

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1. Background

English is one of the most widely used international languages and plays an essential role in communication, education, business, science, and technology. As globalization continues to expand, English proficiency has become increasingly important for students because it enables them to access international information, participate in academic activities, and communicate effectively across cultures. In Indonesia, English is taught as a foreign language and has become one of the compulsory subjects at the junior high school level. Therefore, English language teaching is expected not only to develop students' communicative competence but also to strengthen their mastery of language components, including grammar, vocabulary, pronunciation, and the four language skills.

Among these language components, grammar plays a fundamental role because it provides the structural system that enables learners to produce meaningful and grammatically accurate sentences. Grammar mastery allows students to express ideas clearly, understand written and spoken texts, and communicate appropriately in various contexts. According to Larsen-Freeman (2003), grammar is not merely the study of rules but involves the interaction of form, meaning, and use, enabling learners to apply grammatical structures appropriately in real communication. Similarly, Ellis (2020) argues that grammar instruction remains an essential component of English language learning because

explicit grammar teaching, combined with meaningful practice, contributes significantly to learners' language development.

Despite its importance, grammar is often regarded as one of the most difficult aspects of learning English by Indonesian students. Many learners experience difficulties in understanding grammatical rules, constructing correct sentences, applying English tenses, and maintaining subject–verb agreement. These problems frequently result in grammatical errors that affect students' ability to communicate accurately in both spoken and written English. Traditional grammar instruction, which commonly relies on teacher explanations, textbook exercises, and repetitive written assignments, often limits students' opportunities to practice grammar actively and independently. Consequently, many students perceive grammar learning as monotonous, difficult, and less motivating.

The rapid development of educational technology has created new opportunities for improving English language instruction through digital learning media. Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) has emerged as an effective approach that enables students to access learning materials anytime and anywhere using mobile devices. Kukulska-Hulme (2020) explains that MALL promotes learner autonomy, flexibility, and continuous language practice beyond the classroom. Likewise, Viberg et al. (2023) emphasize that mobile learning environments support students' engagement, self-regulated learning, and language achievement by providing interactive and personalized learning experiences.

One mobile learning application that has gained worldwide recognition is Duolingo. Duolingo is a free language-learning application designed to support language acquisition through interactive activities, gamification, adaptive learning,

and immediate corrective feedback. The application provides grammar exercises, vocabulary practice, translation tasks, listening activities, and sentence construction exercises that allow learners to practice English independently while receiving instant feedback on their performance. Gamification features such as experience points (XP), badges, learning streaks, levels, and leaderboards further encourage students to participate consistently and maintain their motivation throughout the learning process (Deterding et al., 2011; Hamari et al., 2014).

Immediate corrective feedback is another important feature of Duolingo that supports grammar learning. According to Nassaji (2020), immediate feedback enables learners to recognize grammatical errors, revise incorrect responses, and strengthen long-term retention of grammatical structures. Through repeated exposure to grammar exercises accompanied by instant feedback, students are expected to develop greater grammatical accuracy and confidence in using English.

Preliminary observation conducted at UPTD SMPN 5 Kupang indicated that many Grade 8 students experienced difficulties in English grammar mastery, particularly in sentence construction, tense usage, and subject–verb agreement. Classroom instruction was predominantly teacher-centered, with grammar lessons relying heavily on explanations and textbook-based exercises. As a result, students tended to participate passively, demonstrated limited motivation during grammar lessons, and had few opportunities to practice grammar independently using interactive learning resources.

To address these challenges, the integration of the Duolingo application into classroom instruction was considered an appropriate instructional strategy. Rather than replacing the role of the teacher, Duolingo functions as a supplementary

learning medium that provides additional opportunities for students to practice grammar through interactive, technology-supported activities. The combination of classroom instruction and mobile-assisted learning is expected to increase students' engagement, encourage independent learning, and improve grammar mastery through repeated practice and immediate feedback.

This study employed Classroom Action Research (CAR) because the primary objective was not only to measure students' grammar achievement but also to improve classroom instructional practices through continuous cycles of planning, acting, observing, and reflecting. According to Burns (2019), Classroom Action Research enables teachers and researchers to solve classroom problems systematically while continuously refining teaching strategies based on classroom evidence. Through the implementation of three action cycles, instructional improvements can be made progressively to maximize students' learning outcomes.

Several previous studies have reported that Duolingo contributes positively to English language learning by improving learners' motivation, vocabulary acquisition, grammar achievement, and learner autonomy. However, many previous studies primarily focused on students' perceptions or employed experimental research designs. Only a limited number of studies have investigated the implementation of Duolingo through Classroom Action Research to improve junior high school students' English grammar mastery in Indonesian EFL classrooms. This research gap highlights the need for further investigation regarding how Duolingo can be systematically integrated into classroom instruction through Classroom Action Research and to what extent it improves students' English grammar mastery.

1.2. Research Questions

1. How is the Duolingo application applied by the English teacher to improve Grade 8 students' English grammar mastery at UPTD SMPN 5 Kupang?
2. To what extent does the use of the Duolingo application improve Grade 8 students' English grammar mastery at UPTD SMPN 5 Kupang?

1.3. Aims of Study

1. To describe how the Duolingo application is applied by the English teacher to improve Grade 8 students' English grammar mastery at UPTD SMPN 5 Kupang.
2. To investigate the extent to which the use of the Duolingo Application improves Grade 8 students' English grammar mastery at UPTD SMPN 5 Kupang.

1.4. Significance of Study

This study is expected to provide both theoretical and practical significance for English language teaching, particularly in the integration of educational technology to improve students' English grammar mastery. Theoretically, this study is expected to contribute to the development of knowledge in the field of English Language Teaching (ELT), particularly in the implementation of Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL) for grammar instruction. The findings are expected to enrich the existing literature concerning the use of the Duolingo application in improving students' English grammar mastery and provide empirical evidence regarding the implementation of Classroom Action Research (CAR) in integrating

educational technology into English grammar instruction at the junior high school level. Practically, the findings of this study are expected to provide benefits for the following parties:

1. For Teachers

This study is expected to provide English teachers with an alternative instructional strategy for teaching English grammar through the use of the Duolingo application. The findings may assist teachers in creating more interactive, engaging, and student-centered learning environments while encouraging students' active participation, motivation, and independent learning.

2. For Students

The use of the Duolingo application is expected to help students improve their English grammar mastery through interactive learning activities, repeated practice, and immediate feedback. Furthermore, the application is expected to enhance students' learning motivation, self-confidence, and learner autonomy in learning English..

3. For School

This study is expected to provide valuable information for schools regarding the integration of educational technology into English language teaching. The findings may encourage schools to support innovative instructional practices that enhance students' English learning outcomes and promote the effective use of digital learning resources in classroom instruction.

4. For Future Researchers

This study is expected to serve as a useful reference for future researchers who intend to conduct studies related to Mobile-Assisted Language Learning (MALL), the use of the Duolingo application, English grammar instruction, or Classroom Action Research (CAR). It is also expected to provide recommendations for further research involving different educational contexts, participants, language skills, or instructional approaches