technology where people live now English is easily learned by the help of technology they have in their hands. The development of smart gadgets like cellphone helps people a lot when they want to learn English, especially when people want to learn English independently.

When people open their cellphone and go to the application store, they can find a lot of applications to help them learn English. Many programmers create applications to learn English independently. One of the most popular applications to learn English among Indonesian learners is *Duolingo*. *Duolingo* application is created for helping people who want to learn languages in the world. One of the languages provided by *Duolingo* to learn is English. *Duolingo* provides a kind of English exercise online on websites and application. If people want to open it by using their computer or laptop they can use the website, but if they want to open *Duolingo* by using their cellphone they can install the application, or they just can go to the website to use *Duolingo* for them exercising their English. However, if a cellphone already has a *Duolingo* application then when people open it on the website, the system will automatically connect the website to the application. *Duolingo* is application created by the United States company and according to the information from the Internet the users of *Duolingo* now has reach 575 million people in the world. The source also mentioned that there are 95 languages offered by *Duolingo* to users for them to learn, stated by Pires (2024).

Duolingo offers English exercises from the very basic level until the level where people want to start based on their competence. When people start using *Duolingo* they can take the test first to get the level that suits their competence. People can also choose to start from the basic level if they want to start from the very basic level. Even people can do the test after they start to jump for the higher or more difficult level. But the test of course is not easy and if they cannot get the minimum score they cannot move to a higher level even though they think they are able to do higher level. What makes *Duolingo* app very interesting is the tests or the exercises they offer it is a kind of game and challenging. *Duolingo* also sets scoring systems in their exercises and this course will affect the achievement of players or learners here, so the learners feel challenged to the better and to get focused on their exercises to get higher or highest score for the exercises they do. *Duolingo* also challenges the learners not to skip any days when they exercise using *Duolingo*. They always get reminders from *Duolingo* either a notification sent to their cell phone or

a message sent to their e-mails because when they register for using *Duolingo*, *Duolingo* will ask the learners to give e-mail that can be connected to *Duolingo* app. Writer thinks that your lingo can help English learners to improve their English including for increasing their vocabularies and of course to practice the four skills listening reading writing and speaking. *Duolingo* also helps learners in practicing their pronunciation skills because in some parts of the exercise learners can find pronunciation or reading practice where learners need to read a text and *Duolingo* will test them whether their pronunciation is correct or not. One very important thing from *Duolingo* is this application is a free application where users or learners do not find many advertisements when using it. There is a paid service provided by *Duolingo*, but if learners do not want to use the paid service it is acceptable and they still can use the application free. Therefore, that condition can be one of reasons that *Duolingo* becomes one of the most interesting and one of best applications for learning English that can be used by English learners to improve their English skills. In this study the writer will show the readers about how exercises done in *Duolingo* can be used by learners to learn English and improve their skills and some other things related with English learning process. The writer will show some samples of exercises that *Duolingo* used to have learners learn English and improve their English skills. Hence the purpose of writing this study result is to let public know about how *Duolingo* looks and how *Duolingo* exercises work in helping English learners improve their English skills, English vocabulary, their pronunciation skills, and so on. The writer hopes that the findings about how *Duolingo* can help English learners improve their English skills will motivate many English learners, especially those who have not used *Duolingo* even have not known *Duolingo*, to improve their English skills by using *Duolingo* because the writer thinks that *Duolingo* has many interesting features that will make English learners convenient in using it.

Research about the use of technology to learn English has been mushrooming because teachers and learners believe that technology can help them learn English, especially when technology is already in our hand by using cellphone. Ajisoko (2022) says in his paper that the combination of technology and English language learning is inevitable. Students can access a lot of information through their smartphones.

For teachers, technology can be useful for both learning and teaching languages. Moreover, when teachers learn languages by using technology, they can share their ideas about how useful technology is for language learners, especially learners in their classroom. This belief about how important technology to be used for learning languages have inspired many researchers investigated technology and the relation with English learning process. The technology discussed in this study is

Duolingo application which was created in the United States for the first time in 2011 (Wallingford, 2024).

