STUDENTS' REASONS FOR USING DUOLINGO APPLICATION IN IMPROVING THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY

(A Study Of English Department Student Of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar Registered In 2025/2026 Academic Year)

THESIS

Submitted to the English Teaching Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, State Islamic University of Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, as a Requirement for Obtaining Bachelor Degree (S1) in Teaching English

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ABSTRACT

KILMA PUTRA, NIM 2230104021, thesis title: "STUDENTS' REASONS FOR USING DUOLINGO APPLICATION IN IMPROVING THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY (A Study of English Department Students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar Registered in 2025/2026 Academic Year)", English Language Teaching Department, Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, 2026.

This research was motivated by the importance of vocabulary mastery for English Department students in supporting their language skills. Along with the development of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) technology, the Duolingo application has become one of the digital-based learning media widely used by students independently. The purpose of this study was to explore the main reasons why English Department students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar choose and use the Duolingo application to improve their vocabulary mastery.

This study employed a descriptive qualitative research design. The research informants were selected using a purposive sampling technique, consisting of five English Department students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar registered in the 2025/2026 academic year who actively used the Duolingo application to learn vocabulary. The main research instrument was the researcher himself (human instrument) assisted by a semi-structured interview guide. Data were collected through in-depth interviews. Data analysis followed the Miles and Huberman model, which consists of three stages: data reduction, data display, and conclusion drawing/verification. Data trustworthiness was tested using member checking.

The results of the study showed that there are main reasons driving students to use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery, namely: (1) Ease of Use, which includes a simple interface, intuitive navigation, clear instructions, and immediate feedback; (2) Gamification Features, such as game elements (board game), leaderboards, and friends' quests, which make learning fun and non-monotonous; (3) Perceived Usefulness and Flexible Learning, where students experience a significant increase in both the quantity and quality of their vocabulary, as well as short learning durations (3–5 minutes per session) that make it easy to integrate into daily routines; (4) Curiosity, namely initial interest triggered by widespread advertisements and friends' recommendations; (5) Spaced Repetition, where vocabulary is regularly repeated in different contexts and question formats, leading to long-term memory retention; and (6) Audio and Pronunciation Support, which helps students accurately connect spelling, meaning, and pronunciation, thereby boosting their confidence in communication.

ABSTRAK

KILMA PUTRA, NIM 2230104021, judul skripsi: "STUDENTS' REASONS FOR USING DUOLINGO APPLICATION IN IMPROVING THEIR VOCABULARY MASTERY (A Study of English Department Students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar Registered in 2025/2026 Academic Year)", Jurusan Tadris Bahasa Inggris, Fakultas Tarbiyah dan Ilmu Keguruan, Universitas Islam Negeri (UIN) Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar, 2026.

Penelitian ini dilatarbelakangi oleh pentingnya penguasaan kosakata (vocabulary mastery) bagi mahasiswa Tadris Bahasa Inggris dalam mendukung kemampuan berbahasa. Seiring berkembangnya teknologi Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), aplikasi Duolingo menjadi salah satu media pembelajaran berbasis digital yang banyak dimanfaatkan oleh mahasiswa secara mandiri. Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengeksplorasi alasan-alasan utama mahasiswa Jurusan Tadris Bahasa Inggris UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar memilih dan menggunakan aplikasi Duolingo dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata mereka.

Penelitian ini menggunakan desain penelitian kualitatif deskriptif. Informant penelitian dipilih menggunakan teknik purposive sampling, yang terdiri dari lima orang mahasiswa Jurusan Tadris Bahasa Inggris UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar tahun akademik 2025/2026 yang aktif menggunakan aplikasi Duolingo untuk belajar kosakata. Instrumen utama penelitian adalah peneliti sendiri (human instrument) yang dibantu dengan pedoman wawancara terstruktur (semi-structured interview guide). Pengumpulan data dilakukan melalui wawancara mendalam. Analisis data mengikuti model Miles dan Huberman yang terdiri dari tiga tahapan, yaitu reduksi data (data reduction), penyajian data (data display), serta penarikan kesimpulan dan verifikasi (conclusion drawing and verification). Keabsahan data diuji dengan menggunakan member checking.

Hasil penelitian menunjukkan terdapat tujuh alasan utama yang mendorong mahasiswa menggunakan aplikasi Duolingo dalam meningkatkan penguasaan kosakata mereka, yaitu: (1) Keamanan dan Kemudahan Penggunaan (Ease of Use), yang meliputi antarmuka (interface) yang sederhana, navigasi intuitif, instruksi yang jelas, dan umpan balik langsung; (2) Fitur Gamifikasi (Gamification Features), seperti elemen permainan (board game), papan peringkat (leaderboard), dan friends quest yang membuat pembelajaran menjadi seru dan tidak monoton; (3) Persepsi Manfaat (Perceived Usefulness), di mana mahasiswa merasakan peningkatan kuantitas dan kualitas kosakata secara signifikandan Pembelajaran Fleksibel (Flexible Learning), berupa durasi belajar yang singkat (3–5 menit per sesi) yang memudahkan mahasiswa mengintegrasikannya ke dalam rutinitas harian; (4) Rasa Ingin Tahu (Curiosity), yaitu ketertarikan awal akibat maraknya iklan serta rekomendasi teman; (5) Pengulangan Berjarak (Spaced Repetition), di mana kosakata diulang secara teratur dalam konteks dan bentuk soal yang berbeda sehingga ingatan bertahan lama; serta (6) Dukungan Audio dan Pelafalan (Audio and Pronunciation Support), yang membantu mahasiswa menghubungkan ejaan, makna, dan cara pengucapan kata secara tepat sehingga meningkatkan rasa percaya diri saat berkomunikasi.

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CHAPTER I
INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Problem

According nation (2001) vocabulary is one of the most fundamental components of language learning because it provides the basis for understanding and producing language. In English language learning, vocabulary refers not only to a collection of words but also to learners' knowledge of word meanings, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical functions, collocations, and appropriate usage in different contexts. Knowing a word means more than recognizing its meaning; learners should also understand how and when the word is used in real communication. Therefore, vocabulary knowledge represents an essential aspect of communicative competence and serves as a foundation for successful language acquisition Heidari (2024).

Vocabulary mastery has long been recognized as a key factor in achieving proficiency in a second or foreign language. Without sufficient vocabulary knowledge, learners experience difficulties in understanding spoken and written texts as well as expressing ideas effectively. Although grammar provides the structural framework of a language, vocabulary carries the meanings that enable communication to occur. According to Nation (2001), knowing a word involves more than simply recognizing its meaning; it includes knowledge of its spoken and written forms, pronunciation, spelling, grammatical behavior, collocations, frequency, and appropriate use in different contexts Luisa & García, (2024) Likewise, Richards and Renandya (2002) explain that vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners listen, speak, read, and write (Scrutinizing Vocabulary and Grammar Presentation in English Textbooks, 2025). Therefore, vocabulary development has become one of the primary objectives of English language teaching because it supports learners in understanding and using the language effectively Nursyahrifa (2026).

The importance of vocabulary is also evident in the learning process of English as a Foreign Language (EFL). Unlike learners in English-speaking environments, EFL students generally have limited opportunities to practice English in their daily lives. As a result, vocabulary acquisition requires continuous learning both inside and outside the classroom. Nation (2013) argues that vocabulary knowledge is one of the strongest predictors of language proficiency because learners with larger vocabularies are more capable of understanding texts, participating in conversations, and producing meaningful written communication Luisa & García, (2024). Likewise, Schmitt (2008) states that vocabulary knowledge significantly influences learners' overall language competence since lexical knowledge supports comprehension and communication across various contexts Eskandari et al, (2024) Therefore, developing vocabulary mastery is essential for students who aim to achieve higher levels of English proficiency.

For students of the English Education Department, vocabulary mastery is particularly important because English functions not only as a subject of study but also as the primary medium through which academic knowledge is accessed. Throughout their academic journey, students are required to read textbooks, journal articles, research reports, and other academic references written predominantly in English. They are also expected to participate actively in classroom discussions, deliver presentations, write academic papers, and conduct research using English-language sources. These academic demands require students to possess an extensive vocabulary that enables them to comprehend complex information and communicate their ideas accurately Babayiğit (2026) Richards and Renandya (2002) explain that vocabulary knowledge directly supports the development of all four language skills and contributes significantly to learners' academic success (Hartini (2024) Therefore, vocabulary mastery becomes a fundamental requirement for English Department students to successfully complete their academic responsibilities.

Furthermore, vocabulary mastery plays a decisive role in preparing English Department students for their future professional careers. As prospective

English educators, translators, researchers, and global communications specialists, students are expected to demonstrate a high standard of professional English proficiency. This professional expectation cannot be fulfilled without an extensive and retentive vocabulary, as lexical breadth and depth directly dictate communicative accuracy, fluency, and discourse appropriateness across occupational settings Havwini et al. (2024)

The rapid evolution of digital technologies has profoundly transformed language pedagogy, particularly in the domain of vocabulary acquisition. Traditional vocabulary instruction, which relies heavily on printed textbooks and direct classroom delivery, is increasingly augmented by digital learning ecosystems that offer unprecedented accessibility, cognitive flexibility, and interactive feedback Alqahtani (2024) Integrating mobile and digital technologies into language learning enables students to transcend physical classroom boundaries, facilitating autonomous, self-paced vocabulary practice tailored to their individual learning needs Challoop (2025). Consequently, digital technology has emerged as an indispensable cornerstone of modern EFL education, fostering continuous micro-learning and offering expansive opportunities for deliberate language practice within informal, everyday contexts Anh (2026).

The integration of mobile technology into language learning is commonly conceptualized as Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). MALL refers to the strategic utilization of smartphones, tablets, and portable digital devices to facilitate language acquisition anytime and anywhere. Unlike conventional instruction, MALL provides learners with ubiquitous, flexible access to educational resources without being constrained by rigid classroom schedules or physical locations Antonio et al. (2025). Through dedicated mobile applications, students can engage in continuous vocabulary practice, receive instantaneous feedback, and autonomously monitor their linguistic progress Teymouri (2024). These technological affordances foster learner autonomy while encouraging students to become active, self-directed agents in their own vocabulary development. As Kukulska-Hulme highlights, mobile technologies

continuously expand boundaries for language acquisition by enabling contextualized interactions within flexible, authentic digital ecosystems Judijanto (2025).

The relationship between vocabulary mastery and digital learning applications has also received considerable attention in recent years. Digital applications facilitate vocabulary acquisition by providing repeated exposure to new words, contextualized learning activities, immediate corrective feedback, and interactive exercises that encourage active participation. These features are particularly beneficial because vocabulary learning requires continuous repetition and meaningful encounters with words in various contexts. Loewen et al. (2019) state that mobile-assisted language learning applications provide learners with frequent opportunities to review vocabulary through interactive activities, allowing vocabulary retention to occur more effectively than through one-time exposure alone. Therefore, digital learning applications have become valuable supplementary tools that support students in developing and maintaining their English vocabulary knowledge.

