

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Vocabulary is one of the most important parts of learning English that must be learned and taught. This is because without mastering and understanding certain vocabulary, mastering a language especially English will be difficult. Irawan, Wilson & Sutrisno (2020) stated, Vocabulary is also taught to support language skills. Teaching vocabulary is not just about introducing new words. It is also the decision that words should be taught based on how often the speaker uses them in communication. According to Purnawan, Padmadewi & Budiarta (2022), knowing a lot of vocabulary is important to have good communication, listening, reading, and writing as well. The most commonly used words are the words that teachers should teach first. As mentioned by Tamrin, Azliya & Sari (2017), a teacher must always need and provide learning tools. These tools help convey learning material easily. Additionally, using learning media allows students to better understand and absorb material from the teacher. Therefore, teachers need interesting media to motivate their students to learn.

However, the lack of use of media in learning makes the process less effective. Teaching media is a crucial tool to assist learning, but its absence can lead to significant issues. One common problem is limited vocabulary knowledge, often due to a lack of creativity in teaching, which makes students disinterested in learning English (Syafrizal & Haerudin (2018). who states that such problems can arise from using outdated or uninteresting media, which fails to motivate learners. The root of the problem often lies with teachers who cannot apply technology in learning. As Tamrin, Azliya, & Sari (2017) mention, many teachers cannot use media for various reasons, such as unfamiliarity with the technology or lack of training. This issue is particularly prevalent among older teachers who are unskilled in applying teaching media.

The use of technology in the application of learning is one of the approaches often used by teachers to motivate the students. Moreover, Hidayati & Diana (2019) stated, the integration of mobile technology in language learning can facilitate teachers to have authentic learning materials and to guide learners to interact with other language learners or even with the native. Furthermore, the use of technology in teaching, especially learning English makes teaching much easier for both educators and students. On the other hand, the use of technology as a learning media also has several problems. Nursyamsiah (2020) stated, the lack of media to support learning makes students not accustomed to using technology as a media for learning. Moreover, not all students have access to technology such as smartphones which makes them unable to learn using technology. Hidayati, et al., (2021) stated that students' dependence on old learning style such as direct explanations from the teacher makes learning using technology ineffective. Then, the use of technology in learning to be effective also requires time to adapt to students. Learning to use a smartphone will be a new thing and it is likely that students will not be comfortable constantly staring at a smartphone screen while studying. Hidayati & Diana (2019) stated due to their small screens, mobile devices like smartphones in particular have a limited interface. With this condition, completing tasks needing a significant amount of time for high level thinking is more challenging than doing it on a larger device like the computer, despite the tremendous affordances a smartphone can afford.

Learning vocabulary through platforms like Duolingo can be particularly effective. Duolingo exposes students to a wide range of vocabulary in context, covering various subjects like real-world scenarios, travel, cuisine, and culture. Nushi & Eqbali (2017) stated that Duolingo highlights errors made by students, helping them learn the rules of the language independently. Through the use of Duolingo, students can gain a deeper understanding of the vocabulary related to these subjects and contexts as well as practice applying it in authentic contexts. This method can significantly enhance students' language abilities by providing practical and engaging exercises that reinforce learning. There are several studies that have been carried out dealing with the use of Duolingo as a learning medium in teaching vocabulary. Nursyamsiah (2021) found that Duolingo is more effective in teaching

vocabulary than traditional methods. Using Classroom Action Research (CAR), she observed improvements in students' vocabulary mastery, as indicated by increasing test scores. Then, Hidayati, et al., (2021) found positive impacts of Duolingo on vocabulary learning. Their study, involving Mining Engineering students at the University of Muhammadiyah Mataram, showed that students were more interested and excited about using Duolingo because of its engaging, game-like approach. These findings suggest that Duolingo can effectively increase students' vocabulary mastery and enthusiasm for learning.

However, in this current research, the researcher will add a questionnaire for the data collection technique to see students' perspectives regarding the use of Duolingo as the learning medium. The researcher will use Classroom Action Method (CAR) to determine the effectiveness of Duolingo in improving student's vocabulary mastery for junior high school students. Based on what has been explained above, it can be concluded that new and interactive media are needed especially for teaching and learning of vocabulary. Therefore, the researcher intends to conduct research at SMP Muhammadiyah 1 Malang by using Duolingo as a learning medium. The researcher chooses the subjects at this school because, based on the preliminary study, the students' scores were very low in English lessons, especially in their vocabulary understanding. In addition, the students are also less enthusiastic and do not have sufficient motivation in learning due to the lack of use of learning media used by the teacher.

1.2 Statement of the Problem

Based on the research background above, the research problem is stated as follows, "How effective is the use of *Duolingo* as the media for teaching vocabulary in improving students' vocabulary mastery?"

1.3 Research Purpose

The purpose of this study is to determine the effectiveness of *Duolingo* as a learning media for improving students' vocabulary mastery.

1.4 The scope of limitation

This study focuses on evaluating the effectiveness of Duolingo as a teaching media for enhancing students' vocabulary mastery. The research is restricted to the students of junior high school as the participants.

1.5 The significance of the study

The significance of this study is to contribute to the field of education by investigating the effectiveness of Duolingo as an educational media for improving students' vocabulary mastery. The finding of this research is likely to help the teachers in increasing the vocabulary knowledge of junior high school students. Also, it is expected to facilitate teachers to improve their creativity in using learning media and make it easier for students to learn English.

1.6 The Definition of the Key Terms

In order to avoid misunderstanding of the main concepts used in this study, the following key terms are defined.

1. **Teaching media** can be interpreted as a physical and non-physical tool used by teachers to convey material to students to make it more effective and efficient (**Puspitarini & Hanif, 2019**). In this study, teaching media is teaching tools that can help teachers facilitate teaching and learning activities **vocabulary**.
2. **Vocabulary** can be defined as "the words we need to know to communicate effectively; words in speaking (expressive vocabulary) and words in listening (receptive vocabulary) (**Syafrizal & Haerudin, 2018**). In this study, vocabulary is the important words the need to mastered by the students in learning vocabulary.
3. **Duolingo** is a popular language learning platform and mobile application that offers a gamified approach to language learning. It provides users with a range of interactive exercises, quizzes, and lessons to develop their skills in various languages (Nushi & Eqbali, 2017). In this study, Duolingo is a learning application that can be used as a learning medium for teaching vocabulary.