

CHAPTER IV

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This chapter presents the findings of the study based on data collected through in-depth interviews with students of class 8B at MTs. Al-Hikmah regarding their use of the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary. The data were analyzed thematically and categorized into four main themes: students' perceptions, motivation, experiences, and challenges. Each theme is discussed in detail to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Duolingo supports vocabulary learning from the students' perspectives.

A. Findings

The findings of this study were obtained through in-depth interviews with several informants who were students of class 8B at MTs. Al-Hikmah. The interviews were conducted in May 2025. The purpose of this research was to explore students' perceptions of using the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary. Data collection was carried out using semi-structured interviews, which allowed students to express their experiences, thoughts, and challenges in using Duolingo as a language learning tool. The responses were then transcribed, analyzed, and categorized into several thematic areas.

The following finding were obtained through in-depth interviews with students, carried out after they had used the Duolingo application in their English vocabulary learning process. These findings include four main themes

that emerged from the data analysis, namely: students' perceptions, motivation, experiences, and challenges in using the Duolingo application for learning English vocabulary.

1. Students' Perceptions

Based on the results of the interviewed with students of class 8B MTs. Al-Hikmah who showed a positive perception of the use of the Duolingo application in learning English vocabulary. They described the app as fun and engaging because it presents learning in a game-like format. Features such as points, levels, and rewards were seen as motivating factors. As stated by *D.A* : *“menurut saya, aplikasi Duolingo itu menyenangkan dan menarik untuk belajar kata-kata dalam bahasa Inggris.”* (“I think Duolingo is fun and interesting to learn English words.”)

Some students also viewed Duolingo as offering a different atmosphere compared to conventional classroom methods. Its interactive interface, appealing visual design, and varied learning approaches made students feel more involved in the learning process. This is reflected in the statement by *L.M* : *“menurutku, Duolingo itu aplikasi yang bagus karena bikin belajar kosakata bahasa Inggris jadi lebih menarik dan menyenangkan.”*

(“Duolingo is a good application because it makes learning English vocabulary more interesting and enjoyable.”)

In addition to being enjoyable, Duolingo was considered easy to use. Simple instructions and the presence of images and icons helped students

understand the material more easily. Some students mentioned they could use the application without a teacher's assistance because the instructions were clear. As *L.I* stated, “*iya, gampang digunakan karena petunjuknya sederhana dan ada gambarnya juga.*” (“Yes, it is easy to use because the instructions are simple and there are pictures.”)

Using Duolingo also gave students the freedom to learn independently. The app allowed them to access lessons outside of school hours and repeat materials as needed. *N.R* shared, “*iya dong, soalnya Duolingo itu ngebantu banget dan nggak ngebosenin kayak baca buku doang.*” (“It’s helpful and not boring like reading books only.”) This shows that Duolingo aligns with the characteristics of digital learners who prefer flexible, technology-based learning.

Overall, students’ perceptions of Duolingo indicate that the application is well accepted as a learning tool. This positive perception highlights the potential of Duolingo to be continuously used as a supportive medium for vocabulary learning in junior high schools or madrasahs. It also reflects students’ readiness to adopt technology in their learning process in a more independent and interactive way.

2. Students’ Motivation

Students' motivation in using the Duolingo application is shaped by a learning experience that resembles playing a game. Most students reported feeling more motivated due to features such as points, badges, levels, and daily challenges, which give them a sense of achievement. As expressed by *D.A*, "*iya, aku jadi lebih termotivasi soalnya kayak main game, terus dapet poin sama hadiah juga.*" (Yes, I feel more motivated because it feels like a game and I get points and rewards.") This indicates that the gamification design of Duolingo successfully stimulates students' intrinsic motivation to study consistently.

In addition, the ease of use and flexible learning time further strengthen student motivation. Several respondents mentioned that they could study at any time according to their availability, without the pressure typically found in classroom learning. *L.M* stated, "*aku lebih termotivasi karena pakai Duolingo tuh rasanya kayak main game, jadi bikin semangat terus buat belajar.*" ("I feel more motivated because using Duolingo feels like playing a game, and it makes me want to keep learning.") Students found that learning through the app is more enjoyable and less monotonous than conventional methods.

Motivation is also fostered through the habit of self-directed learning, which develops gradually. Many students used the application several times a week regularly, even without teacher instruction. *I.M* said, "*aku merasa lebih semangat belajar karena di Duolingo aku bisa dapet poin*

dan hadiah.” (“I feel more excited to learn because Duolingo gives points and rewards.”) This shows that their motivation is not only externally driven by app features but also begins to grow as internal motivation.

