

EXPLORING THE IMPLEMENTATION OF DUOLINGO MEDIA FOR ASSIGNMENT IN LEARNING ENGLISH

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ABSTRACT

This research is aimed at investigating the use of Duolingo media in learning English as students' assignment at eleventh grade students of methodist senior high school. A case study was used as the research design. The participant was an English teacher and 30 eleventh-grade students of Methodist school. The data were collected by interviewing the teacher and giving students questionnaires in order to attain the data needed for this reseach. The interview result was analysed by using procedure of data analysis from Miles and Huberman (1994), while the result data of the questionnaire was analyzed by using percentage formula from Sudjana (2002). The research finding shows that the teacher and students consider that using the Duolingo media was effective in learning English because it improved students' willingness to do the assignment at home via Duolingo media and language skills in learning English. In conclusion, Duolingo media can be applied in by students to finish English assignment at home because it maked students excited and interested to do the homework by Duolingo.

Keywords: *Duolingo, learning English, assignment*

INTRODUCTION

The assignment is one of the essential parts in teaching-learning process. It can improve students' creativity, motivation, performance and even curiosity in learning. In addition, assignment helps students meet the standard which is support students to explore their ideas like task or assignment that is settled in textbook or homework. According to Dougherty (2012), the assignment encourages students' thinking around

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ideas and questions that require careful examination. Furthermore, he stated that assignments are an excellent tool to develop students for the routines and demands of college work. The assignment in learning is needed since it can improve students' achievement.

Meanwhile, the world is changing at high speed. People are moving from an industrial economy to one that is media-driven and based on information. It means there are different ways to do a thing in the past and right now. Two decades ago people did everything manually, but now media has changed it into easier ways. People nowadays do a thing automatically with media which supports people to do everything in one-touch by their computer, laptop or phone. This also happens in education. Mobile device technology can be a great ally if it is used not only to promote a more meaningful language learning experience for students, but also to increase methodological efficiency by allowing access to education anywhere and at any time. According to Trentin and Repetto (2013), no dialogue about the integration of communication technology into teaching and learning processes can ignore the wide and indeed ever-widening gap between the students' personal/daily use of Web and mobile technology and the manner in which schools recommend utilizing them for instructive activities.

In ten or fifteen years ago, teachers still used chalk to write on a blackboard in teaching, but now, teachers use in-focus in teaching; it certainly makes them easier in teaching. Nowadays every student has a mobile in their hands, which will change the way they learn and read any subject or everything. They can get all knowledge or all about information only in one touch via their mobile phone.

Technological developments with the adoption of mobile multimedia devices and applications have given opportunities for learning English as a foreign language. Wiley (2015) argued that there are many practical and theoretical dialogues concerning mobile devices that help us to better conceptualize the opportunities and overcome the challenges they present. He further claimed that mobile devices can enable mobile learning, but if they are used with an unwise strategy, they are no more revolutionary to our students than any other technology.

Over one decade and a half when technology still became a new thing, teachers usually asked students to do assignment provided in textbook or teachers made some questions on blackboard and then students would do it at home. However, since technology emerged and was initially used in education, the situation has been changed. Teachers has used media such as mobile phones or laptops to give assignment to

students from home or somewhere else. It indicates that since then, technology has been synchronized in learning. In this case, students can utilize a mobile phone application to finish their assignments.

Therefore, this situation demands students to be familiar with English to operate their smartphone. Methodist Senior High School is one of senior high schools in Banda Aceh that requires students to understand English inside and outside the class. Furthermore, there is an application that can be used by students to develop their English anytime and anywhere; it is called Duolingo. With this application, teachers can use it as an assignment for students at home. Students can be more familiar with English and also spend their leisure time not only playing games on their smartphone but also maximizing to utilize their android phone to do some tasks with this application.

In Indonesia, the use of media that is integrated for learning began in some schools, particularly at schools that are located in capital cities of provinces or big cities. It will not be seen at schools far from the city or in the village. It also happens in Aceh. In school which is faraway from the city, teachers prefer teaching with a book provided by the school, giving a note for students by writing the material on blackboard, and explaining it to students. Materials explained by a teacher come only from the book, and thus the explanation will be limited which can not be expanded to real life. Methodist is one of the schools in Banda Aceh which applies the use of media in English language learning, since the English teacher of the eleventh grade is aware of the benefit of implementing Duolingo as an assignment in learning.