Results of some research the writer found have agreed that *Duolingo* application has helped English learners improve their English. Fitria et al. (2023) in their research found that *Duolingo* is considered effective in improving speaking skills of English learners. Santi et al (2023) say that the 40 articles they reviewed shows that *Duolingo* application facilitates English learners in learning vocabulary and can help learners improve their language skills, but for the language skills the result is still minimal. After that there is also a result of a research from Purwanto and Syafryadin (2023) that shows the same idea about the positive effect that *Duolingo* gives to English learners. *Duolingo* has a positive effect on learners' vocabulary learning process. Their research also tells readers that *Duolingo* is easy to use and is easily accessed from anywhere. That condition helps English learners a lot in their English learning process. The next findings come from research done by Indrasari et al (2024) which show that *Duolingo* considered as an effective and enjoyable language learning tool that can be used for helping English learners with their vocabulary learning process. Moreover, Azzahara et al (2023) finds in her research that *Duolingo* could help English learners improve their vocabulary. The research has a positive result that the English learners' vocabulary got improved after learners use *Duolingo* application. There is also research from Nasrul and Fatimah (2023), in their conclusion based on the research they say that using *Duolingo* application can help English learners with their motivation and vocabulary enrichment. The English learners in their research show their interest in using the application because they feel that using *Duolingo* is fun so that they enjoy the English learning process. Nushi and Egbali (2017) write in their research conclusion that *Duolingo* application is a useful language application for language learners that can provide practical and systematic steps to learn new languages by themselves. It shows that *Duolingo* helps learners who want to do self-study or study process independently. Furthermore, Permatasari and Aryani (2023) in their research conclude that *Duolingo* is an effective learning media. The features that *Duolingo* has can be convenient for users. Moreover, the research concludes that *Duolingo* is easily accessed from anywhere and this helps English learners a lot.

METHOD

The study methodology that the writer used in this study is a literature review from using the application and the website of *Duolingo*. The first thing that the writer did of course, was the writer installed the application on the writer's cell phone. Next, after installing the application, the writer registered for being able to use it and the writer

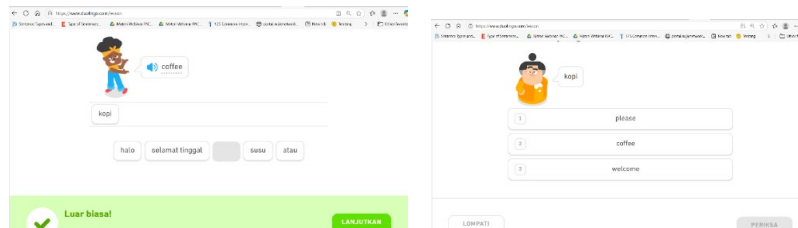
also joined the test so the writer could start from the level from the real competence of writer has. Besides, the writer also tries to start the exercise from a very basic level to see how the difference of the exercises both levels have. After looking at the exercises provided by *Duolingo* the writer took the screenshots of the exercises to be used in this study that later the writer will explain how the exercises can help English learners practice and improve their English skills. By showing the pictures of the screenshots from *Duolingo* exercises the writer wants to motivate English learners who have not used *Duolingo* app to start using it to help them learn and improve their English. The writer believes that there are still many English learners do not have the idea about the existence of *Duolingo* app and how it works how *Duolingo* can help them learn English at least how *Duolingo* can increase their English vocabulary.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

As learners learn at an English course on *Duolingo* learners are also asked whether they want to start from the beginning at the basic level or they want to join a test as a placement test for later *Duolingo* analyze which level is suitable for them. *Duolingo* also asks learners about the time they want to spend learning every day. For beginners learning English vocabulary will be very interesting when they use *Duolingo* because on *Duolingo* they will be introduced to basic vocabulary and some drilling exercises are always given.

Learning Basic Vocabulary for Beginners on *Duolingo* Level 1 by Repetition of Using Words

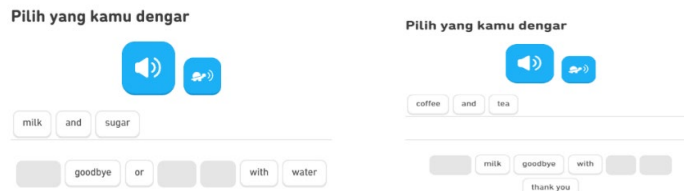
Pictures 1-2



Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

In increasing vocabulary learners are usually introduced to a new word and that word will be asked repeatedly to make learners familiar and remember with the word. In the picture it can be seen how learners are given a picture of coffee and the translation in Indonesian as a part of the question because the learners here are Indonesian. Kinds of questions given by *Duolingo* are presented in interesting ways, for example by using pictures and sounds. Multiple choice questions are also considered friendly users because they will ease and help beginners in doing the exercises

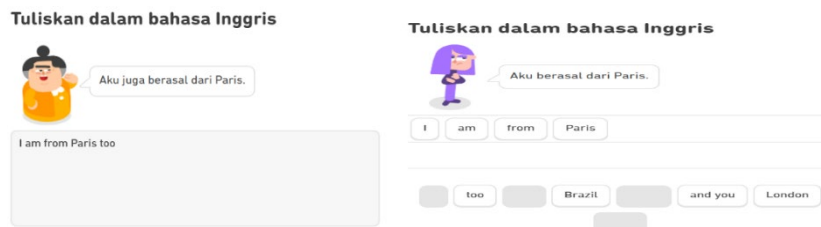
Learning Vocabulary by Listening Words Read by the System Pictures 3-4



Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

Learning vocabulary by listening to the words read by the system is also offered by *Duolingo* because sometimes among practices given learners are also asked to listen to and answer the question based on the words they listen. It can be seen from pictures 3-4. If learners push the picture of turtle beside the loudspeaker picture it means the sound will be played more slowly for helping learners who have difficulty in catching the words when they are pronounced. This practice will provide learners with listening skill exposure to make them familiar not only with the way the words are written but also, they will be familiar with the sound or with the way the words are pronounced.

Learning Vocabulary by Writing the English translation from Indonesian for higher level of learners Pictures 5-6

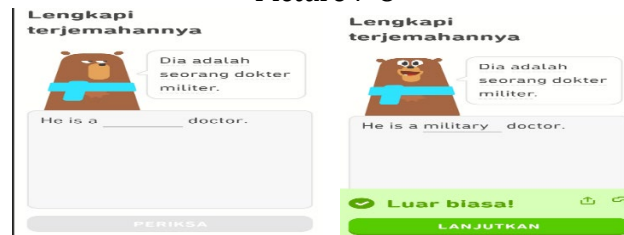


Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

On *Duolingo* sometimes learners are asked to write the translation from their first language, here in this case it is Indonesian, into English. Some exercises provided the words as choices, but at some exercises, choices do not appear therefore learners must think harder to do the exercise or answer the questions. The samples are on pictures 5-6. For beginners, even though the choices are provided by *Duolingo* if learners have not understood basic English sentence structure learners will find the exercises more challenging.

Learning Writing Vocabulary by Translating and Exercising Spelling

Picture 7-8



Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

Picture 7-8 shows one of the exercises from *Duolingo* and this exercise can help English learners to practice their writing skills for at least it helps learners to practice the spelling skill because the learners need to write the translation of the word 'military' correctly. This kind of exercise also help learners to understand the difference between the word *militer* in Indonesian and military in English. Both words seem similar, but they are different. Learners also learn how to write correctly the word military where in that word the letter 'a' in the word military used instead of letter 'e' that is used in the word *militer* in Indonesian. The exercise in picture 7-8 can help the learners to improve their vocabulary because the word military can be one of new words for English learners who do not have rich enough vocabulary.

Practicing Listening and Pronunciation by Saying the Words Given on the Microphone Provided by the System

Pictures 9-10



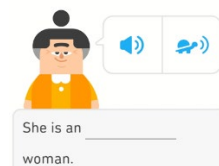
Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

In picture 9-10 the exercise is about how to read the sentence provided by *Duolingo*. The learners can listen first how the sentence is correctly read because there is a speaker sign/symbol in the picture, and it shows that the sentence can be read first by *Duolingo* and the learners will listen to the sample from *Duolingo*. After that the learners can push the blue microphone sign and directly the learners can repeat the text given. After the sentence is read by the learners, *Duolingo* will check the results of the sound from the learner. If the result is good or the learners pronounce or read the text correctly then *Duolingo* will give the result. *Duolingo* shows the learners that

the way the learners pronounce and read the sentence is correct. The exercise given in picture 9-10 will help English learners practice the listening skill and improve the learners' pronunciation.

Learning Words by Listening the Words Pronounced by *Duolingo* System

Picture 11
Tuliskan kata yang hilang

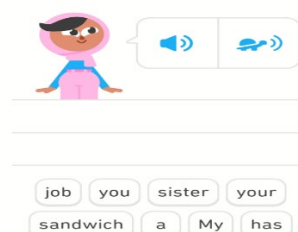


Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

In picture 11 the exercise is about writing a missing word, but the learners can catch the word from the sounds. In the picture the learners can see the symbol of a speaker that he can push and there will be sound from *Duolingo*. After that then from the sound the learners listen, the learners can catch the word to complete the sentence for this exercise. Therefore, in this exercise the learners will be able to practice their listening skills and writing skills by writing the words that the learners listen from *Duolingo*. Not only listening skills but also new vocabulary knowledge will be gained by the learners from this exercise because from the sound that the learners listen to the learners can guess the word and write the correct word to complete the sentence. It can be seen also in the picture a small symbol of a turtle, it shows that by pushing that button the words will be read more slowly. The turtle symbol button will help the learners practice listening better because for beginners usually they need to listen to the words for a couple of times until they catch the word that they need to write.

