CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background

Compared to other languages, English has the largest number of speakers in the world. According to Ambarwati et al. (2022), English ranks first in terms of global usage, and based on Statista (2022), there are approximately 1.5 billion people worldwide who use English either as their mother tongue or as a second language. This indicates that English holds significant importance and continues to grow in both the number of speakers and the opportunities it provides to those who are fluent in it.

Language and technology have been intrinsically linked since the advent of writing approximately five thousand years ago, as noted by Chun, Smith, and Kern, (2016). This longstanding relationship has significantly shaped language instruction, where technological advancements have become integral to the teaching and learning process. The exponential growth of the internet in recent years has further amplified this impact, providing widespread access and benefits. In the contemporary digital era, the implementation of application-based instructional media has emerged as a pivotal strategy to enhance educational effectiveness. Such learning applications incorporate interactive features that can be tailored to individual students' learning styles, thereby enriching the educational experience and fostering greater motivation and learner autonomy.

The teacher should be ready to have a suitable method for it; provide the media, teaching technique, and strategy because they want their students to be able to use the target language communicatively (Larsen and Freeman, 2002). The concept of learning in this era has been related to the rapid development of technology, the emerging and developing of technology and its application to teaching comes into full play in education (Jaelani et al. 2020). In order to engage students' interest in learning vocabulary, many English teachers develop the teaching method using technology and media which have been common in this era such as using Duolingo application, because Duolingo is one of media that can be used in learning vocabulary especially, for english learning.

Perception refers to the impression, interpretation, or response that an individual develops after receiving and processing information about an object through the five senses. It is a cognitive process that allows a person to interpret and make sense of their environment Rakhmat (2003, p. 50) and Siagian (2004, p. 100) define perception as the experience of objects or events formed through the interpretation and organization of information. Thus, perception can be seen as an individual response influenced by past experiences, thoughts, and the interpretation of stimuli received from the surrounding environment. These stimuli may arise from both external sources, such as events or objects, and internal factors, like thoughts or bodily conditions. However, external stimuli tend to be the most dominant in shaping perceptual experiences. As a result, individuals may perceive the same object differently depending on their unique background, values, and experiences. These differences in perception can significantly affect their attitudes and behavior toward the object.

Based on this background, the researcher is interested in conducting this study to explore students' perceptions of Duolingo application as a tool for learning English, as well as to identify the factors that influence their preference for using Duolingo as their chosen English learning application.

1.2 Research Problem(s)

Based on the background above, researchers identified several problems, including:

1. What are the students' perception of utilizing duolingo application in learning English?

1.3 Aim(s) of Study

This study aims to examine students' perceptions of utilizing the Duolingo application in learning English, focusing on the positive aspects and benefits they experience, as well as how it supports their motivation and engagement in the language learning process.

1.4 Significance of Study

This study intends to strengthen theoretical frameworks regarding technology-enhanced language learning and digital learning media while empirically validating prior research. The investigation systematically analyzes student perceptions of Duolingo as an English language learning tool. Results may yield practical implications for optimizing mobile-assisted language learning, potentially improving English proficiency and developing crucial 21st-century competencies. The research contributes to scholarly understanding of effective technological integration in language education contexts.

1.4.1 Implication

The findings of this study show that the use of the Duolingo application can support students' English learning by creating positive learning experiences and encouraging independent learning practices. Features such as gamification, interactive exercises, immediate feedback, and flexible access enable students to engage with learning materials in an enjoyable and consistent way.

This result can be explained through Fraser's (1998), which states that students' perceptions of the learning environment play a crucial role in shaping their attitudes and engagement in learning. In this study, students perceived Duolingo as an engaging, accessible, and supportive learning medium. These positive perceptions influenced their motivation, interest, and active involvement in learning English. Therefore, when a learning medium creates a supportive and enjoyable environment, it can enhance students' attitudes and strengthen their engagement in the learning process.

1.4.2 Application

This research is expected to provide practical benefits for several parties involved in the English language learning process. For students, this study can help them understand the benefits and limitations of using the Duolingo application as a learning medium. By being aware of these aspects, students can use Duolingo more effectively and independently to support their English learning, particularly in improving vocabulary, grammar, pronunciation, and listening skills.

For teachers, the findings of this study can serve as a reference in selecting and integrating digital learning media such as Duolingo as a supplementary tool in English instruction. Understanding students' perceptions of the application enables teachers to design learning activities that are more engaging and aligned with students' learning needs, both in classroom settings and in supporting independent learning outside the classroom.

For future researchers, this study can be used as a reference for conducting further research related to students' perceptions of mobile-assisted language learning applications or other digital learning platforms. Future studies may explore different contexts, larger samples, or other variables to gain a deeper understanding of the role of digital applications in English language learning.