LITERATURE REVIEW

Duolingo

According to Krashen (2014), Duolingo is a web-based self-paced language teaching program that guides students step-by-step through a sequence of tasks, largely based on the translation. It means there are several tasks such as tasks in basic English form, phrase form, plural/singular form, adjective form and many more that have to be finished to begin another step. Every language in Duolingo media has a skill tree that maps out students' courses. Students begin learning the basics and as they progress, the skills build on each other and become more complex. As learners successfully progress through the tree, they will unlock the next lessons and units. Students will not advance unless

they master previous skills. The goal is to get through all the lessons and skills in the tree and master a language.

In addition, Krashen (2014) stated that it is clearly aimed at conscious learning, although some subconscious acquisition of language is inevitable, as students hear and read samples of the language. Duolingo, a free online language learning site, has its mission to help users to learn a language while simultaneously using their learning exercises to translate the web. Language is learned through translation with, according to developers, Duolingo being as effective as any of the leading language learning software (Garcia, 2013).

Duolingo is the world's largest online language learning platform. It uses science and adaptive learning techniques to make the language learning experience more fun and effective, and it is completely free. This application was recognized as Apple's iPhone App of the Year of 2013 as well as Google Play's Best of the Best of 2013 and 2014. It was created by crowdsourcing pioneer Luis von Ahn, Ph.D., and Severin Hacker, PhD. Duolingo has organically become the most popular way to learn languages online only in a few years with over 100 million learners. In an independent study, professors from the City University of New York (CUNY) and the University of South Carolina found that when using Duolingo for 34 hours, students learn the equivalent of one university semester of language instruction (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012).

Duolingo was launched in June 2012. It is a gamified platform for learning foreign languages (Magnuson, 2014). Duolingo is a fully free gamified e-learning application or web that allows learning how to speak any of the languages such as English, Italian, French, Spanish, German, and Portuguese. This e-learning tool can also be accessed by online computer using the Duolingo website; www.duolingo.com, or by using smartphone such as iPhone, iPad or any Android device. Duolingo has made its course to let users learn and have fun at the same time, by making this course through a gamified learning experience.

During each lesson, you are given four hearts, if you lose all of your hearts while doing a lesson you have failed that specific lesson and must complete the lesson from the beginning. The term heart in this lesson is like a soul or chance to play in a game. Thus, if students do not want to complete the lesson from the first, they have to keep the heart complete. It has allowed users to embrace the exercises by applying their knowledge and learning verbally how to speak in your chosen language. Each course is presented through diverse lessons. In those lessons, there are different games allowing users to apply their knowledge using words,

voice, pictures, matching, repetition, writing, filling in the blank and much more. As students continue to improve their language skills, they move up in next levels to increase their learning skills.

According to Lionetti (2013), Duolingo is for all users whether they are a beginner, moderate or intermediate student in the specified language. The gamified tool requires users to complete a test before jumping ahead of the course, challenging users new and improved skills. Once learners make some progress, they are asked to participate with real texts in real translation projects. Duolingo is able to provide this e-learning for free to its users because through the process as users learn, they are creating value by translating real-world documents provided by clients paying Duolingo to translate their webpage for them.

Assignment

The assignment is a task or piece of work designed to somebody as a major aspect of occupation or course of study (Hornby, 2010). Thus, it is important for a teacher to give an assignment for students to see the influence of this application in English language learning as a task from teachers.

Assignments have two aims. The first is to guide educators, teachers and administrators in the craft of creating quality assignments by articulating a design process which is often a time-consuming, after-hours project for teachers. The second aim is to help teachers to be more aware of assignments' impact on teaching and learning (Dougherty, 2012). Teachers make instructional decisions every minute of the classroom day; assignments make some of those decisions easier and more relevant, which is important because we know that those who teach "in a most deliberate and visible manner" make learning to high expectations possible (Hattie, 2008). Thus, the assignment can help students succeed in school, as long as there is not too much (Cooper, 2006).

Planning and assigning homework is a major responsibility and challenge to teachers at all grade levels. Cooper (1989) defined homework as tasks assigned to learners by their teachers, that are to be done outside of school time and without concomitant teacher direction. Homework is most frequently done at home and alone, but it may be done in other places such as in a library, in study periods during or after school, or with other people such as parents or fellow students. There are different kinds of homework. Some homework is designed to assure that students review, practice, and drill materials that have been learned at

school. Other homework assignments are intended to provide students with an opportunity to amplify, elaborate, and enrich previously learned information. Homework is also sometimes used to prepare, in advance, material to be learned in the following classes.

