PERCEPTION OF VOCATIONAL STUDENTS TOWARD THE USE OF DUOLINGO AND QUIZLET TO IMPROVE THEIR WORDS BANK

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Abstract: The English subject is one of the compulsory subjects taught in vocational schools in Indonesia. Vocational students need more opportunities to practice their skills so they can do better in using the language. Using learning apps like Quizlet and Duolingo is one attractive strategy to increase the chance of the students to practice and improve their English skills. The purposes of this study are to investigate the perception of the vocational students toward the use of Duolingo and Quizlet to improve their word bank. There are nine vocational students who participate in this study, and all of them just graduated from senior high school. The data in this study are from a questionnaire and students' logbooks. Students are asked to do the use the apps for six weeks. They have to finish one topic each week and post their progress and reflections on their logbook in the form of an online blog. Some major findings are discovered, and some suggestions are made as well.

Keywords: *perception, vocational students, learning apps, Duolingo, Quizlet*

INTRODUCTION

One of the crucial aspects of learning a language is mastering the vocabulary of the language. Vocabulary is one of the components in English or the sub-skills that must be taught to the learners because it has a main role in the language. It is the knowledge about words and word meanings (Charter, 2014). Someone will have difficulties understanding the language if they do not master the vocabulary of the target language. This is strengthened by Moghadam et al. (2012) that mentioned that vocabulary learning is dominant in language acquisition, whether the language is a second or foreign language, and crucial to the learners. Indonesian students who learn English as Foreign Language need to have adequate vocabularies so they can do well in other competencies.

COVID-19 pandemic forces students to do online learning suddenly and responsibly for because most of the students study from their home and use their devices, either a smartphone or a laptop. By accessing and doing the activities on a learning platform on their devices, students have opportunities to add more vocabularies to their word bank. This is supported by Mahdi (2018), which mentioned that the use of mobile devices in learning vocabulary was associated with greater achievement in comparison with traditional ways.

There are some benefits of using technology in language education (Riasati et al., 2012). The benefits are increasing the students' motivation, creating learner-centered approaches, contributing to developing the autonomy of the students, encouraging collaboration and communication in the learning activities, and having the possibility to lower the anxiety among learners. In addition, the use of technology to enhance language learning, where it is described how the use of technology makes the students more confident to learn English (Barreto & Maritza, 2018). Students have more time to learn and practice their language skills by using the technology, so the more they practice, the better their skills are.

Two of the many available learning platforms that can be used by students to improve their vocabularies are Duolingo and Quizlet. Duolingo and Quizlet are two of many learning platforms that can be used by students to improve their vocabularies. Duolingo (https://www.

duolingo.com/) is a free learning app which was created by Luis von Ahn and his partner Severin Hacker. It is a web-based self-paced language teaching program that guides students step-by-step through a sequence of tasks based on translation (Krashen, 2014). Currently, it has more than 300 million users all over the world, with 60% men and 40% female. This app has 31 social clubs and 40 board games. The topics introduced in the website quite vary, such as product management, business development, and design. It is hoped that users spend a daily average of 30 minutes to do the apps to learn from its vocal.

Quizlet (https://quizlet.com/) is an online flashcard creating and learning site that can be used on computers and smartphones (Wright, 2016).   The app was created by Andrew Sutherland in 2005 to train the students to learn vocabulary through flashcards. This app lets the students study vocabularies in some interesting modes, and those are flashcards, gravity, write, speller, match, and live.

Both Duolingo and Quizlet are listed as education websites in the world by SimilarWeb.com (https://similarweb.com), a website traffic analysis based in New York. It showed that Quizlet is more popular than Duolingo. The number of people in the world who used Quizlet increases, and it gets the fourth place as the education website or app used in the world while Duolingo is in the fifteenth rank. The number of Duolingo users in the past six months (May – October 2020) was slightly reduced from 75.7 million to 66.6 million. On the contrary, the users of Quizlet sharply rocketed from 100 million to 170 million users during this six months period (May – October 2020). (SimilarWeb, 2020).

There is already some research on those learning platforms, and one research was conducted by Ajisoko (2020). In his research entitled *The Use of Duolingo Apps to Improve English Vocabulary Learning* resulted that Duolingo is one of the effective media in teaching-learning vocabulary, and most of the respondents mentioned that it provided advantages in learning vocabulary. It helped them to discover new ideas, get a better understanding, master vocabulary, and it is applicable. Although most of the respondents mentioned positive respond toward the use of Duolingo, 1% of the respondents disagreed with the benefits. Another research tried to prove the effectiveness of using Duolingo in elementary school, which resulted that using Duolingo as a mobile application can make teaching and learning activities more effective and varied because it provides alternative learning media so the students can improve their ability to speak and their vocabulary mastery (Irawan et al., 2020).