Numerous digital applications have been developed to assist students in learning English vocabulary. Applications such as Quizlet, Memrise, Busuu, Babbel, Mondly, and Duolingo provide various learning features designed to improve vocabulary knowledge through different instructional approaches. Quizlet emphasizes flashcards and spaced repetition to strengthen memory retention, while Memrise combines vocabulary learning with authentic video content and mnemonic techniques. Busuu offers structured language courses integrated with feedback from native speakers, whereas Babbel focuses on conversational language learning supported by grammar explanations. Each application possesses unique characteristics intended to accommodate learners' preferences, learning styles, and educational needs. As a result, students have numerous alternatives when selecting digital learning applications to support their vocabulary development.

Among these applications, Duolingo has emerged as one of the most widely recognized and frequently utilized mobile-assisted language learning (MALL)

platforms globally. Since its launch, Duolingo has attracted millions of users by providing free, highly accessible language instruction while incorporating interactive exercises and gamified mechanics designed to enhance learner engagement Loewen et al. (2019). The application strategically integrates vocabulary practice with listening, speaking, reading, translation, and sentence-construction tasks delivered through bite-sized, micro-learning sessions. Furthermore, Duolingo employs systematic gamification elements—such as experience points (XP), achievement badges, daily streak counters, level progressions, and competitive leaderboards—to motivate learners to maintain consistent daily study routines Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022). As Munday (2016) highlights, these gamified affordances create an enjoyable, low-anxiety environment that significantly increases learner motivation, fosters task persistence, and supports autonomous language acquisition beyond formal classroom settings.

To obtain preliminary information regarding students' use of language-learning applications, the researcher conducted a preliminary survey among students of the English Education Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. The survey involved 16 students and revealed that 10 students reported using Duolingo for vocabulary learning, while 6 students preferred other applications or learning methods. These findings indicate that Duolingo is one of the applications frequently used by students for vocabulary learning. This finding also suggests that although students have access to various language-learning applications and resources, many of them prefer to use Duolingo. Therefore, it becomes important to investigate the reasons behind their choice of this application.

The preliminary findings raise an important question regarding the reasons behind students' use of Duolingo. Since students have access to various applications and learning resources for vocabulary development, it is necessary to investigate the factors that influence their decision to use Duolingo. Understanding these reasons may provide valuable insights into students' preferences in utilizing digital tools for vocabulary learning and help educators

better understand the characteristics of technology-based learning favored by students.

Several previous studies have investigated the use of Duolingo in English language learning from different perspectives. Purwanto & Syafryadin, (2023) examined students' perceptions of using Duolingo for learning English vocabulary and found that students responded positively to the application due to its interactive features, accessibility, and engaging learning activities. Similarly, Loewen et al., (2019) conducted a study on mobile-assisted language learning through Duolingo and reported that the application could support vocabulary development and learner engagement. In addition, Shu & Munday, (2016) highlighted the educational benefits of integrating Duolingo into language learning, emphasizing that its interactive and game-like activities could increase learners' participation and interest in learning English. Furthermore, Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022) analyzed Duolingo as a language-learning platform and found that features such as gamification, rewards, user-friendly design, and accessibility contributed to its popularity among language learners.

To the researcher's knowledge, most previous studies have focused on students' perceptions, the effectiveness of Duolingo, learner engagement, and vocabulary achievement. While these studies have provided valuable insights into the educational benefits of Duolingo, studies specifically investigating students' reasons for using Duolingo for vocabulary learning remain limited, particularly among English Department students in the context of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Therefore, this study seeks to fill this gap by exploring the reasons that encourage students to use Duolingo in improving their vocabulary mastery.

Understanding students' reasons for using Duolingo is important because the findings may help lecturers, educators, and researchers gain a better understanding of students' preferences in technology-based vocabulary learning. Furthermore, the findings may provide useful information for

selecting and implementing digital learning applications that are relevant to students' learning needs and interests.

Based on the explanation above, the researcher is interested in conducting a study entitled "Students' Reasons for Using Duolingo Application in Improving Their Vocabulary Mastery (A Study of English Department Students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar Registered in the 2025/2026 Academic Year)."

B. Research Focus and Question

Based on the background of the problem, this study focuses on exploring the reasons why English Department students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery. The study specifically investigates the factors that encourage students to choose and use Duolingo as a vocabulary-learning tool. Based on the research focus, the research question is

What are the reasons for English Department students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar to use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery?

C. Research Purpose

Based on the research focus and research question, the purpose of this research is:

To explore the reasons why English Department students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery.

D. Significance of the Study

This study is expected to provide benefits for the following parties:

1. English department student of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar

   The findings of this study are expected to provide information about the reasons why English Department students use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery. The findings may also help students

understand the factors that encourage the use of Duolingo and become a consideration in choosing learning applications that suit their vocabulary learning needs.

2. The researcher

   This study is expected to increase the researcher's understanding of the reasons why English Department students use the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery. In addition, this study is expected to provide experience in conducting qualitative research, especially in collecting, analyzing, and interpreting research data

3. Future Researchers

   The findings of this study are expected to serve as a reference for future researchers who are interested in conducting studies related to the reasons for using the Duolingo application or other language-learning applications in different contexts or with different participants.

E. Definition of Key Terms

To make the meaning of this research clearer, the following key terms are explained based on how they are used in this study:

1. Reason

   In this study, reasons refer to the students' explanations or motivations for choosing and using the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery. These reasons include the factors that encourage students to use the application as part of their vocabulary learning.

2. Duolingo Application

   In this study, Duolingo refers to a language-learning application used by English Department students of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar to support vocabulary learning through various learning activities and exercises.

3. Vocabulary Mastery

   In this study, vocabulary mastery refers to the students' knowledge and understanding of English vocabulary that support their English learning.

In this study, vocabulary mastery is discussed in relation to the students' reasons for using the Duolingo application.

CHAPTER II
REVIEW OF RELATED LITERATURE

A. Review of Related Theories

1. Definition of Vocabulary Learning

Vocabulary is a very important aspect in English language teaching. Experts assert that vocabulary learning is at the core of language acquisition, whether it is a first, second, or foreign language; vocabulary is one of the most important aspects of foreign language learning; vocabulary is knowledge of word meanings, which is divided into active and passive vocabulary; and vocabulary development includes learning formulaic phrases or chunks and deepening the understanding of these words (Murcia, 2001; Richards & Rodgers, 2001; Hiebert & Kamil, 2005; Cameron, 2001, as cited in Nurchurifiani et al., 2021).

Vocabulary is widely recognized as one of the most fundamental components of language learning because it provides the basis for communication and language proficiency. Without an adequate vocabulary, learners may struggle to understand spoken or written texts and may also find it difficult to express their ideas effectively. Although grammar provides the structural framework of a language, vocabulary supplies the meanings that enable communication to occur. Consequently, vocabulary development has become one of the primary objectives in second language acquisition and English language teaching.

According to Richards and Renandya (2002), vocabulary is a core component of language proficiency and provides much of the basis for how well learners speak, listen, read, and write. They argue that vocabulary knowledge is essential because learners cannot effectively develop the four language skills without possessing sufficient knowledge of words. For example, students with a larger vocabulary are generally better able to understand reading materials, comprehend spoken language, participate in conversations, and produce coherent written texts. Therefore, vocabulary learning plays a central role in achieving communicative competence Nursyahrifa (2026).

Similarly, Schmitt (2000) emphasizes that vocabulary occupies a central position in language learning because learners cannot communicate successfully without sufficient vocabulary knowledge. He explains that while grammar helps learners organize language, vocabulary provides the meanings necessary to convey messages. For this reason, vocabulary instruction has become one of the most important areas in English language teaching, particularly for learners studying English as a foreign language (EFL). Schmitt further argues that vocabulary acquisition is a gradual process requiring repeated exposure to words in various contexts so that learners can understand not only their meanings but also their appropriate use Heidari (2024).

Vocabulary acquisition serves as the primary foundational pillar for language mastery and effective communication. As famously stated by Thornbury (2002), while very little can be conveyed without grammar, nothing can be conveyed without vocabulary Dhungana (2026). Expanding on this core principle, recent research emphasizes that knowing a word encompasses a multi-dimensional construct rather than simple translation or isolated memorization. Specifically, Nation (2022) asserts that comprehensive vocabulary knowledge requires learners to master form, meaning, and contextual use through repeated, meaningful linguistic exposures Dhungana (2026). Recent empirical findings by Bunga and Nur, (2026) confirm these theoretical frameworks, demonstrating that interactive, context-driven pedagogical strategies uch as cooperative role-play and contextual teacher-mediated tasks significantly enhance word retention, active recall, and communicative confidence among foreign language learners.

In recent years, technological developments have significantly influenced vocabulary learning. Mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications provide learners with greater flexibility to study vocabulary anytime and anywhere. These applications often incorporate multimedia elements, interactive exercises, immediate feedback, and gamification features that encourage learners to engage in regular vocabulary practice. Such

characteristics make mobile applications particularly attractive for students who seek independent and flexible learning opportunities outside the classroom.

One of the most widely used mobile language learning applications is Duolingo. The application introduces vocabulary through short learning units that combine pictures, translations, pronunciation practice, sentence completion, matching exercises, and spaced repetition. These features allow learners to encounter vocabulary repeatedly in different contexts, which supports vocabulary acquisition and retention. Furthermore, Duolingo's gamified elements, such as points, streaks, badges, and achievement levels, are designed to increase learners' motivation and encourage continuous engagement with vocabulary learning activities.

For university students, vocabulary development is especially important because vocabulary knowledge supports academic reading, writing, listening comprehension, and oral communication. Students with broader vocabulary knowledge generally experience fewer difficulties in understanding English materials, participating in classroom discussions, and completing academic assignments. Therefore, many students choose to use supplementary learning applications such as Duolingo to expand their vocabulary beyond classroom instruction.

In the context of the present study, vocabulary refers to the English words and lexical knowledge that students acquire, understand, and use through learning activities in Duolingo. This includes not only learning the meanings of new words but also developing knowledge of pronunciation, spelling, grammatical functions, and appropriate usage in different communicative situations. Since this study focuses on students' reasons for using Duolingo, understanding the concept and importance of vocabulary provides an essential foundation for explaining why students choose the application as a tool to support their English language learning.

