

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

The concept of self-directed language learning is appealing to be discussed. As a possible result, the concept has piqued the interest of experts in fields such as education. It was frequently viewed as a way to transition from a teacher-centered to a learner-centered approach to education when used in formal educational contexts. Regardless of the necessity for such a change, it became a catchphrase as well as a widely accepted method of instruction. There are several notable characteristics of learners' self-directed language learning and the lack thereof. Because learners with high self-directed language learning believe that learning is a personal responsibility, they are willing to face learning challenges and select learning strategies to best overcome the challenges (Ayyildiz & Tarhan, 2015) such learners typically have specific learning goals and prioritize what is more important, and thus learners have much time.

To improve self-directed language learning, appropriate media is needed. One of the media that can be used is Duolingo. A self-paced language learning program called Duolingo offers lessons on groups of skills such as phrases, adjectives, and food. These skills are largely presented in a linear order, with learners only moving on to new skills after finishing earlier lessons. Duolingo can be accessed on both desktop computers via web and on mobile devices by Duolingo app Isbel, et al., (2017). Personalization and gamification are game design techniques that use game elements as a driving force for participation.

The educational mobile app Duolingo offers a variety of exercises in vocabulary, reading, writing, listening, speaking, and grammar. These features can increase learner autonomy. This means that the availability of features on Duolingo can increase students' ability to learn and determine their own learning goals. In a sense, Duolingo and learner autonomy are closely related because users will feel their learning outcomes and learning independence after using Duolingo.

Several studies have suggested that Duolingo is quite practical for learning English. Several studies were conducted to examine the result of the role of Duolingo on learner autonomy in promoting self-directed learning. According to Tsai (2016), Duolingo shows that the participants performed greater extent of autonomous behaviors in their learning. And show that Duolingo promotes learners' learner autonomy, but limitation still exists. A study conducted by Saraswati, et al., (2021) said that the use of Duolingo could enhance learner motivation and attitudes in learning English autonomously as well as actively practicing the language in a real situation. The participant actively engaged in using Duolingo to learn English on their own, and their parents also thought the platform was helpful in assisting the participant's learning. As a result, this study found that learning English using Duolingo can support independent EFL learning without time or space constraints. Another study by Prapbowati (2022) said that studied German language with autonomous learning through Duolingo is interesting and not boring. Because each student can choose how they want to learn, autonomous learning helps students comprehend the material more easily, according to the results of the interviews.

This research is certainly different from previous research. The novelty of this research lies in its focus on the role of personalization and gamification in promoting self-directed language learning. While previous research has examined the impact of these features on language learning, few have specifically focused on their impact on learner autonomy in self-directed language learning and this study seeks to fill this gap by examining the impact of these features on learner autonomy.

1.2 Problem of the Research

Based on the background of the research above, the problem of the research is: How do personalization and gamification features in Duolingo impact learner autonomy in self-directed language learning?

1.3 Focus of the Research

This research focuses on investigating the role of personalization and gamification in Duolingo application in promoting self-directed language learning on the first grade students at *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri (SMPN) 2 Sukowono*

1.4 Purpose the Research

Based on the research question above, the purpose of the research is to investigate and seeks to explore how these features promote learner autonomy, and how these features can be optimized to enhance the effectiveness of language learning platforms.

1.5 Significance of the Research

For future research, it addresses an important aspect of language learning, which is self-directed language learning. This is particularly important in today is

fast-paced and constantly changing world where learners need to be able to take control of their own learning. The findings of the study can inform the design of language learning platforms, particularly with regard to the use of personalization and gamification features to promote self-directed learning.

1.6 Assumption of the Research

Duolingo is a language learning application where Duolingo features have a personalization and gamification role so that these features can increase learner autonomy.

1.7 Scope of the Research

This research focuses on the role of personalization and gamification in promoting self-directed language learning. This research is conducted on 7th grade students of *Sekolah Menengah Pertama Negeri (SMPN) 2 Sukowono*.

1.8 Operational Definition of the Terms

1.8.1. Duolingo application

Duolingo is an application that offers personalization and gamification features. Gamification is an application that provides learning in which learning is like playing a game, while for personalization in Duolingo, such as Duolingo is systemically able to read user abilities. If the user makes a lot of mistakes in a specific vocabulary, then the vocabulary will tend to be repeated or reviewed at the next level.

1.8.2. Learner autonomy

Autonomy learner refers to freedom and the ability to manage own affairs, which entails the right to make decisions as well. Besides, the learners act independently of the teacher, not waiting to be told what to do. The student can

set goals and can choose the right technique to use in monitoring the learning process and evaluating it.