On the other hand, there is also some research on the use of Quizlet in learning a language. A study conducted by Muthumaniraja (2020) resulted that using Quizlet for review attracted greater engagement of the learners for vocabulary acquisition than the traditional method. Quizlet also impacts freshmen of non-English major who learn English. The data revealed that the students had positive attitudes toward the use of Quizlet to learn vocabulary, including their willingness to learn vocabulary with Quizlet in the future (Van et al., 2020).

Based on those previous studies, most of the studies resulted that both Duolingo and Quizlet help the students in learning vocabularies. This study tries to complete the previous study about the research on the perception of the students toward Duolingo and Quizlet by using vocational students as the respondents and using the two applications at the same time. The goals of this study are to try to answer the questions: what are the perceptions of vocational students toward the use of Duolingo and Quizlet to improve their word banks and the challenges that they faced when using the apps.

METHOD

Since this study's purpose is to find out the perception of vocational students toward the use of learning apps to improve their word banks, this study employs descriptive case study because this study wants to describe an intervention or phenomenon and the real-life context in which it occurred (Baxter & Jack, 2008). This study was conducted at one of the vocational schools in Surakarta, Central Java. A class from that vocational school was chosen as the participants of this study. Seventeen students registered in the class but only nine of them responded to this study. The students were requested to use and do the activities on Duolingo and Quizlet from meeting one to meeting six for six weeks. Students learned different topics each week, and they did one topic activity on both apps.

To collect the data, this study employed a questionnaire and students' logbook to get authentic data from the students. The questionnaire was classified into two sections, perceptions when using the apps and their influences on the word banks, and challenges faced by the students with five options based on a 5-level Likert scale from 1 for strongly disagree and 5 for strongly agree. On the other hand, the students used a logbook to write their experiences when they used the apps. It can be the challenges that they face, materials, what they learn, what they feel after when using the apps, and their progress. Once the data from the questionnaire and students' logbook were gathered, then it was classified and analyzed to answer the research questions.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study include the perception of the students toward their perceptions on using the apps and vocabulary improvements, and the challenges they face when using the apps.

Perceptions of the students on using Duolingo and Quizlet

The first three statements are about the perceptions of the students on using Duolingo and Quizlet. The analysis of it is described in table 1.

Table 1. Perceptions on the use of Duolingo and Quizlet

No	Statements	N	Total value (D)	Average (D)	Total value (Q)	Average (Q)
1	I am interested to use the app to improve my English skill.	9	40	4.4	36	4.0
2	The app increases my motivation to learn English.	9	35	3.9	35	3.9
3	The app makes me more motivated to learn English.	9	35	3.9	35	3.9

Note: D = Duolingo, Q= Quizlet

As described in table 1, it is shown that most of the respondents agreed that using Duolingo and Quizlet can improve their English skills (item 1). This was followed up with the data from one of the students' journals that mentioned that she felt that by using games, she felt more challenged and had more fun in learning English.

By using Quizlet, in my opinion, it makes learning English more challenging and more fun. Where there are several options to choose from for practice such as testing, matching, writing, and can compete with other friends (M5HD)

They also mentioned that they agreed that the apps increase their motivation to learn English and increase their motivation to learn it (item 2 and 3). The students assumed that the apps are interesting and able to improve their motivation to learn English; not only are they able to hear the sounds, but also they can have more opportunities to do the quiz. As one of the respondents said, "The app is really interesting because we learn a language with games and there is a sound to hear how native speaker says the word (M3SA)."

In addition, the unlimited activities on the apps let the students do the activities until they fully understand the materials. This is as mentioned by one of the respondents, "Quizlet taught me words or sentences that I never met before. By using Quizlet, I get chances to retake the quiz if I make mistakes, so I fully understand (M2HB)."

Perceptions of the apps toward the students' word banks

The next six statements are about the perceptions of the vocational students on the apps toward their word banks. The result of the analysis is described in Table 2.