2. Kinds of Vocabulary

a. Receptive vocabulary

According to Segura et al. (2021), receptive vocabulary refers to words that learners can recognize and comprehend when listening to spoken language or reading text, even if they do not actively use or produce those words in their own speech or writing. In receptive vocabulary knowledge, learners focus on understanding the semantic meaning of words within context and recognizing form-meaning connections without needing to independently recall or construct the word forms. Because it only requires partial word knowledge, receptive vocabulary is acquired faster and constitutes the essential foundation for second language comprehension and literacy development (Segura et al., 2021).

b. Productive vocabulary

According to Segura et al. (2021), productive vocabulary refers to the stage of word knowledge where learners not only recognize and understand a word, but also know how to actively retrieve and use it in their own speech or writing. According to Meara and Miralpeix (2021), productive vocabulary represents a higher level of complexity along the learning continuum because learners must master detailed linguistic features such as spoken and written forms, grammatical functions, and collocations rather than relying on partial recognition. roductive vocabulary can be divided into two types: Controlled Productive Vocabulary: According to Laufer and Goldstein (2020), this refers to the ability to produce target words when prompted by specific cues or explicit tasks (e.g., fill-in-the-blank or sentence completion exercises). Free Productive Vocabulary: According to Laufer and Goldstein (2020), this refers to the ability to spontaneously and autonomously select appropriate words during unprompted or open-ended communication (Segura et al., 2021).

3. Vocabulary mastery

According to Waruwu, Hidayati , Telaumbanua, (2023) vocabulary mastery is defined as a learner's comprehensive ability to understand the meanings of words and effectively utilize them to communicate ideas, information, or concepts both orally and in written forms.

According to Rahmawati et al. (2025), vocabulary mastery refers to the capacity of language learners to acquire, retain, and apply lexical competence across all primary language skills—listening, speaking, reading, and writing. It involves not only memorizing isolated word forms but also understanding their meanings and functions accurately within specific communicative contexts.

English vocabulary mastery is essential in students' learning and academic achievement. If students have limited English vocabulary, especially with regard to academic subject matter, this will result students' difficulties in comprehending other subjects that incorporating English materials and resources (Havwini et al., 2024)

According to Hornby (2006), vocabulary is all the words that a person knows or uses, as well as all the words in a particular language. Similarly, Hatch and Brown (1995) define vocabulary as a list or set of words used in a particular language or by individual speakers (Lestari, 2015). While mastering vocabulary remains a fundamental core of language learning, traditional classroom instruction often provides limited opportunities for continuous exposure and practice. To bridge this gap, modern educational technology has introduced mobile platforms as an accessible medium for dynamic word acquisition. The integration of mobile devices into language pedagogy is conceptualized as Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL).

4. Definition of MALL

Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) refers to the strategic deployment of smartphones, tablets, and portable digital devices to facilitate language acquisition across formal, informal, and lifelong learning contexts.

MALL provides language educators with innovative pedagogical affordances to design engaging, interactive learning activities that heighten student motivation and language processing. Through mobile-mediated platforms, learners can access educational resources, practice target-language skills, and collaborate with peers and instructors ubiquitously, transcending traditional spatial and temporal classroom boundaries (Anh, 2026)

However, the ultimate efficacy of MALL is not automatically guaranteed by device mobility and accessibility alone; rather, it depends on a complex interplay of technological affordances and learner-centered factors. In accordance with mobile learning frameworks, technical attributes—such as screen size, input/output responsiveness (touchscreen vs. keypad), device portability, and audio-visual clarity—directly impact user interaction and cognitive load during learning tasks. Furthermore, individual learner characteristics, including digital literacy levels, prior technological experience, self-regulation, and attitudes toward mobile learning, significantly mediate engagement and learning outcomes (Challoop, 2025). Among the various mobile applications that successfully harmonize these technical affordances and user-centered factors, Duolingo has emerged as a prominent exemplar within the MALL ecosystem. By aligning device usability with gamified, low-anxiety user experiences, Duolingo operationalizes the core principles of mobile-assisted language learning into an accessible digital tool.

5. Duolingo

a. Definition of Duolingo

Duolingo is widely recognized as one of the most popular applications for language learning. It can be accessed free of charge through both computers and mobile devices. According to (Munday, 2016), Duolingo is designed to make language learning enjoyable by integrating various language skills into game-like activities. The platform links lessons with interactive features that help increase learners' interest in studying a

language. It also incorporates audio, visual elements, and exercises related to vocabulary and grammar in an engaging way, which can contribute to the improvement of users' English language skills.

b. Features of Duolingo

Duolingo incorporates a multi-modal battery of exercises designed to support language learning through varied interactive tasks. These include bidirectional translation activities, in which learners translate sentences between their native language and the target language. The platform also features image-word association tasks, where learners pair visual graphics with corresponding lexical items, as well as vocabulary alignment drills that require matching equivalent word pairs across two languages. Furthermore, listening comprehension activities require learners to transcribe short auditory phrases delivered by native-sounding text-to-speech audio, while speech-recognition exercises prompt learners to repeat or pronounce target-language expressions (Loewen et al., 2019).

Each instructional session typically comprises 10 to 15 micro-learning exercises that systematically combine these distinct activity types. Learners monitor their real-time performance through a dynamic progress indicator displayed at the top of the interface, which advances incrementally upon each correct response. Incorrect answers stall progress; instead, the application highlights errors and strategically re-presents missed items at the end of the lesson until mastery is demonstrated. Additionally, Duolingo's adaptive framework permits unlimited lesson repetition, allowing learners to revisit completed modules autonomously to reinforce retention (Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, 2022)

c. Advantages and Disadvantages of Duolingo

(1) Advantages of Duolingo

Duolingo provides a wide range of language options. As of February 2022, the platform offers around 40 languages. Besides widely learned languages such as English, French, and Spanish, users can also study

less commonly taught or endangered languages like Hawaiian and Navajo. In addition, Duolingo includes fictional languages such as High Valyrian from Game of Thrones and Klingon from Star Trek, giving learners a more diverse and unconventional selection.

Another key feature of Duolingo is its use of gamification. Learners progress by unlocking higher levels, earning points for completed exercises, and competing on leaderboards. The platform also rewards users with virtual tokens and in-app currency called gems, which can be used to access additional features. The system includes a “hearts” mechanism that limits mistakes, along with visible statistics and achievement tracking. This game-like structure helps maintain user engagement, and according to von Ahn, Duolingo’s retention rates are more comparable to gaming platforms than traditional learning applications (Adams, 2019 as cited in Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022).

Duolingo also operates under a freemium model and incorporates crowdsourcing. Users can access basic learning features for free, while premium options such as unlimited lives, additional lessons, and level skipping are available through paid subscriptions. Initially, the course content was developed by the founders with support from professional linguists, but over time, contributions from volunteers have played a significant role. Users can suggest alternative translations during lessons, and this crowdsourced input, along with ad-supported content, enables Duolingo to maintain free access for its users Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022).

(2) Disadvantages of Duolingo

Duolingo is not without its limitations, particularly in terms of technical performance. Users often encounter software issues, and the voice recognition feature is considered relatively inaccurate. Although there is an option to report bugs, the platform does not provide direct access to technical support. As a result, most technical problems are

typically handled by users themselves, often through simple actions such as restarting or reinstalling the application Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022).

Another limitation lies in the scope of its learning content. Duolingo mainly focuses on beginner to intermediate levels based on the CEFR framework, making it insufficient for learners aiming to reach advanced proficiency. The material can also feel repetitive over time, which may reduce learner motivation. Additionally, since many exercises rely on translation between languages, users are required to have prior knowledge of at least one language offered by the platfor

Duolingo's overall image is sometimes viewed as less serious compared to more traditional learning platforms. Its playful design and unconventional teaching methods can lead to criticism, with some people perceiving it as lacking academic credibility. As a result, the platform is occasionally ridiculed for prioritizing entertainment over a more formal educational approach.

Another issue relates to user behavior within the platform. Some learners focus more on competition than actual learning, aiming to accumulate points rather than develop language skills. This can involve repeating simple exercises or only engaging with basic levels across multiple languages. In some cases, users even rely on automated scripts to complete tasks. Such practices can discourage other learners and reinforce the perception of Duolingo as a game focused on winning, rather than an effective educational tool Sakalauskė & Leonavičiūtė, (2022).

6. Students' Reasons for Using Duolingo

In technology-enhanced language learning (TELL), students do not adopt digital learning applications randomly. Instead, they make decisions based on various considerations, including their learning needs, personal goals, previous learning experiences, and perceptions of the learning technology. These considerations influence learners' willingness to use an application as well as their intention to continue using it throughout the learning process Kukulska-hulme & Shield, (2008) In the context of this study, students' reasons for using Duolingo are understood as the various motivational and technology-related considerations that encourage students to use the application to improve their English vocabulary. Rather than being viewed as a single psychological construct, these reasons are conceptualised through two complementary theoretical perspectives. Self-Determination Theory Ryan & Deci, (2000) explains the motivational aspects underlying students' engagement, whereas the Technology Acceptance Model Davis (2014) explains how students' perceptions of Duolingo influence their decision to use the application. These theories are discussed in the following sections.

a. Ease of Use

One of the main reasons students choose Duolingo is its ease of use. Ease of use refers to students' perceptions that the application is simple to learn, easy to navigate, and does not require significant effort to operate. A learning application that is user-friendly enables students to focus on the learning process rather than on understanding how to use the technology itself. As a result, students are more likely to use the application consistently as part of their independent vocabulary learning.

The importance of ease of use can be explained through the concept of Perceived Ease of Use proposed in the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM). According to Davis Davis (2014), Perceived Ease of Use is defined as the degree to which an individual believes that using a particular system will be free of effort. Users are more willing to adopt a technology when

they perceive it as easy to understand, easy to operate, and requiring minimal mental and physical effort. Furthermore, technologies that are easier to use are more likely to encourage continued usage because users experience fewer difficulties when interacting with the system.

In the context of Duolingo, students may perceive the application as easy to use because it provides a simple interface, clear instructions, organized learning materials, and intuitive navigation. Learning activities are presented in short lessons with immediate feedback, allowing students to complete vocabulary exercises without requiring extensive technical knowledge. These characteristics help students access learning materials quickly and maintain regular learning habits.

Several previous studies have also reported that ease of use is an important factor influencing students' acceptance of mobile-assisted language learning applications. Students tend to use language learning applications more frequently when they perceive them as simple, practical, and convenient for daily learning activities. Therefore, the ease of using Duolingo can be considered one of the primary reasons why students choose the application to support their English vocabulary learning.

b. Gamification Features

The implementation of gamification in modern learning media has been shown to have a significant impact on student motivation and engagement, particularly within digital learning environments. A systematic review by Ertan & Selay, (2022) emphasizes that gamification elements such as badges, leaderboards, adaptive challenges, and immediate feedback effectively trigger and sustain student motivation through both competitive and collaborative approaches. This aligns with the findings of Shortt et al. 2021) regarding Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) applications like Duolingo, where mechanics such as streaks, experience points (XP), and leaderboards prove highly effective in driving initial interest and consistent user interaction with learning materials. Duolingo incorporates

various gamification features such as experience points (XP), daily streaks, badges, hearts, levels, achievements, and leaderboards. These features provide learners with clear goals, immediate feedback, and rewards for completing learning tasks. By monitoring their progress and earning achievements, students can experience a sense of accomplishment that encourages them to continue practicing regularly.

