

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

A. Background of the Study

Vocabulary is one of the most important aspects in learning English.

Vocabulary is also the foundation of language skills, both in reading, writing, listening, and speaking. Vocabulary mastery is the core of language competence, because without sufficient vocabulary, communication skills will be hampered. Munibi (2023) also emphasized that vocabulary and grammar mastery have a significant influence on reading ability in English. This study shows that a good understanding of vocabulary will improve students' ability to understand English texts.

MTs. Al-Hikmah is one of the junior high schools that makes English a compulsory subject for its students. However, based on initial observations at MTs Al-Hikmah, many students have difficulty mastering English vocabulary. This is due to less interesting learning methods, minimal vocabulary repetition, and limited learning time in class. As a result, students' ability to understand and use English vocabulary effectively is still low.

In the digital era, technology plays an important role in learning, including in mastering English vocabulary. One of the applications that is widely used in language learning is Duolingo. The Duolingo application has been widely used for fun technology-based language learning, while making vocabulary learning that can be done independently and flexibly.

Through the Duolingo application, it can increase student motivation and accelerate the process of mastering English vocabulary through the use of a scheduled repetition system and visual and auditory reinforcement in each lesson (Zhou & Shardlow, 2021).

In the Duolingo application, there is a gamification approach such as points, levels, and daily challenges, which can increase students' learning motivation. In addition, gamification provides an interactive and interesting learning experience so that students are more motivated to practice independently (Alqahtani & Rajab, 2020).

Research that focuses on junior high school students, especially in formal educational settings such as MTs Al-Hikmah, is still limited. In addition, it is necessary to explore how supporting factors such as motivation and availability of technology, as well as obstacles such as limited facilities and digital skills affect the implementation of Duolingo in vocabulary learning. In this case, students at MTs Al-Hikmah face challenges in mastering English vocabulary effectively. Conventional learning may be less interesting or not provide enough good and correct vocabulary repetition. Therefore, I use Duolingo as a technology-based application that provides structured and interactive vocabulary learning features, so that it can help students be more motivated and focused on learning vocabulary.

The use of the Duolingo application in English learning is quite effective in improving vocabulary, but there are several obstacles that can affect learning outcomes. Based on the background above, the researcher choose the

title “Students Perceptions Towards the Use of Duolingo in Learning English Vocabulary” as research.

B. Statements of the Problem

1. What are students' perceptions of using Duolingo as a tool to learn English vocabulary at MTs. Al-Hikmah?
2. What challenges do students' encounter while using Duolingo to learn english vocabulary?

C. Objectives of the Study

1. To describe students' perceptions of using Duolingo as a tool to learn English vocabulary at MTs. Al-Hikmah.
2. To examine the challenges students' face when using Duolingo for learning English vocabulary.

D. Significances of the Study

The benefits that can be obtained by teachers, students, and researchers, including :

1. For Teachers

- a. Provide teachers with the right alternative methods to teach interesting and effective English vocabulary.
- b. Teachers can also gain insight into how technology can increase student engagement and motivation in learning.
- c. Help teachers understand students' perceptions of the use of the Duolingo application, so that they can integrate this application effectively in English vocabulary learning.

2. For Students

- a. This study can provide and introduce them to interesting, innovative, and interactive vocabulary learning strategies.
- b. Students can be more motivated to learn English independently using Duolingo.
- c. This study can provide information to students about a fun and efficient way to improve their vocabulary skills through the Duolingo application.

3. For Researchers

This study is expected to provide valuable insights and can contribute to the development of science in the field of language learning and educational technology. In addition, these findings can also be a basis for future research that explores the integration of mobile applications in second language learning or compares the effectiveness of various platforms. This study also offers practical

implications for developing innovative and accessible strategies in language education.

E. Scope and Limitation

This study has several limitations that need to be considered so that the focus of the study becomes clearer and more focused. First, this study only discusses students' perceptions of the use of the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary mastery, without covering other linguistic aspects such as grammar, speaking, listening, or writing skills. Second, the research subjects are 15 students of class 8B MTs. Al-Hikmah, because the pre-survey showed that they have low interest and motivation in learning English, which contributes to their English vocabulary acquisition is poor. Third, this study needs four meetings within a period of two weeks. This limitation is set to maintain the suitability of the research with the objectives that have been formulated and to ensure that the data analysis process can be carried out in depth and focus on one aspect of learning, namely vocabulary mastery.

F. Operational Definition

1. Students' Perceptions

Perception is defined as students' subjective views, assessments, or responses to the use of the Duolingo application in the process of

learning English vocabulary. The perception in question includes how students understand, feel, and assess the effectiveness of the application in helping them learn and improve vocabulary mastery. Thus, perception in this context is used to evaluate the extent to which the Duolingo application is able to motivate students and facilitate independent vocabulary learning.

2. Duolingo

Duolingo is a technology-based language learning application that uses gamification methods to improve language skills, including vocabulary. In this study, the use of Duolingo refers to the activities of students who learn English vocabulary through application features, such as vocabulary exercises, pronunciation, and reinforcement through repetition.

3. English Vocabulary Mastery

The process of students in acquiring and understanding new English vocabulary. This vocabulary mastery is measured through the results of student progress in the Duolingo application, such as the level of achievement, the number of vocabulary learned, and the ability of students to use these words in simple contexts.

4. Gamification for Learning

Gamification is a concept that uses game elements to increase motivation, engagement, and outcomes in various contexts, including education. In the context of learning, gamification aims to transform monotonous learning processes into more engaging and interactive experiences. Gamification involves integrating features such as points, badges, challenges, leaderboards, levels, and instant feedback into learning activities, particularly within digital platforms or online learning applications.