Finally, students expressed enthusiasm in maintaining their streaks (daily learning records), feeling positively challenged to continue learning. Some of them admitted not wanting to lose the achievements they had accumulated, which motivated them to access the app consistently. As *N.R* shared, *“aku lebih termotivasi karena bisa naik level dan dapet lencana tiap selesai pelajaran.”* (“I feel more excited because I can get levels and badges when I finish lessons.”) This demonstrates that Duolingo fosters long-term motivation, which can support sustainable learning habits.

3. Students' Experiences

Students' experiences in using Duolingo as a medium for vocabulary learning are generally constructive and encourage active involvement in learning. Most students stated that Duolingo provides a fun way to learn because its appearance is attractive and not monotonous. They feel more

involved because this application is different from traditional learning methods. *D.A* stated, *“menurutku, Duolingo itu seru dan menarik buat belajar kata-kata dalam bahasa Inggris.”* (“I think Duolingo is fun and interesting to learn English words.”) This shows that the learning

experience through digital applications creates a more relaxed and enjoyable atmosphere.

Some students also feel more comfortable because Duolingo allows them to learn independently without pressure. With no direct assessment from teachers, students are free to try, make mistakes, and improve themselves with the help of the application's automatic feedback feature. *L.I* explained, *“Duolingo membantuku belajar kata-kata baru dengan mudah karena katanya diulang-ulang dengan berbagai cara.”* (“Duolingo helps me learn new words easily because it repeats them in many ways.”) This shows that the repetition given through Duolingo helps build students' confidence and strengthen their vocabulary understanding.

Flexibility of time and place is also an important part of the students' learning experience. Many of them use Duolingo at home or during their free time, as *L.M* said, *“aku biasanya pakai Duolingo empat atau lima kali dalam seminggu, terutama kalau lagi ada waktu luang di rumah.”* (“I usually use Duolingo four to five times a week, especially when I have free time at home.”) This experience allows students to organize their study time according to their own convenience, so that the learning process does not burden their daily activities.

Some students also had interesting experiences in using certain features on Duolingo, such as the point system, levels, and daily challenges. This creates a competitive spirit and becomes a fun learning experience. *N.R*

said, “*saya bisa mendapatkan level dan lencana ketika aku selesai pelajaran.*” (“I can get levels and badges when I finish lessons.”) These elements not only add to the positive experience but also increase their motivation to study consistently.

However, the students' experience was not entirely without obstacles. Some found it difficult when faced with questions that were too difficult or when the internet connection was disrupted. *IM* said, “*aku susah pakai Duolingo kalau lagi sibuk sama tugas sekolah atau nggak ada internet.*” (“It's hard to use Duolingo if I'm busy with school tasks or don't have internet.”) Technical obstacles like this are often part of the digital learning experience, especially for students who do not yet have full access to devices or a stable internet network.

Despite the challenges, overall student experiences still show that using Duolingo has a positive impact on vocabulary learning. Some students even said that they are now more familiar with and able to use new words in everyday contexts. Interviewee 5 said, “Yes, I know more words now.” This experience strengthens the evidence that the app-based approach has a real impact on improving students' vocabulary mastery.

4. Challenges Faced by Students

Despite the enthusiasm students have shown toward using Duolingo as a vocabulary learning tool, they also face various challenges throughout the learning process. One of the most frequently mentioned obstacles is the difficulty in understanding the meaning of unfamiliar English words or sentences. Some students feel confused when there are no supporting images or when the vocabulary is too difficult to comprehend. As stated by N.R, "*kadang aku nggak ngerti arti katanya kalau nggak ada gambarnya.*" ("Sometimes I don't understand the meaning of the words if there's no picture.")

Another challenge is boredom that arises from repetitive exercises or monotonous content. Although Duolingo is known for its gamified approach, some students feel less challenged when faced with the same type of exercises repeatedly. I.M said, "*kadang aku bosan kalau latihannya itu-itu saja dan diulang terus.*" ("Sometimes I feel bored if I do the same kind of exercises many times.") This indicates the importance of variation in both format and difficulty level of exercises to keep students motivated.

Technical issues also present significant barriers in using Duolingo.

Some students struggle with limited access to the internet or do not always have a personal device available. L.I explained, "*aku kesulitan pakai Duolingo kalau nggak ada internet atau kalau aku lupa bawa HP.*" ("I find it hard to use Duolingo when I don't have internet or when I forget my

phone.”) This situation shows that infrastructure readiness remains a challenge in consistently integrating digital applications into students’ learning activities.

Difficulties with the listening and speaking exercises are also commonly reported. Some students feel that the application cannot accurately recognize their voice, or they struggle to understand English pronunciation. *L.M* shared, “kadang bagian speaking atau listening agak membingungkan karena susah nangkep cara pengucapannya.” (“Sometimes I find the speaking or listening parts confusing because it’s hard to understand the pronunciation.”) This indicates the need for audio features to be complemented with guidance or additional practice outside the application.