Furthermore, gamified learning environments can reduce boredom and make repetitive activities more enjoyable. This is particularly beneficial in vocabulary learning, which often requires repeated exposure and practice. Through game-like features, students may perceive vocabulary learning as more interesting and less monotonous than traditional learning methods. As a result, they are more likely to maintain their engagement and continue using the application over time.

In the context of this study, gamification features are considered one of the reasons students use Duolingo because these features create enjoyable learning experiences, increase engagement, and encourage students to practice English vocabulary consistently. Therefore, the presence of game elements within Duolingo may contribute to students' decisions to adopt and continue using the application for vocabulary learning.

c. Flexible Learning

Another reason students use Duolingo is its flexible learning environment. Flexibility in learning refers to learners' ability to access educational materials regardless of time and place, allowing them to study according to their own schedules and learning pace. This flexibility is particularly important for university students who often need to balance academic responsibilities with other daily activities.

The concept of flexible learning is closely associated with Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL). According to Loewen et al. (2019) MALL emphasizes the use of mobile devices to support flexible, accessible, and autonomous language learning experiences. Mobile learning

applications enable learners to engage with learning materials anytime and anywhere, while providing repeated exposure, interactive activities, and immediate feedback that facilitate language acquisition. Consequently, MALL allows students to integrate language learning into their daily routines without being restricted by classroom schedules or specific learning locations.

As a mobile-assisted language learning application, Duolingo provides students with the flexibility to learn English whenever and wherever they choose. The application can be accessed through smartphones, allowing learners to complete short learning sessions during their free time. This flexibility is especially beneficial for students who have limited time, financial constraints, or restricted access to formal English courses. By eliminating the limitations of time and place, Duolingo enables learners to maintain consistent learning habits while accommodating their individual schedules.

Furthermore, the study by Dhiyaushshafa & Djuharie, (2025) highlights that Duolingo supports independent English learning by providing learners with the freedom to determine when, where, and how long they study. This flexibility encourages students to engage in continuous vocabulary learning without relying solely on classroom instruction. Therefore, flexible learning becomes one of the important reasons students choose Duolingo as a supplementary tool for improving their English vocabulary.

d. Vocabulary Improvement

Another important reason students use Duolingo is its effectiveness in improving English vocabulary. Vocabulary improvement refers to the process of expanding learners' knowledge and understanding of words, enabling them to communicate more effectively in English. A strong vocabulary foundation is essential because it supports learners' abilities to understand texts, express ideas, and develop other language skills.

According to Loewen et al. (2019), mobile-assisted language learning (MALL) applications facilitate vocabulary acquisition by providing repeated exposure, interactive learning activities, and immediate feedback. These features allow learners to encounter new words multiple times in different contexts, helping them retain vocabulary more effectively.

Furthermore, Vesselinov and john, (2012) found that Duolingo contributes positively to vocabulary development by encouraging consistent practice and repeated exposure to new words. The application enables learners to gradually acquire vocabulary through short and interactive lessons, making the learning process more manageable and engaging. Therefore, students may choose Duolingo because they perceive it as an effective tool for expanding their English vocabulary while maintaining regular learning habits.

B. Review of Relevant Studies

Several studies have discussed the use of Duolingo in English language learning from various perspectives. Loewen et al. (2019), in a study entitled *Mobile-Assisted Language Learning: A Duolingo Case Study*, investigated the contribution of Duolingo to second language learning through a mixed-method approach. The study involved adult language learners who used Duolingo over a certain period. The findings revealed that Duolingo positively supported vocabulary acquisition by providing repeated exposure to vocabulary, immediate feedback, and interactive learning activities. The researchers concluded that Duolingo could effectively complement language learning, although it should not replace formal language instruction. This study is relevant to the present research because both examine Duolingo as a tool for English vocabulary learning. However, the previous study emphasized the effectiveness of Duolingo in improving language learning outcomes, whereas the present study focuses on exploring the reasons why students choose and continue using Duolingo to improve their vocabulary mastery. Therefore, this study extends previous research by investigating the factors underlying students' decisions rather than evaluating the application's effectiveness.

Purwanto & Syafryadin, (2023) conducted a qualitative study entitled *Students' Perception Toward the Use of Duolingo Application in Learning English Vocabulary*. The purpose of the study was to investigate students' perceptions after using Duolingo in vocabulary learning. The findings indicated that students viewed Duolingo positively because of its user-friendly interface, gamification features, accessibility, and engaging learning activities. These characteristics encouraged students to learn vocabulary more consistently and independently. Although this study is closely related to the present research because both discuss Duolingo in vocabulary learning, the focus is different. The previous study explored students' perceptions of the application after using it, while the present research seeks to identify the reasons that motivate students to select and continue using Duolingo. Consequently, the present study complements previous findings by emphasizing students' motivations and decision-making processes.

Munday (2016) examined the implementation of Duolingo as a technology-enhanced language learning platform. Their study highlighted that personalized learning paths, gamification, immediate feedback, and interactive activities created an engaging learning environment that encouraged learner participation. The researchers concluded that Duolingo promoted autonomous learning because learners could practice English independently outside the classroom. The previous study is relevant to the present research since both discuss Duolingo as a language-learning application. Nevertheless, Shu and Munday focused primarily on the educational features of Duolingo and their influence on language learning, whereas the current study explores the reasons behind students' decisions to adopt Duolingo as their preferred vocabulary-learning application. Accordingly, the present research provides a learner-centered perspective rather than an application-centered evaluation.

Based on the previous studies, it can be concluded that most existing research has investigated Duolingo from the perspectives of effectiveness, students' perceptions, vocabulary improvement, learner engagement, autonomous learning, and gamification. These studies have demonstrated that

Duolingo provides positive contributions to English language learning and vocabulary development. However, limited attention has been given to exploring the reasons that influence students' decisions to choose and continue using Duolingo as a vocabulary-learning application. Moreover, previous studies were conducted in different educational contexts and involved participants from different institutions. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, no previous study has specifically explored this issue among English Department students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. Therefore, the present study seeks to fill this research gap by exploring the reasons why English Department students at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar use Duolingo to improve their vocabulary mastery.

Most of these studies focused on students' perceptions, the effectiveness of Duolingo, vocabulary improvement, learner engagement, and gamification. However, only a few studies have specifically examined the reasons why students choose and continue using Duolingo as a vocabulary learning application. Therefore, the following studies are considered relevant to the present research.

CHAPTER III
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

A. Research Design

This research employed a descriptive qualitative design. This design was chosen because the primary purpose of the study was to explore students' reasons for using the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary. A qualitative approach enabled the researcher to gain an in-depth understanding of the reasons, experiences, and considerations that influenced students' decisions to use Duolingo as a vocabulary learning tool. As Creswell (2012), states, qualitative research is appropriate for studies that seek to understand a phenomenon from the perspectives of participants. Therefore, this approach was considered suitable for exploring students' reasons for using Duolingo in their vocabulary learning (Kalu, 2017).

The descriptive qualitative method was employed to provide a comprehensive description of the factors underlying students' decisions to use Duolingo. Rather than testing the effectiveness of the application or measuring students' achievement, this study focused on describing the reasons that motivated students to adopt Duolingo as part of their vocabulary learning process. Through semi-structured interviews, the researcher explored participants' experiences, considerations, and personal explanations regarding their use of the application.

Furthermore, the descriptive qualitative design was considered appropriate because it aligned with the research objective, which was to understand why students chose to use Duolingo for vocabulary learning. The findings were expected to provide a detailed description of students' reasons and contribute to a better understanding of the factors influencing the use of educational technology in language learning.

B. Research Setting

This research was conducted at the English Education Department of UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar. The department was selected because vocabulary learning is one of the essential components of the English curriculum, and many

students have started using digital learning applications such as Duolingo to support their English learning. In addition, the integration of mobile learning applications into language learning has become increasingly common among university students, making this department an appropriate setting for exploring students' reasons for using Duolingo in learning English vocabulary.

The English Education Department is under the Faculty of Tarbiyah and Teacher Training (FITK). The department offers various courses related to English language skills and language teaching, including courses that require students to develop vocabulary mastery for both academic and communicative purposes. Since vocabulary knowledge plays a fundamental role in developing other language skills, this academic setting provides an appropriate context for investigating the reasons why students choose to use Duolingo as a vocabulary-learning application.

This study was conducted during the 2025/2026 academic year. The participants were students who had completed several advanced English courses and had experience using digital technology in their learning activities. Their familiarity with language learning applications enabled them to provide rich and relevant information regarding the reasons that influenced their decision to use Duolingo for learning English vocabulary. Therefore, they were considered suitable participants for achieving the objectives of this study.

C. Research Informants

Research informants are individuals who possess relevant knowledge and experience related to the research problem, enabling them to provide meaningful and accurate information. In qualitative research, informants are selected based on their ability to contribute rich and detailed insights into the phenomenon under study. (Creswell, 2012) states that qualitative researchers intentionally select participants who can best help them understand the central phenomenon through purposive sampling (Furqon et al., 2025).

The informants in this study were students of the English Education Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar from various academic years who had experience using the Duolingo application to improve their English

vocabulary mastery. Their direct experience with the application enabled them to provide comprehensive information regarding the reasons that influenced their decision to use Duolingo as a vocabulary learning tool.

To determine the informants, the researcher employed purposive sampling. According to Creswell (2012), purposive sampling is a technique used to intentionally select participants who meet specific criteria relevant to the objectives of the study (Sakkir & Aziza, 2023). The selection process began with a preliminary survey distributed through Google Forms to identify students who had experience using the Duolingo application for improving their English vocabulary mastery. Based on the survey results, the researcher selected participants who met the predetermined criteria and were able to provide rich and detailed information regarding their reasons for using Duolingo. This sampling technique ensured that the data collected were relevant, meaningful, and appropriate for answering the research question.

The participants in this study were selected based on the following criteria:

They were students of the English Education Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar.

They had experience using the Duolingo application to improve their English vocabulary mastery.

They were willing to participate voluntarily in the interview.

They were able to explain their experiences and reasons for using the Duolingo application in detail.

D. Research Instrument

The primary instrument of this study was the researcher himself. In qualitative research, the researcher functions as the main instrument because he is responsible for planning, collecting, interpreting, and analyzing the data. Therefore, the researcher must have sufficient understanding of the research focus, the context, and the procedures of qualitative inquiry (Sugiyono, 2018).

The data were collected through interviews. According to Gay et al. (2012), an interview is a purposeful interaction between the researcher and participants conducted to obtain detailed information related to the research topic. In this study, a semi-structured interview was employed because it enabled the researcher to prepare guiding questions while also allowing participants to explain their experiences, opinions, and reasons in greater depth. This type of interview provided flexibility for the researcher to ask follow-up questions whenever additional clarification was needed.

The interview questions focused on exploring the factors that encouraged students to use Duolingo for improving their English vocabulary mastery. During the interview, participants were invited to explain why they chose Duolingo, what benefits they obtained from using the application, what aspects motivated them to continue using it, and how their experiences influenced their decision to use the application as a vocabulary learning tool. The interviews were audio-recorded with the participants' consent to ensure the accuracy and completeness of the collected data.