Furthermore, according to Dougherty (2012), any environment affects how people interact. In a classroom, the environment affects how teachers and students connect with ideas and each other. Because high-rigor assignments require time, energy, and collaboration from teachers and students, environments play a critical role in ensuring that assignments become staples of the curriculum and are taught intentionally. Many an excellent teacher has taught students who have gone on to become productive citizens using only a blackboard, chalk, and a pile of textbooks. However, there are many more possibilities today for creating supportive environments for teaching and learning process.

There is no need for students to sit all day in classrooms relying heavily on teacher-talk, worksheets, rows of desks, and bulletin boards. Technology and other interactive experiences offer endless possibilities to engage everyone—teachers, students, even parents and visitors—in the intellectual life of ideas. Environments that allow teachers to teach assignments and, in doing so, employ a wide array of instructional experiences in and outside the classroom are places where students can become autonomous, self-determined, and connected to one another. Such a classroom is an exciting place to be.

In Methodist senior high school, students in teaching-learning processes have a good understanding of English. However, some students did not understand enough when teachers delivered materials. This happened perhaps because they had lack English vocabulary mastery. This situation required the teacher to use a Duolingo application as a solution. The assignment through Duolingo can be given to students and they do it at home.

In addition, Duolingo media has several tasks which will be done by students; it is called by skill tree. The language has a skill tree that maps out students' courses. The skill tree contains many tasks like basic, phrase, animal, food, plural, color, preposition, conjunction, time, family, job, adjective, adverb, things, place, society, traveling, education, present tense, past tense, future tense, sport, art, communication, science, business, modal, gerund, etc. The students begin learning from the basic task and as they progress, the skills build on each other and become more complex. This research focused on the teacher's ability to use Duolingo

media in learning, students' perception of using Duolingo media in learning English, and their motivation on using Duolingo media in learning English.

Learning English in Indonesia School Context

Some studies concerning the process of teaching English in Indonesia school context show miserable facts in some cases. Zulfikar (2009) found in Indonesian, the students still experience teacher-centered instruction which seems to become part of Indonesian school culture. Furthermore, Indonesian schools are very common with rote learning where the process of transferring knowledge is through memorization technique. The use of rote learning is somehow beneficial, but using it overly prevents learning from students-centered settings (Zulfikar, 2009).

Moreover, the finding is similar to Marcellino (2005) who found that most teachers still used audio-lingual methods in teaching speaking and they commonly used L1 in discussing the topic and clarifying the structure of the target language. In addition, based on the observation data and the document collected by Faridi and Bahri (2016) in Central Java, most teachers at Junior high school there did not use teaching methods that correspond to the learning objective. It is only 27.8% of them who used proper methods. Besides, the most common method used is Grammar Translation Method, communicative language teaching and three-phase technique.

In terms of classroom assessment as found by Saefurrahman (2015), the most common assessment performed by Indonesian teachers in learning English is assessment for learning. It used to check students' progress while learning. Teachers also did an assessment of learning where the assessment was performed at the end of semester to get final grades and data for students. Additionally, Zulfikar (2009) affirmed that Indonesian education system still focuses on in-class examination evaluating students' academic achievement in which tests are set centrally. This kind of evaluation is intended to grant students a higher grade.

From those findings, it can be concluded that the process of teaching English in Indonesian school context is still in classic settings where teachers still commonly employ classic teacher-centered method and the assessment process is emphasized on the result not the process.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

Research Participants

The research participants were an English teacher who teaches at Methodist school who majored in natural science.

Research Instrument

The instrument is the tool in collecting data. Thus, in this research the researchers used interview guide as the instrument to collect data from the participant.

Technique of Data collection

Interview is used as the technique of collecting data for this study. The interview was done with the English teacher.

Technique of data analysis

The data were collected by an interview the teacher and giving students a questionnaire in order to attain the data needed for this reseach. The interview result was analysing by using procedure of data analysis from Miles and Huberman (1994).

RESULTS AND DISCUSSIONS

In the result of the qualitative data, the researchers conducted primary data collection techniques. The researchers met the English teacher to do an interview, consisting of 10 questions.

In the first question, the teacher said that there were thirty students who involved actively using Duolingo media from the beginning semester until the end. In learning English, they used Duolingo when the teacher asked them to do an assignment at home. There is notification on their smartphone when the teacher gives the task.

Dalam kelas saya ada 30 siswa yang aktif terlibat dalam pembelajaran bahasa Inggris dengan menggunakan media Duolingo di sekolah.

“In my class there were 30 students who are actively involved to learn English by using duolingo application at the school”.

