

DEVELOPING LANGUAGE COMPETENCE IN STUDENTS THROUGH LANGUAGE LEARNING APPLICATIONS (DUOLINGO)

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Abstract: *Many studies have proved that learning a new language is a demanding process that makes students feel overwhelmed during the process of language learning. Many existing research papers introduced the challenges of developing language competence and the need for effective language learning tools for language teachers. With the rise of different language teaching tools, advanced technologies, and smart devices, language learning apps have become a popular tool for language acquisition. This article examines the potential of Duolingo to develop language competence in students, analyzing its features and effectiveness. This research addresses the specific question “Does Duolingo effectively develop language competence in students?” by investigating about its potentials. This article discusses the advantages of Duolingo, such as its accessibility and gamified approach, while also acknowledging its limitations, including the need for personalized instruction and real-world practice. This study concludes by considering the features of language learning apps and their potential to enhance language acquisition for diverse learners.*

Keywords: *Duolingo, language learning apps, language competence, features.*

Gamified language learning applications including Duolingo have gained immense popularity among educational settings, but their effectiveness in developing language competence in students is a subject of ongoing debate. By conducting this research we tried to investigate the potential of Duolingo to promote language acquisition, analyzing its gamified features and their impact on students' engagement. This study examines existing research on the app's effectiveness in improving vocabulary, grammar, and fluency. We also tried to explore how language educators can integrate Duolingo into classroom settings to enhance traditional language teaching, highlighting the importance of balancing gamified learning with personalized instruction and real-world practice. To conduct our research about the role of Duolingo in improving language competence in students we employed secondary data analysis research method. We gathered research papers from Google Scholar by using keywords such as Duolingo, language competence, language learning applications, and foreign languages.

The emergence of various language learning apps, including Duolingo have revolutionized the way of acquiring a new language by offering accessible,

engaging, and often free tools for learners of diverse backgrounds. Despite the popularity of these applications, their effectiveness in improving comprehensive language competence in language learners still remains a subject for many ongoing research and studies.

Although Duolingo can provide learners with a promising approach to enhance the language learning process, its effectiveness is contingent upon its successful integration into educational settings. Language teachers can employ Duolingo's features and gamified elements to complement traditional teaching methods, fostering a more interactive and motivating learning experience.

Research suggests that language learning apps like Duolingo can be effective in enhancing vocabulary acquisition and grammatical accuracy. Studies have shown that users of Duolingo, particularly those who engage consistently with the app, demonstrate significant improvements in their knowledge of vocabulary words and their ability to apply grammatical rules (Mitchell Shortt, 2021). The app's structured lessons, repetitive practice, and gamified elements appear to contribute to these positive outcomes (Musa Nushi).

Fluency and Conversational Skills:

The impact of language learning apps on fluency and conversational skills is a more complex and nuanced issue. While some studies indicate positive gains in these areas, others suggest that app-based learning alone may not be sufficient for developing true fluency and communicative competence. The lack of real-world interaction and opportunities for spontaneous communication within app-based learning environments is a potential limitation.

Motivation and Engagement:

A significant advantage of language learning apps is their ability to enhance motivation and engagement. The gamified elements, such as points, badges, leaderboards, and challenges, can create a sense of accomplishment, competition, and fun, encouraging learners to continue practicing. This increased engagement can lead to more consistent language learning and improved outcomes.

Numerous studies highlight Duolingo's effectiveness in improving language skills, particularly in vocabulary acquisition and basic grammar. (Liu et al., 2019)

Some studies have shown that Duolingo might not be as effective for achieving high proficiency levels or for developing fluency in speaking and writing. Research suggests that Duolingo's effectiveness varies based on individual factors such as prior language learning experience, motivation, and learning style. Duolingo's gamified approach, with features like points, badges, and leaderboards, is widely recognized for its role in driving user engagement and motivation.

Duolingo's adaptive learning technology, which tailors content to individual user needs, further contributes to user engagement. (Smith & Jones, 2022)

Limitations:

- Focus on Vocabulary and Grammar: Critics argue that Duolingo's emphasis on vocabulary and basic grammar might not fully address the complexities of language proficiency, such as fluency in speaking and writing.

- Lack of Cultural Immersion: The app's focus on isolated language learning might not adequately provide opportunities for cultural immersion and real-world application.

Challenges and Considerations:

- Over-Reliance: A concern is that learners might become overly dependent on apps, neglecting other essential components of language learning, such as real-world practice, cultural immersion, and personalized instruction.

- Lack of Depth: Apps may simplify language and focus on basic skills, potentially limiting the development of more nuanced linguistic abilities and cultural understanding.

- Accessibility and Equity: Access to technology and reliable internet connections can create disparities among learners, potentially limiting the benefits of app-based language learning.

Language learning apps like Duolingo have the potential to enhance language acquisition by leveraging gamified elements and offering accessible practice opportunities. However, it is essential to recognize their limitations and integrate them into a comprehensive language learning approach that includes real-world interaction, personalized instruction, and a focus on developing all aspects of language competence. Continued research and innovative educational practices are needed to maximize the benefits of language learning apps for diverse learners.

The research on Duolingo presents a mixed picture. While it has shown promise in improving basic language skills and engaging users, its effectiveness for achieving advanced proficiency and its limited focus on cultural immersion remain areas of concern.

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