E. Technique of Data Collection

The researcher will conduct interviews as one of the data collection methods. This includes preparing interview guidelines, asking questions based on the guidelines, and recording the interview results. The focus is specifically on students who use Duolingo application in learning vocabulary. In qualitative research, interviews are one of the recognized data collection techniques,

which involve a series of questions and answers with selected informants or sources Nursapia (2020)

F. Technique of Data Analysis

The data will be analysed based on the the result of the interview. The result of the interview will be analysed in three steps; reduction of the data; data display; and conclusion and data (Crismeilani et al., 2025; Miles & Huberman, 1994) .In analysing qualitative data needs three activities, they are:

1. Data Reduction

In this study, several steps were carried out during the data reduction process. First, the researcher conducted in-depth interviews with the participants and recorded all conversations using a smartphone. Second, the interview recordings were transcribed verbatim so that every participant's response was documented exactly as spoken. To facilitate the transcription process, the researcher used TurboScribe as an automatic transcription tool. After obtaining the initial transcripts, the researcher carefully reviewed and compared each transcript with the original audio recordings to ensure the accuracy of the data and to correct any transcription errors.

After completing the transcription and verification process, the researcher conducted member checking by sending the interview transcripts to the participants. This process was intended to confirm that the transcripts accurately reflected the participants' responses and to minimize possible misinterpretations.

Next, each transcript was organized using a coding system. Each participant was assigned an identification code, such as I-1 (Informant 1), I-2 (Informant 2), I-3 (Informant 3), and so forth. Meanwhile, the researcher's questions were consistently coded as R (Researcher). After organizing the transcripts, the researcher read the data repeatedly to identify meaningful statements related to the research focus, namely students' reasons for using the Duolingo application for improving English vocabulary mastery.

The researcher then assigned initial reason codes to each meaningful statement. For example, E1 (Ease of Use), U-01 (Flexible Learning), U-02 (Vocabulary Improvement), R1 (Spaced Repetition), A1 (Audio and Pronunciation Support), C1 (Curiosity), and G1 (Gamification Features). These codes were assigned to meaningful segments of the interview transcripts and subsequently organized into broader themes during the thematic analysis process. These codes were used to organize similar responses into broader categories and themes. Statements that were not relevant to the research objectives were excluded from further analysis.

2. Data Display

The data were presented in the form of tables containing the informant codes, excerpts from the interview transcripts, initial codes, categories, themes, and the researcher's interpretation. Presenting the data in this way enabled the researcher to compare participants' responses, identify recurring patterns, and understand the dominant reasons underlying students' use of the Duolingo application. The data display also facilitated the researcher in interpreting the findings systematically before drawing the final conclusions.

3. Conclusion and Data Verification

In this study, the researcher drew conclusions based on the themes that emerged from the interview data regarding students' reasons for using the Duolingo application for improving their English vocabulary mastery. The researcher interpreted the identified themes to answer the research question and explain the factors that influenced students' decisions to use Duolingo.

To verify the findings, the researcher continuously reviewed the interview transcripts, compared the identified themes with the participants' responses, and ensured that each conclusion was supported by sufficient evidence from the collected data. This verification process was conducted throughout the analysis to enhance the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

G. Checking Data Trustworthiness

To ensure the credibility of the research findings, the researcher employed member checking. According to Creswell (2012), member checking is a process in which researchers return the collected data or research findings to the participants to verify their accuracy and ensure that the participants' views have been represented correctly.

In this study, member checking was conducted after the interview transcripts had been completed. The researcher returned the interview transcripts to each participant and asked them to review whether their responses had been accurately transcribed and interpreted. If any inaccuracies or misunderstandings were identified, the researcher revised the transcripts based on the participants' feedback.

Through this process, the researcher ensured that the interview data accurately reflected the participants' experiences and reasons for using the Duolingo application for improving their English vocabulary mastery. Therefore, member checking enhanced the credibility and trustworthiness of the research findings.

CHAPTER IV
RESEARCH FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

A. Research Findings

This chapter presents the findings of the research focusing on students' reasons for using the Duolingo application in improving their vocabulary mastery. The findings were obtained from semi-structured interviews conducted with five students of the English Tadris Department at UIN Mahmud Yunus Batusangkar who actively use Duolingo as one of their English learning media. The interview data were transcribed, coded, categorized, and analyzed to identify the students' reasons for using the application.

Based on the analysis of the interview data, four major categories were identified among the participants. These categories are ease of use, flexible learning, learning motivation, and vocabulary improvement. These categories emerged from the participants' experiences while using Duolingo to learn English vocabulary. To present the findings systematically, the researcher classified each category into several sub-categories, as presented below.

1. Students' Reasons for Using Duolingo Application in Improving Their Vocabulary Mastery

No	Reasons	Informants
1.	Ease of Use	I.1, I.2 ,1.3, 1.4, 1.5
2.	Gamification	1.4, 1.5
3.	Flexible Learning	I.1, I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5
4.	Vocabulary Improvement	I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5
5.	Curiosity	I.1, I.3, I.4, I.5
6.	Spaced Repetition	I.2, I.3, I.4, I.5
7.	Audio and Pronunciation Support	I.5

a. Ease of Use

The first category identified in this study is Ease of Use. Ease of use refers to students' perceptions that Duolingo is simple to operate, easy to understand, and does not require much effort to learn how to use the application. According Davis (1989), perceived ease of use is defined as the degree to which a person believes that using a particular technology would be free of effort. Applications that are easy to understand tend to be accepted more easily because users can focus on achieving their learning goals instead of spending time understanding the system.

The participants expressed their opinions as follows.

I-1.1 *"itu pernah, Bang, contohnya saya pernah sempat mencoba aplikasi namanya memrise, tapi entah kenapa Oke, saya lebih nyaman menggunakan dualingo karena menurut saya tampilan yang diberikan oleh Duelinggo itu lebih gampang dipahami. Jadi pas buka aplikasinya, saya langsung tahu harus belajar apa"*
"I once tried another application called Memrise. However, for some reason, I felt more comfortable using Duolingo because, in my opinion, its interface was easier to understand. When I opened the application, I immediately knew what I was supposed to study."

I-2.1 *"Yang paling berkesan itu plikis eee aplikasinya itu gampang dipahami. Eee Waktu pertama kali dibuka, saya gak perlu lama buat belajar cara menggunakannya. Eee Semua langkah-langkahnya itu sudah diarahkan, jadi tinggal mengikuti materi yang disediakan aja. Menurut saya itu sangat membantu, apalagi buat orang yang gak suka aplikasi yang terlalu banyak menu."*
"The most memorable thing was that the application was easy to understand. When I first opened it, I did not need much time to learn how to use it. Everything had already been guided, so I only needed to follow the

provided lessons. In my opinion, it was very helpful, especially for people who do not like applications with too many menus."

I-2.1 *"Ee Misal, setiap latihan itu sudah disusun berurutan.Saya gak perlu bingung menentukan materi sendiri, jadi materinya itu sudah dipilihkan berdasarkan aplikasi dan sudah diurutkan. Selain itu, bentuk lainnya juga macam-macam, ee kayak memilih jawaban, menyusun kalimat,ee mendengarkan, juga menerjemahkan. Jadi belajarannya itu terasa lebih fun, aa ringan, dan gak monoton lah gitu."*
"For example, every exercise has already been arranged in sequence. I do not need to decide what material to study because the application has already selected and organized it for me. Besides that, the exercises are varied, such as choosing answers, arranging sentences, listening, and translating. Therefore, the learning activities feel more enjoyable, lighter, and not monotonous."

I-3.1 *"Sesuai banget, Bang. Malahan itu lebih simpel dari yang aku bayangin.aku pikir akan disuruh isi-isi tes yang ribet atau materi-materi yang Panjang gitu bang. Ternyata pas itu pas masuk ke aplikasinya itu, kita diarahkan dari level dasar dulu. Dan juga tampilan visualnya itu bersih banget, Bang.Jadi, kita tidak bingung mau mulai dari mana."*
"It was exactly what I expected. In fact, it was even simpler than I had imagined. I thought I would have to complete complicated tests or study long materials. However, when I entered the application, I was guided from the basic level first. The visual interface was also very clean, so I did not feel confused about where to begin."

I-3.1 *"Hampir nggak pernah sih, Bang.Soalnya instruksinya itu memang singkat-singkat banget dan juga mudah banget untuk dipahami. Apalagi yang levelnya masih dasar. Dan juga kalau misalnya kita salah pencet atau salah jawab, Nah, biasanya arahnya itu memang jelas banget.Kita itu langsung dikasih tahu di mana letak salahnya gitu bang."*
"Almost never. The instructions are very short and easy to understand, especially for beginners. If I accidentally press the wrong button or answer

incorrectly, the application clearly shows where the mistake is."

I-4.1 *"Aaa Sesuai sih Bang malah menurut Nayla alurnya itu tertata rapi terus pas buka aplikasi juga langsung ada tes penempatan singkat biar nggak mulai ehem dari materi yang terlalu gampang atau terlalu susah terus tampilannya juga interaktif Bang jadi nggak kerasa kalau kita lagi buka aplikasi belajar kan biasanya aplikasi belajar itu banyaknya kaku tapi kalau Duolingo nggak."*
"Yes, it matched my expectations. In my opinion, the learning flow is well organized. When I first opened the application, there was a short placement test so that I did not have to start from lessons that were too easy or too difficult. The interface is also interactive, so it does not feel like using a conventional learning application."

I-4.1 *"Eem Nggak sih Bang karena kalau kita salah jawab itu aplikasinya langsung ngasih koreksi yang jelas terus ada tombol penjelasan singkatnya gitu Bang jadi aaa kita langsung tahu letak kesalahannya dimana tanpa harus cari-cari lagi gitu Bang."*
"No. Whenever I answer incorrectly, the application immediately provides clear corrections and a brief explanation. Therefore, I can immediately identify my mistakes without having to search for the explanation elsewhere."

I-5.1 *"Ammm Ternyata beda banget dari bayangan Wi Bang, karena Wi pikir bakal disuruh baca teori grammar yang kayak di buku tebel banget, terus kosa kata yang ngebosanin Tapi pas masuk tampilannya dibuat kayak board game gitu, terus tombol-tombolnya intuitive banget sampai kayak seru banget ini kalau mainnya Terus ada juga kek panduan sama level-levelnya yang dikasih sama Duolingo Jadi kek kesan untuk main itu emang bener-bener beda dan bikin seru aja gitu main aplikasinya"*
"It turned out to be very different from what Wi imagined, Brother, because Wi thought I would be asked to read grammar theory like in a very thick book, then boring vocabulary. But when entering, the display is made like a board game, then the buttons are very intuitive, so it feels very fun to play. Then there are

also guides and levels given by Duolingo, so the impression of playing is really different and makes playing the application fun."