Moreover, a heavy school workload is also a major reason for irregular use of the app. Many students mentioned that they have trouble finding time to use Duolingo when overwhelmed with homework or other school activities. “*kalau lagi banyak PR atau internetnya lemot, jadi susah buka aplikasinya.*” (“When I have a lot of homework or my internet is slow, it’s hard to use it,”) said *D.A.* This time management challenge hinders the consistency of self-directed learning.

Some students also struggle with levels or exercises that are too difficult and lack sufficient explanation. As a result, they tend to guess the answers or skip exercises without fully understanding the content. “*ya,*

beberapa level sulit dipahami.” (“Yes, some levels are hard to understand,”) complained *H.S.* This highlights the need for teacher support or more detailed help features within the application.

Sustaining focus during lessons is also a concern. When exercises feel too long or dull, students tend to lose focus and motivation to continue. *D.A.* stated, *“kadang aku merasa bosan kalau pelajarannya terlalu panjang atau terlalu susah.”* (“Sometimes I feel bored if the lesson is too long or too hard.”) This emphasizes the need for lessons to be not only varied but also appropriately timed to match the attention span of junior high school students.

In addition, pressure from the strict auto-correction system is another challenge. When answers are marked wrong due to minor mistakes, students can become frustrated. *“kadang aku melakukan kesalahan, dan aku merasa kesal ketika dikatakan salah.”* (“Sometimes I make mistake, and I feel upset when it says wrong,”) said *L.M.* This can reduce students’ confidence and hinder their learning progress if not addressed with a more supportive approach.

Finally, some students face challenges due to limited access to personal devices, such as not owning their own phone or having to share it with family members. *“saat ponsel saya tidak bersama saya.”* (“When my phone is not with me,”) said *H.S.* . These kinds of obstacles highlight the

importance of school or family support to ensure students have consistent access to digital learning media like Duolingo.

B. Discussion

The finding data above are analyzed to explore students' perceptions of using Duolingo for learning English vocabulary, which are grouped into four main themes: students' perceptions, motivation, experiences, and challenges. These themes aim to provide a comprehensive understanding of how Duolingo supports vocabulary mastery from the learners' perspective.

1. Students' Perceptions

Students' perceptions toward Duolingo are generally positive. Most students described the application as fun, interesting, and useful for learning English vocabulary. When students view Duolingo positively as an enjoyable and easy-to-use tool, they are more likely to use it consistently. This positive perception fosters a sense of comfort and enthusiasm, making the learning experience less intimidating than conventional methods.

These findings are consistent with the statement by Wang et al. (2020), who emphasized that students' perception plays a vital role in determining the effectiveness of educational tools because positive perceptions can increase motivation and engagement in learning.

The researcher personally agrees that students' perceptions play a crucial role in the success of any learning tool, especially in digital contexts like Duolingo. When learners find an application enjoyable, user-friendly, and helpful, it creates a positive and sustainable learning experience. The interview data clearly reflect that most students feel comfortable and engaged using Duolingo due to its appealing interface and interactive design. This shows that a positive perception can foster a more open and enthusiastic attitude toward using technology in learning.

This statement aligns strongly with the theory proposed by Wang et al. (2020), which asserts that positive perceptions can enhance both motivation and learning engagement. The results of this study reinforce that idea, illustrating how educational tools designed with attention to user experience (UX) can significantly improve the quality and consistency of student engagement. Therefore, Duolingo's success in capturing students' interest can be attributed to how well it aligns with learners' preferences and expectations in today's digital age.

Furthermore, positive student perceptions are often influenced by the sense of control and autonomy offered by the application. Duolingo allows users to choose when, where, and how long they want to learn, give them the flexibility to tailor their learning experience according to their personal routines. This autonomy is particularly beneficial for junior high school students who may have varied schedules and responsibilities. When students feel in control of their learning process, they tend to develop a

stronger sense of ownership and commitment, which ultimately contributes to improved learning outcomes.

In addition, the visual and interactive nature of Duolingo plays a key role in shaping students' positive perceptions. The use of bright colors, icons, animations, and audio cues creates an engaging learning environment that caters to digital-native learners. These elements reduce the cognitive load and help students absorb new vocabulary more effectively. Many students state that the visuals help them remember the words more easily and make the learning process less stressful.

2. Motivation

The gamification features in Duolingo significantly increase students' motivation in learning English vocabulary. Elements such as points, rewards, streaks, and levels are identified as key motivating factors.

The researcher personally believes that gamification is one of the most effective approaches in modern digital learning, especially for young learners. At the junior secondary level, students are easily influenced by elements of play, competition, and recognition. Duolingo successfully incorporates all these elements into its platform, turning routine learning into an exciting activity. From the students' responses, it is clear that the app increases their willingness to learn vocabulary without external

pressure from teachers or parents. This intrinsic motivation is a strong foundation for long-term language development.