For the second question of interview, the teacher clarified the purpose of using duolingo application that supported students' need in learning English. The teacher hoped that using Duolingo media can increase students' English score and English learning became better.

Furthermore, they would have a new experience in learning English as assignment using Duolingo media.

Adapun tujuan penggunaan media Duolingo adalah untuk memenuhi kebutuhan siswa pada penggunaan ponsel sebagai kebutuhan untuk pendidikan dengan harapan dapat meningkatkan nilai bahasa Inggris siswa jadi lebih baik.

“The purpose of using media duolingo is to fulfill students’ needs to use mobile phones to support their education, in a hope that the students’ English score becomes better”.

According to the teacher, the use of Duolingo media was suitable with curriculum 13. Besides, Duolingo provides additional materials that can expand students’ English proficiency although the materials are not covered in curriculum 13.

Menurut saya media Duolingo cocok digunakan untuk siswa karena sesuai dengan kurikulum 13. Ada beberapa keterampilan yang tidak ada pada kurikulum, namun mereka memiliki keterampilan tersebut dan mereka juga memahami materi yang tercantum dalam kurikulum. Misalnya materi tentang kata sifat yang memiliki banyak jenis kata, namun dengan media Duolingo sangat membantu siswa untuk memahami kata sifat yang baik.

“I think duolingo media is suitable for students because it has the materials contained in the curriculum 13. They are some materials which are not included in curriculum 13, but they master those materials, for example, Duolingo is very helpful to improve the students’ mastery of adjective which consists of many words.”

The teacher said that Duolingo media were used in a certain time at the classroom, such as when the teacher was sick or had an important agenda outside school. In such circumstances, the students were asked to use Duolingo media to finish the English task. However, Duolingo media were used at home as an assignment as a priority in learning English in order not to interfere with the English learning process.

Penerapan media Duolingo saya sesuaikan dengan waktu belajar bahasa Inggris yang cukup serta keadaan didalam sekolah misalnya guru yang sedang dalam keadaan sakit atau memilih aktifitas penting lainnya untuk sekolah, namun terlebih dahulu mengarahkan siswa untuk belajar bahasa Inggris dengan media Duolingo. Akan tetapi penerapannya lebih di utamakan dalam penyelesaian tugas dirumah.

“I use Duolingo media for students to make them have enough learning study. The media is also used when I cannot attend the class because of being sick or having other important activities, for schools but first direct students to study English using media duolingo. Thus, students used this media more priority in to do the assignment at home.”

In this question, the teacher explained that he hoped the students to be able to operate the application on their smartphone. Using Duolingo media as students’ assignment, the teacher expected that the students could use their smartphone wisely to decrease the negative effect of using a smart phone.

Saya berharap mereka mampu mengoperasikan ponsel pintar mereka dan aplikasinya. Saya kira dengan mengadakan pengajaran dan proses belajarnya dapat mempertajam sikap mereka dalam menggunakan ponsel pinta mereka dengan bijak. Saya percaya dengan membuat mereka sibuk pada hal yang positif dapat mengurangi potensi negatif mereka dapam menggunakan ponsel pintar mereka.

“I expect them to be able to operate their Smartphones and the application. I think by conducting this teaching and learning process it could shape their behaviour in using their mobile phone wisely. I believe by making them busy in good things could reduce any potentiality of them to use their mobile phone in negative operation.”

The teacher explained that during the use of Duolingo media the students’ enthusiasm increased well. Since this application made students curious about how good their English skill is, they were eager to test their English by Duolingo media and find out the level of their expertise.

Saya melihat siswa sangat semangat melakukan pelaksanaan menggunakan media Duolingo. Guru menilai bahwa siswa memiliki rasa penasaran terhadap tingkat keahlian mereka dalam bahasa Inggris dengan mengujinya melalui media Duolingo. Hal tersebut dapat meningkatkan partisipasi siswa secara signifikan terhadap media Duolingo.

“I think that the students’ enthusiasm is somehow increasing during the implementation of the Duolingo Apps. I think it is because they are curious to find out their own skill in English. They wanted to test their English and the level of their expertise. That is why their participation increases significantly.”

For question 7, the teacher answered that not every student already knew about Duolingo. Some students knew what Duolingo and its function, but they had not experienced yet in using the application. Even there are some students who just started to understand. In this case the teacher role in building students understanding is important.