I-5.1 *"Amm Sama sekali gak bikin Lelah sih Bang, soalnya formatnya bervariasi, ada yang tinggal mencucokkan kata, tebak audio, sampai menyusun kalimat dari potongan kata Karena kan modelnya drag and drop gitu, jadi pilihan gandanya sederhana, jadi kayak Wi gak merasa lagi ditagi tes yang menakutkan, tapi lebih kayak main game tebak-tebakan gitu Bang, jadi kayak seru aja gitu"*
"It doesn't make me tired at all, Brother, because the format varies, there is word matching, audio guessing, to arranging sentences from word fragments. Because the model is drag and drop, the multiple choice is simple, so Wi doesn't feel like being demanded with a scary test, but more like playing a guessing game, so it's just fun."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that students perceived Duolingo as an application that is easy to use because it provides a simple interface, clear instructions, organized learning materials, immediate feedback, and various learning activities. These features enabled participants to understand how to use the application without difficulty and allowed them to focus on learning English vocabulary rather than spending time figuring out how the application worked. As a result, participants felt comfortable using Duolingo consistently for vocabulary learning. This finding is consistent with Davis (1989) concept of Perceived Ease of Use, which explains that users are more likely to accept and continue using a technology when they perceive it as requiring little effort.

b. Gamification features

In the context of language learning, gamification refers to interactive features that transform repetitive vocabulary drills into a game-like experience. Features such as Duolingo's board-game-style progression, Friends Quests, and competitive leaderboards leverage

learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, encouraging them to maintain a consistent daily learning habit Ryan & Deci, (2000)

I-4.1 "*Aaa Bakal tetap dipakai sih Bang soalnya udah jadi kebiasaan atau kekk rutinitas sehari-hari terus ada fitur friends quest juga kan Bang di papan peringkat itu jadi itu yang bikin Nayla sama temen-temen yang lain tuh saling nyemangatin buat tetap belajar pakai Duolingo setiap hari"*
"Aaa, it's gonna keep being used, bro, because it's already a habit or like a daily routine, plus there's the friends quest feature on the leaderboard, right bro, so that's what makes Nayla and her friends keep encouraging each other to keep learning with Duolingo every day"

I-5.1 *"Ammm Ternyata beda banget dari bayangan Wi Bang, karena Wi pikir bakal disuruh baca teori grammar yang kayak di buku tebel banget, terus kosa kata yang ngebosanin Tapi pas masuk tampilannya dibuat kayak board game gitu, terus tombol-tombolnya intuitive banget sampai kayak seru banget ini kalau mainnya Terus ada juga kek panduan sama level-levelnya yang dikasih sama Duolingo Jadi kek kesan untuk main itu emang bener-bener beda dan bikin seru aja gitu main aplikasinya "*
"Ammm It turns out to be really different from what I imagined, Wi, because I thought we would be asked to read grammar theory like in really thick books, then boring vocabulary. But when we entered, the display was made like a board game, and the buttons were very intuitive so it felt really fun to play. Then there were also guides and levels provided by Duolingo. So, the impression of playing it is really different and just makes using the app fun."

I-5.1 *"Amm Sama sekali gak bikin Lelah sih Bang, soalnya formatnya bervariasi, ada yang tinggal mencucokkan kata, tebak audio, sampai menyusun kalimat dari potongan kata Karena kan modelnya drag and drop gitu, jadi pilihan gandanya sederhana, jadi kayak Wi gak merasa lagi ditagi tes yang menakutkan, tapi lebih kayak main game tebak-tebakan gitu Bang, jadi kayak seru aja gitu"*

> "It doesn't make me tired at all, Brother, because the format varies, there is word matching, audio guessing, to arranging sentences from word fragments. Because the model is drag and drop, the multiple choice is simple, so Wi doesn't feel like being demanded with a scary test, but more like playing a guessing game, so it's just fun."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that the gamification features provided by Duolingo encouraged students to continue using the application for vocabulary learning. Participants reported that game-like elements, such as the board-game-style interface, levels, Friends Quests, leaderboards, and varied interactive exercises, made the learning process more enjoyable, engaging, and less monotonous than conventional learning methods. These features also motivated students to build a daily learning habit and encouraged them to support and compete with their friends while learning. Consequently, students perceived vocabulary learning as an enjoyable activity rather than a burdensome task. This finding is consistent with Ryan & Deci, (2000), who argue that gamification enhances learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation by integrating game elements into learning activities, thereby increasing engagement and encouraging continuous learning.

c. perceived usefulness

In this study, perceived usefulness refers to students' belief that Duolingo helps them improve their vocabulary mastery effectively. The application allows students to learn vocabulary in short learning sessions that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, making it easier to integrate learning into their daily routines. As a result, students perceive Duolingo as a useful learning tool because it enables them to practice vocabulary consistently without requiring long study sessions.

1) Flexible Learning

Flexible learning refers to students' perceptions that Duolingo allows them to learn English vocabulary anytime and anywhere according to their own schedules. The participants explained that the application enables them to complete short learning sessions during their free time without interrupting their daily activities. This flexibility makes the learning process more practical and supports continuous vocabulary practice. From the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model, this flexibility reflects perceived usefulness, as students believe that the application helps them achieve their learning goals efficiently Davis (1989).

The participants expressed their opinions as follows.

I-1.1 *"karena dengan duolingo saya belajarnya enggak Saya merasa berat soalnya materi yang diberikan oleh dua lingo itu sedikit-sedikit, jadi walaupun saya punya waktu sebentar, tapi saya tetap bisa belajar"*
"Because with Duolingo, learning does not feel difficult. The lessons are presented little by little, so even if I only have a short amount of free time, I can still study."

I-2.1 *"Waktu itu, saya merasa cara belajar saya itu kurang berkembang. Eee Saya memang sering menemukan kosa kata baru, tapi cepat lupa karena cuma baca artinya sekali. Setelah itu, saya mulai cari aplikasi yang bisa ee dipakai setiap hari tanpa harus belajar dalam waktu yang lama.Setelah saya melihat beberapa fitur yang ada pada aplikasi ini, saya merasa aplikasi ini sesuai sama kebiasaan saya saat belajar, karena bisa dipakai sedikit demi sedikit."*
"At that time, I felt that my way of learning was not improving. I often found new vocabulary, but I quickly forgot it because I only read the meaning once. After that, I started looking for an application that I could use every day without having to study for a long time. After seeing the features provided by this application,

I felt that it matched my learning habits because it could be used little by little."

I-3.1 *"Biasanya itu gampang banget, Bang. Biasanya itu kayak misalnya dosennya belum masuk gitu kan bang, nanti itu bisa main bentar atau nggak. Nanti kalau misalnya lagi makan sama temen, kadang kan nunggu pesanan.Nah, itu juga kita bisa pakai duolingo itu itu. Karena satu sesi itu biasanya cuma butuh waktu 3-5 menit, Bang. Jadi nggak kerasa beban sama sekali."*
"It is usually very easy. For example, when the lecturer has not arrived yet, I can use it for a while. Or when I am eating with friends and waiting for the food to arrive, I can also use Duolingo. One session usually only takes about three to five minutes, so it never feels like a burden."

I-4.1 "*Gampang sih Bang karena per lesson itu singkat. Biasanya Nayla main pas nunggu sarapan, nunggu angkot, atau pas break makan siang. Cuma butuh waktu sekitar tiga sampai lima menit per sesi."*
"It is easy because each lesson is short. I usually use it while waiting for breakfast, waiting for public transportation, or during my lunch break. Each session only takes around three to five minutes."

I-5.1 *"Gampang sih Bang, biasanya aa Wi coba pas buka kayak nunggu makanan atau kayak di waktu-waktu juga ada free time gitu Bang Kadang durasinya tuh Wi beri kayak satu hari tuh 3-5 menit untuk ikut main Duolingo ini, jadi gak ada alasan, gak ada waktu gitu Bang"*
"It is easy. I usually open Duolingo while waiting for food or whenever I have some free time. I usually spend about three to five minutes a day using it, so there is really no reason to say that I do not have time."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that Duolingo provides a flexible learning experience that allows students to learn vocabulary anytime and anywhere according to their own schedules. Participants reported that the short lesson duration, which only takes about three to five minutes per session, enabled them to study during their free time, such as while waiting for classes, meals, or

transportation, without interrupting their daily activities. They also perceived that learning through small and manageable lessons made vocabulary practice more practical, consistent, and less burdensome. This finding supports Davis (1989) concept of Perceived Usefulness, which explains that users are more likely to adopt and continue using a technology when they believe it helps them accomplish their learning goals effectively and efficiently

2) Vocabulary Improvement

In this study, vocabulary improvement refers to students' perception that Duolingo helps them improve their English vocabulary mastery by introducing new words through repeated exposure, contextual learning, pronunciation practice, and interactive exercises. As a result, students are able to recognize, remember, understand, and use newly learned vocabulary in authentic communication, such as reading English articles, watching videos, listening to songs, and delivering classroom presentations.

From the perspective of the Technology Acceptance Model (TAM), this finding reflects Perceived Usefulness Davis (1989), which refers to the degree to which individuals believe that using a particular technology enhances their performance. In the context of this study, students perceived Duolingo as useful because it effectively supported the improvement of their vocabulary mastery and enabled them to apply the vocabulary they had learned in real-life situations. Therefore, the improvement in vocabulary mastery strengthened students' belief that Duolingo was a beneficial learning application and encouraged them to continue using it.

The participants expressed their opinions as follows

I-2.1 *"Saya merasa jumlah kosa kata saya itu meningkat,eee jadi setiap belajar itu saya dapat ber eee menambah kosa kata saya.eeee Yang paling terasa itu sekarang lebih sering mengenali kata-kata yang sebelumnya*

terasa asing. Misal, waktu membaca artikel atau menonton video berbahasa Inggris, ada banyak kata yang langsung saya ingat karena pernah muncul di latihan Duolingo."

"I feel that my vocabulary has increased. Every time I study, I learn new words. The biggest improvement is that I can now recognize many words that previously seemed unfamiliar. For example, when reading English articles or watching English videos, I immediately remember many words because they have appeared before in Duolingo exercises."

I-2.1 *"Karena yaa sering diulang dalam latihan itu, setiap kali latihan pasti ada ee menambah kosa kata baru, dan jadi eee seperti satu kata yang tidak cuma muncul sekali, tapi muncul lagi di latihan berikutnya dengan bentuk kata yang berbeda. Kadang bisa dipakai dalam kalimat, kadang muncul di eee latihan mendengarkan atau menerjemahkan. Pengulangan itu yang membuat ee saya eee mengingat ee lebih kata-kata tersebut, dan juga lebih eee bisa diingat dalam jangka waktu yang lama."*

"Because the vocabulary is repeated frequently in the exercises. Every lesson introduces new words, and each word does not appear only once. Instead, it appears again in later lessons in different forms. Sometimes it is used in sentence-building activities, while at other times it appears in listening or translation exercises. This repetition helps me remember the vocabulary better and retain it for a longer period of time."