Table 2. Perceptions of Duolingo and Quizlet toward Students' Word Banks

No	Statement	N	Total value (D)	Average (D)	Total value (Q)	Average (Q)
4	The app helps me to add my vocabulary.	9	38	4.2	36	4.0
5	The app helps me to memorize the vocabulary.	9	42	4.7	38	4.2
6	The app helps me to arrange sentences in English.	9	36	4.0	36	4.0
7	I have more opportunities to practice my English on the app.	9	40	4.0	34	3.8
8	Learning with the app makes me able to use language skills in daily life.	9	35	3.9	34	3.8
9	The app is not useful for adding new vocabulary.	9	19	2.1	16	1.8

Note: D = Duolingo, Q= Quizlet

Table 3 describes that most of the students agreed that the apps give them positive impacts on their word banks by helping them to learn more vocabularies and memorize them; as mentioned by one of the students, he said, "By practicing every day with Duolingo I feel that this application is very helpful in practicing English and of course, increasing our vocabulary. In Duolingo, there is also a daily target so that it can motivate you to work even harder (M5HD)".

The students also thought that the apps helped them in arranging sentences in English because they have more time to practice their skills by using the apps. The students can play it repeatedly until they understand the materials, so they can use it in their daily life. She said, "This Friday, I am playing Duolingo at level 3 conjunctions. As usual, this is very fun, and my vocabulary has increased (M5SN)." The apps also helped the students to learn about grammar and types of words; as he said, "After I did my bilingual assignment at Quizlet, I got a lot of knowledge about using correct grammar. In Quizlet, I know about adverbs of time, correct usage of interrogative words, nouns, and verbs (M2AN)."

Besides learning about vocabularies and sentences, the students also mentioned that they have chances to learn other aspects of languages, including types of words. He mentioned that

one week I played Duolingo. I learned about phrases, adverbs, and adjectives. In the Duolingo app, I can improve my English skills (M2AN).

Challenges when Using the Apps

The last five statements are about the challenges faced by the students when using Duolingo and Quizlet. The result of the analysis is described in table 3.

Table 3. Challenges when Using Duolingo and Quizlet

No	Statement	N	Total value (D)	Average (D)	Total value (Q)	Average (Q)
10	The app is user-friendly.	9	39	4.3	38	4.2
11	I have difficulties when using the app.	9	27	3.0	26	2.9
12	The app is not useful to learn English at self-pace.	9	17	1.9	17	1.9
13	I can't use all the language skills in the app.	9	19	2.1	20	2.2
14	The activities on the app are not interesting.	9	16	1.8	21	2.3

Note: D = Duolingo, Q= Quizlet

Most of the students agreed that both applications are user-friendly and easy to use, but on the other hand, some of the students faced difficulties when using the app. She said, "So this day, I'm confused about what to do in Duolingo, and then I just learn other languages (M4SA)". It is not clear what makes her confused when using the app, and she did not mention it in her journal. A similar statement was mentioned by another student. She said, "I played Duolingo and Quizlet on October 26, 2020. My opinion when using Duolingo is a little bit confusing because when I played it, I made repeated mistakes until I memorize the next sentences, but probably it is easy, maybe because I am not focused when playing Duolingo (M6WL)."

Although the students faced some difficulties when using the apps, they keep using them because they realized that the apps had positive impacts on them. This is as mentioned by one of the respondents. He said, "I'm glad I could play Quizlet and Duolingo because (I) could more understand English although I find difficulties, but I am happy because it is useful for me (M6TB)".

Could not access the Wi-Fi is one of the issues faced by the students, so they could not access the apps. He said that "I'm sorry, I can't open Duolingo because my WLAN have a problem at the server (M3HD)". The two apps are online apps, so the students need to connect to the internet when they need to access these apps.

CONCLUSIONS

This study on perceptions of vocational students toward the use of Duolingo and Quizlet toward their word banks is based on the data from the questionnaire and a logbook. Most of the students agreed that both apps are useful for them in learning English. Not only to improve the vocabularies in their word have banks, but also they learned about grammar, sentences, and types of words. In addition, the apps also help them to memorize the vocabularies that they have learned through the activities on the apps.

This study has suggestions for further research on the use of learning apps. First, it is better to use the interview to collect the data, so it is well-described the perception of the students,

although they have their own logbook. Second, although all students have smartphones and an internet connection, sometimes unexpected things occur which caused them could not access the apps. It is better to give one week to finish one project so the students will have enough time to finish it. Third, the subject of this study is limited to the vocational students majoring in Accounting Information System, so the result cannot be generalized. It is recommended to conduct similar research with more respondents from different majors so the results could be generalized.

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