Beberapa diantara mereka tau apa itu Duolingo dan apa fungsinya, tetapi mereka belum berpengalaman terlibat pada aplikasi. Dan beberapa dari mereka mulai memahami aplikasi dari awal. Itulah mengapa kontribusi guru dalam membangun pemahaman siswa sangat dibutuhkan.

“Some of them know what duolingo and its function are, but they have never experienced to use the application. Some of them just started to understand the application from zero. That is why the teacher’s contribution in building the students’ understanding is formerly needed.”

For this question the teacher explained that duolingo made the teacher’s work easier in giving assignments to the students. There is a button provided in duolingo media. When the teacher wanted to give the task to students, the teacher pressed the designated button. As soon as possible students received an email in their smartphone which contained the detail assignment students should do.

Ini merupakan instrumen spesial untuk guru yang disediakan oleh duolingo. Instrumen ini mengizinkan guru untuk menugaskan mereka dengan mudah menggunakan tombol yang telah disediakan. Kemudian para murid akan mulai menerima email yang berisi detail tugas.

“It is a special dashboard for me provided by the duolingo itself. This dashboard allows me to simply assign the students by using the designated button. Then, the students can start to receive an email that consists of the task detail.”

The teacher said in the ninth question that he hopes that duolingo media became popular not only for students but also to all educators as a promotion to support educational reform in this globalization era.

Saya berharap Duolingo dapat menjadi populer dikalangan pengajar sebagai sebuah promosi untuk mendukung reformasi Pendidikan pada era globalisasi.

“I hope the use of Duolingo could be more popular among educators as a promotion to support educational reform in this globalization era.”

Finally, for the last question, the teacher clarified that assessment was not hard. Duolingo media should directly be received by each students in pre-test, progress, and the final test. It means that the teacher's work is reduced.

Pada dasarnya, penilaian tidak sulit sama sekali tetapi dashboard/papan intrument yang disediakan Duolingo harus langsung diterima tiap siswa pada pre-test, progress dan test akhir. Ini menandakan bahwa tugas guru agak sedikit berkurang.
“Basically, the assessment is not hard at all, but the dashboard provided in duolingo should directly be received by each students in pre-test, progress and the final test. Meaning that the teachers work is a bit reduced.”

In conclusion, the Duolingo media is an application that supports the teacher in teaching English, meanwhile it is used as students' assignment based on teacher answers from the interview the Duolingo media made students encourage in learning, making them better in understanding English material in the classroom. Although in the beginning there were some students met difficulty in using the Duolingo, at the end, they could operate it well.

Discussion

The researchers conducted an interview with one of the English teachers in senior high school Methodist Banda Aceh by giving 10 questions. The questions given to the teacher were about duolingo media applied in learning English.

The result showed that there were 30 active students who employed duolingo in learning English. The teacher's purpose for using duolingo media is to fulfill students' needs to use mobile phones in education, hoping that could improve students' achievement in learning English.

The teacher said that duolingo media is suitable for the students because the materials provided in the application are similar to those mandated in curriculum 13. The teacher used duolingo in certain times, such as when he got sick or had other important activities for schools.

According to the teacher at the school, all students have downloaded duolingo media, but some students did not use duolingo media to learn English. It was because there were other applications on their smartphone such as social media and games which prevent them from using duolingo. Although this media has a positive effect, not all students improved their English proficiency because some of them only learned to use duolingo when the teacher asked them to do the assignment; they

did not use it when they had a free time. The teacher hoped that duolingo media can be more popular among educators as promotions to support English education in the future.

Moreover, the English teacher testified that he properly applied duolingo in the schools because it was very beneficial for students to increase their achievement in English. However, a small number of students were inactive using duolingo media because of the influence of another application on their phone like social media and game. Thus, the teacher must improve students' consciousness to learn English by using Duolingo application.

According to Dougherty (2012), the assignment encourages students' thinking around ideas and questions that require careful examination. Related to the finding from teacher's interview, the students had enthusiasm when they did the assignment to learn English using media duolingo. The teacher said that the students had curiosity about the extent of their expertise in English on testing through the duolingo. This may increase the students' participation in using duolingo. In the use of phone, the teacher did not limit the students to access their phone but direct teachers to drive them to use a smartphone in a correct way in using duolingo.

CONCLUSION

Regarding the explanation in preceding sections, it could be concluded that the result of the interview was duolingo media in schools are properly applied and very beneficial for students to increase English achievement in school and in fact most of the students actively use the media duolingo.

Meanwhile, the students have a good perception on duolingo media which is applied as assignment. The students' operated duolingo media as assignment well as the teacher ordered, when the teacher gave the task they immediately did it.

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