I-3.1 *"Nempel banget sih, Bang, menurut aku. Karena dia itu biasanya pakai metode pengulangan atau space repetition.Nah, jadi kata yang pernah salah atau baru kita pelajari hari ini, beberapa hari kemudian pasti bakal dimunculin lagi dalam bentuk soal yang berbeda. Nah, jadi dengan hal itu, kosa kata itu otomatis akan lebih nempel di ingatan gitu bang."*

"Yes, they really stay in my memory. In my opinion, Duolingo uses a spaced repetition method. Words that I answered incorrectly or have just learned today will appear again a few days later in different types of questions. Because of that, the vocabulary automatically stays longer in my memory."

I-3.2 *"Itu tuh pasti sering banget ya, Bang. Kalau misalnya celine lagi nonton di Netflix gitu kan, Bang. Nah, jadi kalau pas nonton film barat itu, biasanya itu tanpa subtitle Indonesia.Nah, kadang tiba-tiba ada frase yang sering muncul di Duolingo dan dipakai juga sama karakternya. Jadi, celine itu langsung paham konteksnya tanpa perlu ngepause video atau buka kamus. Jadi, kita orang ngerasa kayak, wah, beneran berguna juga aplikasi ini."*

"It happens very often. When I watch movies on Netflix without Indonesian subtitles, I sometimes hear phrases that I have learned in Duolingo. I immediately understand their meaning in context without having to pause the video or open a dictionary. At that moment, I realize that the application is really useful."

I-4.1 *"Emm Menurut Nayla nempel sih Bang karena amm Duolingo itu pake sistem repetisi yang rapi terus kata-katanya juga udah pernah dipelajari terus bakal dimunculin lagi beberapa hari kemudian di tema yang beda terus karena sering diulang-ulang kuasa katanya jadi otomatis hafal sendiri aaaa tanpa perlu dihafalin secara paksa gitu Bang."*

"In my opinion, the vocabulary stays in my memory because Duolingo has a well-organized repetition system. Words that have already been studied appear again a few days later in different topics. Since the vocabulary is repeated many times, I memorize it naturally without forcing myself to memorize it."

I-4.1 *"Ohhh Pernah Bang pas itu Nayla lagi denger lagu bahasa Inggris terus atau nggak lagi nonton konten di TikTok atau Youtube terus ada kayak frasa-frasa yang tadinya Nayla nggak paham artinya apa terus tiba-tiba paham karena baru aja pake Duolingo terus ada materinya di situ jadi rasanya kayak pas Nyadar tuh ohh artinya ini gitu."*

"Yes, it has happened. While listening to English songs or watching content on TikTok and YouTube, I suddenly understood phrases that I had previously learned in Duolingo. Before, I did not know their meanings, but after learning them in the application, I immediately recognized and understood them."

I-5.1 *"Emm Pernah waktu presentasi di kelas Wi harus menjelaskan materi kan dalam Bahasa Inggris Bang,*

saat itu Wi jadi lebih mudah mengingat beberapa vocabulary yang sebelumnya Wi pelajari di Duolingo, jadi kayak Wi lebih percaya diri karena gak terlalu sering berhenti atau nge-stuck karena harus mikirin kosa kata itu."
"Yes. During a classroom presentation in English, I found it easier to remember several vocabulary items that I had previously learned in Duolingo. As a result, I felt more confident because I did not need to stop frequently to think about the appropriate words."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that students perceived Duolingo as a useful application for improving their English vocabulary mastery. Participants reported that the application helped them learn new vocabulary through repeated exposure, contextual learning, pronunciation practice, and interactive exercises, enabling them to recognize, remember, and understand words more effectively. Furthermore, they were able to apply the vocabulary they had learned in authentic situations, such as reading English articles, watching videos and movies without subtitles, listening to English songs, understanding social media content, and delivering classroom presentations with greater confidence. These findings indicate that students considered Duolingo beneficial because it enhanced their vocabulary learning performance and supported the practical use of English in real-life contexts. Therefore, this finding is consistent with Davis, 2014) concept of Perceived Usefulness, which explains that users are more likely to continue using a technology when they believe it effectively improves their performance and helps them achieve their learning goals.

2) Curiosity

One of the reasons participants used the Duolingo application was curiosity. Several participants stated that they initially downloaded and used the application because they wanted to know how it worked,

explore its features, and experience learning English through a new platform. This finding can be explained through Self-Determination Theory Ryan & Deci, (2000) which states that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals engage in an activity because they find it inherently interesting or enjoyable. Participants' curiosity to explore Duolingo reflects intrinsic motivation, as they voluntarily chose to use the application based on their own interest rather than because of external pressure or obligation. Therefore, curiosity served as an initial internal drive that encouraged participants to begin using Duolingo. This intrinsic motivation may have supported their continued engagement with the application, allowing them to encounter new vocabulary and improve their vocabulary mastery over time.

The participants expressed their opinions as follows.

I-1.1 *"itu awalnya mungkin saya karena penasaran bang setelah itu Setelah saya pakai beberapa waktu, saya merasa lebih nyaman belajar menggunakan Duolingo dibanding cara yang biasa saya gunakan,"*
"At first, I was probably just curious. After using it for some time, I felt more comfortable learning with Duolingo compared to the way I used to learn before."

I-3.1 *"aaa Jadi, awalnya aa celine sering menonton YouTube.Karena tidak premium, itu biasanya sering lewat iklan-iklan gitu bang. Nah, kebetulan iklannya itu biasanya kayak ada maskot burung hantu hijau itu. Nah, ternyata itu adalah aplikasi untuk belajar.Nah, karena penasaran dan sering muncul, jadinya sekarang celine download gitu bang."*
"At first, I often watched YouTube. Since I did not have YouTube Premium, I frequently saw advertisements. One of them showed the green owl mascot, and I later found out that it was a language learning application. Because I kept seeing the advertisement and became curious, I finally decided to download Duolingo."

I-4.1 *"Awalnya itu karena direkomendasikan teman kita kan sering belajar bareng truss aa kalau dilihat-lihat dia*

itu rajin buka HP tapi kosa katanya itu makin banyak pas itu Nayla tanya aaa kenapa kosa katanya bisa banyak padahal dia main HP terus terus katanya pakai Duolingo ekhem trus apa Duolingo itu seru kayak main game dan tidak bikin pusing jadi karena dia emm merekomendasikan itu emm dan hasilnya juga kelihatan akhirnya Nayla coba download karena pengen coba Bang"

"At first, it was because a friend recommended it. We often studied together, and I noticed that although my friend frequently used a smartphone, his vocabulary kept improving. I asked why, and my friend said it was because of Duolingo. My friend also said that Duolingo was fun like playing a game and did not feel stressful. Since my friend recommended it and I could also see the results, I eventually became interested and decided to download it."

I-4.1 *"Aaa Bakal tetap dipakai sih Bang soalnya udah jadi kebiasaan atau kekk rutinitas sehari-hari terus ada fitur friends quest juga kan Bang di papan peringkat itu jadi itu yang bikin Nayla sama temen-temen yang lidah tuh saling nyemangatin buat tetap belajar pakai Duolingo setiap hari"*

"I will keep using it, Brother, because it has become a daily habit or routine, and there is also a friends quest feature on the leaderboard, so that makes Nayla and other friends encourage each other to keep learning using Duolingo every day."

I-5.1 *"Ammm Jujur awalnya wi agak skeptis gitu Bang, soalnya iklan Duolingo itu kan sering banget lewat di Reels, Instagram, TikTok Terus kadang-kadang juga kayak di game juga tiba-tiba iklan, terus muncul maskot burung hijau, hantu hijau suka bikin konten meme atau pura-pura menagih lesson Awalnya kayak wi mikir, ah paling cuman gimmick pemasaran biar viral doang Tapi karena makin sering muncul dan aaa juga karena seru jadi penasaran sendiri dan pengen ngebuktiin aplikasi ini worth it gak atau aa beneran bagus gak atau cuman menang marketing doang"*

"Honestly, at first I was quite skeptical because Duolingo advertisements appeared very frequently on Instagram Reels, TikTok, and even in mobile games. The green owl mascot often appeared in memes or funny reminders about unfinished lessons. Initially, I

> thought it was only a marketing gimmick to become viral. However, because the advertisements kept appearing and looked interesting, I became curious and wanted to find out whether the application was actually worth using or was simply good at marketing."

Based on the interview findings, it can be concluded that curiosity was one of the initial reasons students began using the Duolingo application. Participants explained that they were curious to explore the application after seeing advertisements, receiving recommendations from friends, or becoming interested in its unique features and learning approach. This curiosity encouraged them to voluntarily download and try Duolingo without any external obligation. After experiencing the application, many participants found it enjoyable, effective, and suitable for their learning needs, which motivated them to continue using it regularly. These findings are consistent with Ryan & Deci, (2000) Self-Determination Theory, which explains that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals engage in an activity because they find it interesting or enjoyable. Therefore, curiosity functioned as an initial form of intrinsic motivation that encouraged students to explore Duolingo and supported their continued engagement in learning English vocabulary.

3) Spaced Repetition,

A key pedagogical driver of vocabulary retention in Duolingo is its implementation of spaced repetition and native audio models. As Kornell (2009) highlights, spaced repetition reinforces memory retention by reintroducing learned concepts at optimal intervals, preventing decay far more effectively than cramming. Additionally, exposure to authentic audio models ensures accurate phonetic acquisition. The informants reported that these features enabled them to remember words long-term and apply them effortlessly in real-world

contexts, such as watching videos without subtitles, understanding music, and presenting confidently in English classes.

The informants detailed how spaced repetition and native audio assisted their vocabulary retention and real-world English usage, as shown in the following interview excerpts:

I-2.1 *"Karena yaa sering diulang dalam latihan itu, setiap kali latihan pasti ada ee menambah kosa kata baru, dan jadi eee seperti satu kata yang tidak cuma muncul sekali, tapi muncul lagi di latihan berikutnya dengan bentuk kata yang berbeda. Kadang bisa dipakai dalam kalimat, kadang muncul di eee latihan mendengarkan atau menerjemahkan. Pengulangan itu yang membuat ee saya eee mengingat ee lebih kata-kata tersebut, dan juga lebih eee bisa diingat dalam jangka waktu yang lama."*
"Because the vocabulary is repeated frequently in the exercises. Every lesson introduces new words, and each word does not appear only once. Instead, it appears again in later lessons in different forms. Sometimes it is used in sentence-building activities, while at other times it appears in listening or translation exercises. This repetition helps me remember the vocabulary better and retain it for a longer period of time."

I-3.1 *"Nempel banget sih, Bang, menurut aku. Karena dia itu biasanya pakai metode pengulangan atau space repetition.Nah, jadi kata yang pernah salah atau baru kita pelajari hari ini, beberapa hari kemudian pasti bakal dimunculin lagi dalam bentuk soal yang berbeda. Nah, jadi dengan hal itu, kosa kata itu otomatis akan lebih nempel di ingatan gitu bang."*
"Yes, they really stay in my memory. In my opinion, Duolingo uses a spaced repetition method. Words that I answered incorrectly or have just learned today will appear again a few days later in different types of questions. Because of that, the vocabulary automatically stays longer in my memory."