Practicing Creating a Good Sentence by Organizing Words

Picture 12
Pilih yang kamu dengar



Exercise shown in picture 12 is about organizing words into a correct and good sentence. The learners can listen first to the sound provided by

Duolingo. The learners can push either the speaker button on the left to have normal speed sound or the picture of turtle on the right (the turtle picture) for slower speed. By listening to the sound, the learners will be able to create a good sentence. This exercise helps learners with their writing skill by paying attention to the structure of the sentence.

Increasing Vocabulary by Matching Written Words and Pronounced Words

Picture 13

Ketuk pasangan yang cocok

	seluruh
	hakim
	lelah
	penting

Picture 14

Ketuk pasangan yang cocok

di	tuesday
menuju	towards
hakim	during
selasa	at
selama	judge

Source: <https://www.duolingo.com/>

In picture 13-14 the learners will do exercise on matching things on the left column and on the right column. In picture 13 there are signs or symbols of speakers and on the right side there are some words. In this exercise learners practice to match the sounds of English words they listen with the Indonesian words on the right side. From this exercise learners can practice their listening skills, and they practice their understanding about words. Without knowing the spelling of words, the learners must be able to match the sounds of English words with the Indonesian words on the right side. Therefore, it can be seen here that this exercise can help learners to comprehend the words read by speakers and match the words they heard with Indonesian words on the right side. This practice will help the learners build their vocabulary in English. For picture 14 the learner can match directly the Indonesian words on the left column with the English words on the right column.

CONCLUSION

Seeing samples of exercises taken from *Duolingo* the writer concludes that the use of *Duolingo*, both the app on cellphone or on website can enhance an English the learners' skills and vocabulary. The interesting way that *Duolingo* offers by using gamification learning style will increase learners'

motivation to practice their English more often. The writer feels sure that enhancement will happen if learners use *Duolingo* regularly.

Therefore, the writer suggests that any people who know about *Duolingo* introduce this app to people around them because the writer believes there are still many people who do not know the existence of *Duolingo* and how it can be useful for English learners to enhance their English vocabulary and skills. By introducing *Duolingo* to people especially those who are eager to learn English, people will feel the benefits of it and more people can learn English more easily.

REFERENCES

- Ajisoko, P. (2022). Using *duolingo* apps to improve English reading comprehension of engineering students in Universitas Borneo Tarakan. *Exposure Journal*, 1(1), 1–6. <https://journal.unismuh.ac.id/index.php/exposure>.
- Anton Adi Purwanto, & Syafryadin. (2023). Students' perception on using Duolingo for learning English vocabulary. *JET (Journal of English Teaching)*, 9(1). <https://doi.org/10.33541/jet.v9i1.4506>.
- Azzahara, T., Muliati, A., & Sakkir, G. (2023). The effect of using the duolingo application as a medium in improving students' vocabulary mastery. In *Journal of Technology in Language Pedagogy (JTechLP)*, 2(3).
- Fitria, N., Usman, M., & Sahara, N. (2023). Duolingo application for advancing English speaking skills. *Journal of Innovation in Educational and Cultural Research*, 4(4), 587–595. <https://doi.org/10.46843/jiecr.v4i4.630>
- Indrasari et al (2024). Unlocking language proficiency: exploring duolingo's impact on vocabulary learning. *Journal of English Teaching, Literature, and Applied Linguistics*, 8(1). <https://doi.org/10.30587/jetlal.v4i1>
- Irwit Santi, L., Hilal, A., & Kudus, B. (2023). Review of duolingo application in learning English. *Journal of English Language Education and Literature*, 8(2), 56–63. www.duolingo.com,
- Nasrul, V., & Fatimah, S. (2023). The effect of using duolingo application on students English learning motivation and vocabulary enrichment: an experimental research at SMKN 1 Padang. *Journal*

of English Language Teaching, 12(3), 933–952.
<https://doi.org/10.24036/jelt.v12i3.125020>

Nushi, M., & Eqbali, M. H. (n.d.). Duolingo: A mobile application to assist second language learning duolingo: A mobile application to assist second language learning (app review). In *Teaching English with Technology*, 17(1), <http://www.tewtjournal.org>

Permatasari, D., & Aryani, F. (2023). Duolingo: an enchanting application to learn English for college students. *ELTR Journal*, 7(2), 101–109. <https://doi.org/10.37147/eltr.v7i2.176>.

Pires, L. (2024). *Duolingo Users and Growth Statistics*. SignHouse. <https://usesignhouse.com/blog/duolingo-stats/>

Wallingford, P. (2024, September 15). *When Was Duolingo Created? The Fascinating Story*. Duolingo Guides. <https://duolingoguides.com/when-was-duolingo-created/>