Moreover, students not only feel excited when receiving rewards or leveling up, but they also feel challenged to maintain their streaks or improve their scores. This shows that gamification can drive consistency and discipline in learning. Several students mention that they try not to skip days of practice, because breaking their streak make them feel like they are losing progress. This kind of psychological attachment to achievement is beneficial, as it fosters accountability and responsibility for their own learning progress.

As Munday (2021) pointed out, gamification elements help sustain motivation by offering a sense of achievement and healthy competition. Many students admit that they feel more excited and eager to continue learning because Duolingo is more like a game than a traditional learning tool. This fun and engaging experience encourage students to return to the app regularly, promoting consistent vocabulary practice.

Duolingo's gamification strategy plays a crucial role in motivating students to learn English vocabulary. Its design aligns with both educational theories and learners' emotional needs. Based on the findings and student responses, the researcher supports the integration of gamified platforms in vocabulary learning. When applied thoughtfully, gamification not only makes learning fun but also cultivates persistence, confidence,

and a deeper engagement with the language. Future digital learning tools can learn from Duolingo's model by emphasizing intrinsic motivation and learner-centered design.

3. Students' Experiences

The experience of students using Duolingo as a vocabulary learning tool is generally positive and constructive. Most students reported that the application is enjoyable, flexible, and less stressful compared to traditional learning methods. Moreover, students express that the repetitive nature of Duolingo exercises, although potentially monotonous helps them to retain vocabulary better. This is consistent with the principle of spaced repetition in language acquisition, which suggests that repeated exposure to vocabulary enhances long-term memory.

The responses from the students indicate that Duolingo allows them to learn at their own pace and according to their preferred schedule. Several students mention that they use the application when they have free time, such as before bed or during breaks. This kind of flexibility is crucial for

junior high school students, who often juggle school responsibilities and extracurricular activities. The freedom to choose when and where to study fosters learner autonomy and reduces the pressure often associated with formal learning settings.

However, some students get confusing experience when using certain features of the application, particularly during listening and speaking tasks. Challenges such as unclear pronunciation or long sentence structures make it difficult for them to understand instructions or questions.

The researcher believes these experiences reflect the dual nature of digital learning tools like Duolingo. While they offer autonomy, engagement, and interactivity, they also require support structures, such as teacher guidance or peer collaboration—to address challenges that students may encounter independently. Duolingo provides a strong foundation for vocabulary development, but its optimal impact depends on how well it is integrated into the broader learning ecosystem. The students' experiences confirm that when used consistently and with appropriate support, Duolingo can become an effective and student-friendly platform for vocabulary mastery.

This supported by Zainuddin et al. (2020), who stated that gamified learning environments through elements like daily goals, points, and challenges can create a fun and motivating atmosphere that encourages students to engage in self-directed learning.

4. Challenges Faced by Students

Although the Duolingo application is generally well received by students, the findings revealed several challenges they encountered while using the platform. One of the most common issues reported is difficulty understanding new vocabulary, especially when it is not supported by visual aids or contextual examples. Another major challenge is the feeling of boredom due to repetitive exercises. While gamification elements like points and rewards initially attracted students, many reported a lack of variety in the tasks.

This aligns with Zainuddin et al. (2020), who argued that monotony in digital learning tools could reduce learners' engagement and focus. Without adequate variation in difficulty and format, even game-like activities can become demotivating.

Technical limitations also pose significant barriers to consistent use. Some students share that they do not have personal access to smartphones or a stable internet connection, make it hard to use the app regularly. This points to a digital divide that still exists in many educational contexts, especially in less resourced environments. Stockwell (2022) also emphasized that the availability of personal devices plays a crucial role in the effectiveness of mobile learning tools.

Students also face internal challenges, such as time management. School workloads and other obligations often disrupt their regular learning schedule. Additionally, strict auto-correction features in Duolingo

sometimes discourage them, especially when minor mistakes led to failure messages.

The researcher personally believes that while Duolingo offers many strengths in delivering engaging and independent vocabulary practice, these challenges must be addressed to ensure its optimal effectiveness. Students, particularly in junior high school, need both digital access and emotional support to sustain motivation. Teachers and schools play an essential role in guiding learners, offering clarification when they struggle, and ensuring that learning is balanced with their academic workload. From the insights gathered, the researcher sees a clear need for Duolingo and similar platforms to adapt their design to better suit young learners' cognitive, emotional, and contextual needs. With appropriate scaffolding, both technically and pedagogically, these challenges can be transformed into learning opportunities that build resilience, responsibility, and deeper language understand.