I-4.1 *"Emm Menurut Nayla nempel sih Bang karena amm Duolingo itu pake sistem repetisi yang rapi terus kata-katanya juga udah pernah dipelajari terus bakal*

dimunculin lagi beberapa hari kemudian di tema yang beda terus karena sering diulang-ulang kuasa katanya jadi otomatis hafal sendiri aaaa tanpa perlu dihafalin secara paksa gitu Bang."
"In my opinion, the vocabulary stays in my memory because Duolingo has a well-organized repetition system. Words that have already been studied appear again a few days later in different topics. Since the vocabulary is repeated many times, I memorize it naturally without forcing myself to memorize it."

I-5.1 *"Ada Bang, karena terutama eh terutama buat kosa kata kontekstual gitu, fitur suara dan pengulangan itu ngaruh banget untuk kayak ngerecall memory, untuk ingat kosa kata yang udah dipelajari sebelumnya Dulu Wi sering tau suatu kata kalau dibaca, tapi bingung cara ngucapinya, jadi di Duolingo ini kan ada audionya, jadi Wi langsung dapet paket lengkap kayak ejaan, arti, dan cara pelafalan sekaligus gitu Bang, pronunciationnya tuh gimana."*
"Yes. Especially for contextual vocabulary, the audio feature and repeated practice really help me recall words that I have learned before. Previously, I often recognized a word when reading it, but I did not know how to pronounce it. In Duolingo, I learn the spelling, meaning, and pronunciation at the same time, so I understand the vocabulary more completely."

Based on the participants' statements, Duolingo supports vocabulary acquisition by providing repeated exposure to vocabulary through various exercises and contexts. The participants reported that vocabulary learned through the application was easier to remember and retain because words were repeatedly presented in different forms and activities, such as listening, translation, sentence construction, and other exercises. This repeated exposure helped learners recall vocabulary over a longer period without requiring forced memorization.

The findings also indicate that vocabulary learned through Duolingo could be transferred to real-life contexts. Participants

recognized and understood previously learned words and phrases when encountering them in English articles, movies, songs, and social media content. In addition, audio and pronunciation support helped learners connect the written form of vocabulary with its meaning and pronunciation. This made it easier for participants to recall and use vocabulary during English classroom presentations, which also contributed to greater confidence in using English.

Therefore, the findings suggest that Duolingo facilitates vocabulary acquisition through repeated practice, contextual exposure, and audio-pronunciation support. These features help learners not only acquire new vocabulary but also retain, recognize, understand, and recall vocabulary when encountering or using it in different contexts.

4) audio and pronunciation support

In vocabulary acquisition, audio and pronunciation support refers to the clear native-speaker audio playback and voice-matching exercises provided by the application. This feature allows learners to connect written words (orthography) with their correct sound patterns (phonology), helping students build confidence in correctly pronouncing new vocabulary during classroom presentations and real-life communication (Nation, 2001 in Schmitt, (2008).

I-5.1 *"Ada Bang, karena terutama eh terutama buat kosa kata kontekstual gitu, fitur suara dan pengulangan itu ngaruh banget untuk kayak ngerecall memory, untuk ingat kosa kata yang udah dipelajari sebelumnya Dulu Wi sering tau suatu kata kalau dibaca, tapi bingung cara ngucapinya, jadi di Duolingo ini kan ada audionya, jadi Wi langsung dapet paket lengkap kayak ejaan, arti, dan cara pelafalan sekaligus gitu Bang, pronunciationnya tuh gimana."*
"Yes. Especially for contextual vocabulary, the audio feature and repeated practice really help me recall words that I have learned before. Previously, I often recognized a word when reading it, but I did not know

> how to pronounce it. In Duolingo, I learn the spelling, meaning, and pronunciation at the same time, so I understand the vocabulary more completely."

Based on the participant's statement, audio and pronunciation support in Duolingo contributes to vocabulary acquisition by helping learners connect the written form, meaning, and pronunciation of new vocabulary. The participant explained that the audio feature helped overcome difficulties in pronouncing words that were previously recognized only in written form. In addition, repeated exposure to vocabulary through audio and practice supported the participant's ability to recall previously learned words. Therefore, the finding indicates that audio and pronunciation support facilitates vocabulary learning by strengthening the connection between orthography and phonology, while repeated practice reinforces vocabulary retention and pronunciation awareness.

B. DISCUSSION

This study aimed to explore students' reasons for using the Duolingo application to improve their vocabulary mastery. Based on the interview findings, four major categories emerged, namely Ease of Use, Flexible Learning, Learning Motivation, and Vocabulary Improvement. These findings indicate that students perceive Duolingo not only as an easy-to-use learning application but also as a useful platform that supports vocabulary learning through enjoyable and flexible learning experience

1. Ease of Use

   The findings revealed that all participants perceived Duolingo as an application that is easy to use. The participants emphasized the simple interface, clear instructions, organized learning path, and immediate feedback provided after completing exercises. These features enabled students to focus on learning vocabulary rather than spending time understanding how to operate the application.

   These findings support Davis (1989) concept of Perceived Ease of Use, which states that users are more likely to accept and continue using technology when they believe it requires little effort. Since participants found Duolingo simple to navigate, they were willing to use it consistently for vocabulary learning.

2. Gamification features

   In the context of language learning, gamification refers to interactive features that transform repetitive vocabulary drills into a game-like experience. Features such as Duolingo's board-game-style progression, Friends Quests, and competitive leaderboards leverage learners' intrinsic and extrinsic motivation, encouraging them to maintain a consistent daily learning habit Ryan & Deci, (2000).

3. perceived usefulness

   In this study, perceived usefulness refers to students' belief that Duolingo helps them improve their vocabulary mastery effectively. The application allows students to learn vocabulary in short learning sessions that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, making it easier to integrate learning into their daily routines. As a result, students perceive Duolingo as a useful learning tool because it enables them to practice vocabulary consistently without requiring long study sessions.

4. curiosity

   One of the reasons participants used the Duolingo application was curiosity. Several participants stated that they initially downloaded and used the application because they wanted to know how it worked, explore its features, and experience learning English through a new platform. This finding can be explained through Self-Determination Theory Ryan & Deci, (2000) which states that intrinsic motivation arises when individuals engage in an activity because they find it inherently interesting or enjoyable. Participants' curiosity to explore Duolingo reflects intrinsic motivation, as they voluntarily chose to use the application based on their own interest rather than because of external pressure or obligation. Therefore, curiosity served as an initial internal drive that encouraged participants to begin using Duolingo. This intrinsic motivation may have supported their continued engagement with the application, allowing them to encounter new vocabulary and improve their vocabulary mastery over time.

5. Spaced Repetition,

   A key pedagogical driver of vocabulary retention in Duolingo is its implementation of spaced repetition and native audio models. As Kornell (2009) highlights, spaced repetition reinforces memory retention by reintroducing learned concepts at optimal intervals, preventing decay far more effectively than cramming. Additionally, exposure to authentic audio models ensures accurate phonetic acquisition. The informants reported that these features enabled them to remember words long-term and apply them

effortlessly in real-world contexts, such as watching videos without subtitles, understanding music, and presenting confidently in English classes.

6. audio and pronunciation support

In vocabulary acquisition, audio and pronunciation support refers to the clear native-speaker audio playback and voice-matching exercises provided by the application. This feature allows learners to connect written words (orthography) with their correct sound patterns (phonology), helping students build confidence in correctly pronouncing new vocabulary during classroom presentations and real-life communication (Nation, 2001 in Schmitt, (2008).

Overall, the findings indicate that students use Duolingo because it combines ease of use, flexibility, enjoyable learning experiences, and effective vocabulary practice. These factors complement one another and encourage students to continue learning consistently. The findings also demonstrate that the Technology Acceptance Model Davis (1989) and the concept of Intrinsic Motivation and Extrinsic Motivation Ryan & Deci, (2000)provide an appropriate theoretical framework for explaining students' acceptance and continued use of Duolingo as a vocabulary learning application.

CHAPTER V
CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

A. Conclusion

Based on the findings and discussion, this study concludes that students use the Duolingo application to improve their vocabulary mastery because it provides an effective, enjoyable, and flexible learning experience. The reasons for using Duolingo can be classified into seven main categories.

1. **Ease of Use**, which includes the application's simple interface, easy navigation, clear instructions, and immediate feedback that make vocabulary learning easier and more accessible.
2. **Gamification Features**, which include game-like learning elements such as levels, challenges, rewards, and interactive activities that make the learning process more enjoyable and increase students' engagement.
3. **perceived usefulness,** the application allows students to learn vocabulary in short learning sessions that can be accessed anytime and anywhere, making it easier to integrate learning into their daily routines. As a result, students perceive Duolingo as a useful learning tool because it enables them to practice vocabulary consistently without requiring long study sessions.
4. **Curiosity**, which refers to students' initial interest in exploring Duolingo, its features, and its learning system. This curiosity encouraged them to try the application voluntarily and became an initial reason for using it.
5. **Spaced Repetition**, which refers to Duolingo's repeated presentation of previously learned or incorrectly answered vocabulary at different intervals. This feature helps reinforce memory retention and enables students to remember vocabulary more effectively.
6. **audio and pronunciation support**, This feature allows learners to connect written words (orthography) with their correct sound patterns (phonology), helping students build confidence in correctly pronouncing new vocabulary during classroom presentations and real-life communication (Nation, 2001 in Schmitt, (2008).

In conclusion, the findings indicate that students perceive Duolingo as an effective vocabulary learning application because it combines ease of use, gamified learning, flexibility, curiosity-driven engagement, learning motivation, spaced repetition, and effective vocabulary learning practices. These factors encourage students to use the application consistently and contribute to the improvement of their English vocabulary mastery.

B. Suggestion

1. English Teaching Department Students

Students are encouraged to use Duolingo as a complementary learning tool to improve their English vocabulary. They should practice consistently and make use of the application's features, such as repetition exercises, pronunciation practice, and contextual learning activities. However, students are also advised to combine Duolingo with other learning resources, such as reading English books, watching English videos, and engaging in real communication, to develop broader language skills.

2. **Lecturers**

Lecturers are encouraged to integrate technology-based learning applications such as Duolingo into vocabulary learning activities when appropriate. They can recommend Duolingo as supplementary material to increase students' motivation and provide additional opportunities for independent learning. Furthermore, lecturers should guide students in balancing digital learning with classroom interaction to maximize vocabulary acquisition.

3. **Future Researchers**

Future researchers are encouraged to conduct further studies on the effectiveness of Duolingo in improving other English language skills, such as speaking, listening, reading, or writing. They may also investigate students from different educational levels or institutions to obtain broader findings. Additionally, future studies using quantitative or mixed-method approaches are recommended to examine the relationship between the frequency of using Duolingo and students' vocabulary achievement more comprehensively.

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