

CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Study

Vocabulary is one of the important components in learning English. It is known that without sufficient vocabulary, it is impossible to master English. According to Cesarini et al. (2021), students must have sufficient vocabulary to understand English well. Furthermore, learning the vocabulary can also contribute towards 4 skills that include listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Therefore, Aprilani et al. (2023) stated that vocabulary is the essential element that students have to master in order to perform certain activities related to several aspects of the English learning process, namely, listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Hence, given the significance of learning vocabulary, technology or tools in learning vocabulary have developed. These technologies are either in the form of websites or applications, one of which is Duolingo.

In recent years, some of the researchers have investigated the usability of Duolingo in learning vocabulary (Ambara, 2020; Munday, 2016; Wagner & Kunnan, 2015). According to Ambara (2020), using the Duolingo application in the classroom assists students in vocabulary mastery, comprehending class content, getting motivated to learn, and relating knowledge to practice. Various tools on Duolingo such as daily word lists, user conversations, repetition, translation, and reinforcement through notifications, help with vocabulary development. Munday (2016) stated that Duolingo is an easy-to-use game-based application with grammar, repetition, and leveling. According to Wagner and Kunnan (2015), Duolingo application has vocabulary exercises. There are words on the screen in this task. The test taker then has to choose the right term. Therefore, Duolingo can help students in learning English vocabulary.

In this case, the researcher found a phenomenon where Duolingo is still an option for some students who have difficulty learning vocabulary. Some students of the English Education Department at a university admitted that they had been

using Duolingo for approximately 4-6 months and used it to learn vocabulary outside of lecture classes. They learn vocabulary to be actively used in speaking and writing (productive vocabulary). Through Duolingo, they learn form, both spoken and written words such as word spelling, word parts, and word pronunciation. On the other hand, they also learn the meaning of a word and its grammatical function (for example in this application they practice arranging phrases into a sentence). They learn vocabulary in Duolingo during their free time, for example on weekends or in the evenings after finishing their coursework. Therefore, they realize that Duolingo has a positive impact on their English vocabulary learning. These positive impacts include that Duolingo trains their pronunciation of words, trains them good vocabulary writing, they have a lot of vocabulary, know the meaning of vocabulary, and know when the vocabulary should be used. Thus, they are motivated to use this Duolingo application (informal preliminary interview, 3 November 2023). Hence, it is interesting to investigate the students' attitudes to Duolingo-assisted English vocabulary learning.

There are many studies on using Duolingo for English vocabulary learning in the classroom (Ambara, 2020; Aprilani et al., 2023; Aulia et al., 2020; Herminingsih, 2021; Irawan et al., 2020; Kurniawati et al., 2022; Matra, 2020; Permatasari et al., 2022; Tiara et al., 2021; Yusda et al., 2020; Yuwono, 2022). However, there is still little research that identifies university students' attitudes to the use of Duolingo to learn English vocabulary outside of lecture classes. Therefore, in this study, the researcher focuses on investigating university students' attitudes toward Duolingo-assisted English vocabulary learning.

1.2 Formulation of the Problem

What are the students' attitudes to Duolingo-assisted English vocabulary learning?

1.3 Operational Definitions

1.3.1 Student Attitude

Student attitude is students' thoughts (views), behaviors (behavior intents), and emotional feelings about using Duolingo in learning English vocabulary.

1.3.2 English Vocabulary Learning

English vocabulary learning is the act of learning new English vocabulary including learn form, meaning, and use. In this study, students accomplished English vocabulary by way of the application called Duolingo.

1.3.3 Duolingo

Duolingo is a language learning application that offers vocabulary acquisition and practice games, featuring daily word lists, repetition, communication, notifications, and translation features. It can be used to learn various languages, one of which is learning English. Therefore, Duolingo is an application that can be used to learn English vocabulary. Hence, this study focuses on Duolingo as an educational game that easy to use for learning English vocabulary.

1.4 Aim of the Study

The aim of this research is to investigate students' attitudes toward Duolingo-assisted English vocabulary learning at one of the universities in Tasikmalaya.

1.5 Significances of the Study

1.5.1 Theoretical Significance

This study expands the application of technology in education in learning English vocabulary assisted by Duolingo. This study supports the theory of students' attitudes (Eshghinejad, 2016; Haddock & Zanna, 1999) and the utilization of Duolingo in English vocabulary learning (Cesarini et al., 2021).

1.5.2 Practical Significance

This study contributes to the students, lecturers, or teachers in the use of Duolingo technology applications as a tool for learning English vocabulary outside the classroom and as additional media in vocabulary learning in the form of games.

1.5.3 Empirical Significance

This study reviews previous research regarding university students' attitudes toward using Duolingo to learn vocabulary outside of lecture classes. However, this issue is rarely researched. Therefore, this research aims to investigate the students' attitudes toward Duolingo in learning English vocabulary of English Education students.