

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 The Background of Study

In the 21st century, technology has become increasingly sophisticated, which also brings benefits to the field of education. Technology is now a central element in modern learning environments, offering innovative tools that support student engagement and accessibility. According to Raja and Nagasubramani (2018), It was discovered that using modern technology tools improves student learning and interaction. With the use of technology, they also find it to be much more engaging and fuller of interesting areas. Knowledge transfer becomes incredibly simple, practical, and efficient.

In language learning specifically, the role of technology has become increasingly important Pourhosein Gilakjani and Sabouri (2017), suggest that technology is a tool that teachers can utilize to enhance their instruction and practices, using technology to enhance English instruction and learning is a good idea for teachers. Similarly, Ahmadi (2018), claims that because technology plays a vital role in developing learners' creativity and offers them interesting, fun, and exciting ways to study the language, it should be used to improve language proficiency. This underscores the need for educators to adopt appropriate teaching media to foster better interaction and learning outcomes.

Based on the explanation above, there are various English learning applications using technology that can be applied to support teaching and learning English

activities. One widely known and accessible technological tool in language education is the *Duolingo* application. In 2012, the free language learning application *Duolingo* was created by Luis von Ahn and Severin Hacker (Jašková, 2014). The *Duolingo* Language application is the most downloaded educational application globally and a popular language-learning platform (Freeman et al., 2023). According to Šikulová (2023), *Duolingo* is the best-known language learning app, with over 500 million registered users.

Given its widespread use, including in Indonesia, it is important to explore how students perceive *Duolingo* as an English learning tool. Perception plays a key role in shaping learners' attitudes and behaviors toward educational technology. Numerous experts have provided varied definitions of perception. Qiong (2017), defined perception as the process of being aware of or understanding sensory data. "Perception" literally means "receiving, collecting, action of taking possession, and apprehension with the mind or senses." It is derived from the Latin terms perceptio and percipio. Each person's perception of an object will undoubtedly be unique because knowledge, experience, and learning about an experienced object all influence a person's view. Individuals' perceptions of objects might be either good or negative. Numerous elements, including motivation, needs, feelings, experiences, educational background, and so forth, are engaged in this process.

Furthermore, students today are a very digital generation and use technology as an integral part of their daily lives, where they use technology extensively to search the internet, socialize, and communicate (Popovici & Mironov, 2015).

Because of that, the researcher became interested in exploring how students perceive the use of technology as an English learning tool.

A related study concerning *Duolingo* was conducted by Jaelani and Sutari (2021), entitled “*Students’ Perception of Using the Duolingo Application as a Media in Learning Vocabulary*”. The study's objective was to ascertain how junior high school students in Bogor felt about using the *Duolingo* app to learn vocabulary. The study's findings revealed the majority of students preferred utilizing the *Duolingo* application as a medium for learning English vocabulary. There are several benefits to using the *Duolingo* application to learn English vocabulary, including the ease of understanding the material, increased enthusiasm, and motivation to learn, the ability of *Duolingo* to remove learning boredom, and encouraging of innovative learning concepts.

The second study by Nurhisyam et al. (2022), is entitled “*University Students’ Perception in Learning Vocabulary Through Duolingo*”. Ten students from Tadulako University's English Education Study Program, batch 2021, who were currently using or had ever used *Duolingo* served as the subjects. The average score of 89.76% shows that students have a dominantly positive opinion of using *Duolingo* to learn vocabulary. The study's findings indicated that *Duolingo* is a very useful tool for vocabulary learning because it is user-friendly, engaging, enjoyable, and free of advertisements.

The third study by Fadilah (2023), entitled “*Students’ Perception on the Use of Duolingo Application in Learning English During COVID-19*”. According to this

study, which was carried out at SMP Swasta IT Al-Fattah Desa Lama, the majority of students agreed with and responded positively to using the *Duolingo* application to learn English during COVID-19.

First, study was conducted in Bogor in 2020, and participants were 30 second-year junior high school students. The second study was conducted in 2022 in Palu with participants from ten Tadulako University batch 2021 students in the English Education Study Program. The third study in 2022 in SMP Swasta IT Al-Fattah Desa Lama. with 20 students in the ninth class. This study was conducted in 2024 in Malang and focuses on students majoring in English from Universitas Muhammadiyah Malang who have experience using the *Duolingo* application regarding their perceptions of *Duolingo* as an English language learning application. *Duolingo* is widely known for being used as one of the tools in the English learning process, and students majoring in English at least know about this application. Although *Duolingo* is a popular and widely used language learning application, no research has specifically explored the perceptions of UMM English language education students' classes of 2021 and 2022 about its use as a English language learning medium. Students may have different experiences and perceptions regarding the effectiveness of the application. The findings of this research can be a consideration for lecturers in choosing English learning media, and for departments to consider the use of technology in their academic programs.

1.2 The Research Question

Based on the background of the study above, the research question is as follows:

What are the students' perceptions of *Duolingo* as an English learning application?

1.3 The Purpose of The Study

The main purpose of this study is to investigate students' perceptions of *Duolingo* as an English learning application.

1.4 Significance of The Study

Following the background of the study, the researcher expects that this study can contribute to the following:

1. Teachers/lecturer

This research can help lecturers facilitate students learning English, which can be studied outside and inside the classroom at their own pace and level.

This research can also make it easier for lecturers to have a suitable and enjoyable method for learning English so that it can encourage students to develop their interest in learning and improve their English. So, it is promising to help lecturers teach English.

2. English Department

This research informs the UMM English Language Education Department about the benefits of using *Duolingo's* English language learning application as a student learning medium. This kind of technology can help

teachers and students learn English more easily, especially when it comes to improving their English. The use of varied applications can be used as a program from the department as a forum for student learning.

1.5 The Scope and Limitations

The scope of this research is students of 2021 and 2022 batches at the University of Muhammadiyah Malang majoring in English Language Education. *Duolingo* is widely known for being used as one of the tools in the English learning process, and students majoring in English should at least know about this application. Many students are looking for scholarships, so *Duolingo* can be an option for students to learn English and take tests on the application.

1.6 The Definition of Key Terms

This thesis needs to define the following terms to avoid misinterpretation. The terms are defined as follows:

a. Duolingo

The free language learning *Duolingo* can be accessed via mobile applications or the website (<https://id.duolingo.com/learn>). One of the technology applications that students can utilize to study English. This application connects lessons with games that can build interest in learning. The purpose of *Duolingo* is to help and support students in understanding the language.

b. Students' Perception

Students' perception refers to their views regarding their experience using the *Duolingo* application for learning English. Each student may have similar or different perceptions depending on their personal experiences, feelings, and mindset. According to Qiong (2017), each person's perception of an object will undoubtedly be unique because knowledge, experience, and learning about an experienced object all influence a person's view.

