CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION

This chapter presents the background of the study, research questions, research purposes, research significance, theoretical framework, and previous study.

A. Background of the Study

Speaking is an important ability in learning English (Kusumayati, 2014). This theory emphasizes that speaking ability is key to mastering English effectively as it allows learners to communicate directly, convey ideas, and participate in conversations. Moreover, still according to Kusumayati (2014), speaking skills in English have become a focal point for many language education programs such as listening, reading, and writing, as well as increasing confidence and overall competence in the use of English.

Despite its importance, many students still struggle to speak English due to various factors. Sari & Lestari (2019) mention that the main problems in English speaking skills include difficulty expressing ideas orally, limited vocabulary, poor grammar, and improper pronunciation of words. These problems make it hard to speak and pronounce words correctly.

Many students in Indonesia are not interested in English because they think English is difficult (Susanthi, 2020). According to Susanthi (2020), English learning difficulties often involve pronunciation, vocabulary, and grammar. Pronunciation issues arise from differences in phonetic systems, vocabulary challenges stem from the vast number of words, and grammar difficulties are due to complex rules.

Additionally, students may face cultural nuances, language anxiety, and different accents. These difficulties directly impact speaking skills, as effective speaking requires proper pronunciation, a rich vocabulary, and correct grammar usage. This is due to the lack of media in English instruction, which could impact students' speaking ability. Because interactive apps, videos, and audio recordings are effective resources for students to develop

their speaking abilities. This mindset poses a huge barrier to language learning. As a result, these students may not be fully engaged in speaking English lessons, Therefore, engaging media was needed to capture the students' interest in learning English, particularly in enhancing their speaking skills.

Innovative tools are needed to overcome English learning challenges to improve students' speaking skills. One of the innovative tools used to improve students' speaking skills is the Duolingo app. This app offers a gamification approach to language learning, making it more engaging and fun. Kusuma et al. (2024) show in their research that there was a significant difference in students' speaking skills before and after using Duolingo. Therefore, it is hoped that through the consistent use of Duolingo, students will not only improve their English proficiency but also increase their learning motivation, so that it can overcome the problems identified during the observation.

Duolingo application as described by Garcia (2013), is an online language learning platform with the mission of helping users learn languages through interactive exercises on the web and through applications. Duolingo also utilizes a variety of modern learning techniques to make it easier for students to understand, maintain interest, and enjoy the learning process. This platform aims to provide a fun and effective learning experience, offering a wide selection of languages to learn, including English, Arabic, Spanish, French, Dutch, and many others. With its innovative techniques, Duolingo makes it easy for users to learn new languages interestingly and enjoyably.

Several researchers have explored Duolingo for learning English. Research by Syafrizal et al. (2022). The researchers focused on using Duolingo to teach speaking skills. their study employed an ethnomethodological design and involved 27 ninth-grade students. The results showed that most students agreed that Duolingo improved their English skills. Another research study Fuji (2022), examined Duolingo's role in teaching speaking at junior high school in West Bandung. The data indicated that

Duolingo effectively involved one English instructor and 21 junior high school students.

The previous research showed that Duolingo enhanced students' speaking and listening skills. However, more research is necessary to understand how Duolingo can help students who are compelled to learn English in non-formal education and how the app can engage students in learning.

This research was different from previous studies. Previous research explored the use, response, and role of the Duolingo application as the media in speaking teaching. In contrast, this research focused on teaching implementation and student perceptions, especially regarding the benefits and challenges of using Duolingo which have never been discussed in previous research. Moreover, this research also highlights English as an additional subject for students who learn outside school since they are learning English in non-formal educational institutions at the Permatha Tutoring Center. It is hoped that Duolingo can enhance students' speaking skills, during tutoring sessions at class or home.

Based on the research background mentioned above, the research took the title: Investigating the Impact of the Duolingo Application on Students' English Speaking Skills: A Case Study of First Grade Junior High School Students at Permatha Tutoring Center.

B. Research Questions

From the research background, the problem is formulated into the three following questions:

1) How is the implementation of teaching English speaking using the Duolingo Application in the Permatha Tutoring Center?

2) What are students' perceptions of using Duolingo to their learning experience of English speaking skills?

3) What are the benefits and challenges of using Duolingo for students in the Permatha Tutoring Center?

C. Research Purposes

1) To find out the implementation of teaching English speaking by using the Duolingo Application in the Permatha Tutoring Center.
2) To know students' perceptions of using Duolingo to their learning experience of English speaking skills.
3) To find out the benefits and challenges of using Duolingo for students in the Permatha Tutoring Center.

D. Research Significances

This research entitled "Investigating the Impact of the Duolingo Application on Students' English Speaking Skills: A Case Study of Seventh-Grade Junior High School Students at Permatha Tutoring Center" contributed to:

Firstly, for teachers who gave innovative educational media and application tools to employ students' interest in learning English speaking.

Secondly, for students who learn English through Duolingo.

Finally, this research can also be used as a source of information about the use of Duolingo for English practice to improve students' speaking skills.

E. Research Scope

This research aimed to find out how the Duolingo program affects the English-speaking skills of first-grade junior high school students at the Permatha Center tutoring. In addition, this research also explores students' perceptions of the Duolingo application, their educational experiences, and how this program can improve their English language skills.

This research examined the benefits and challenges of using Duolingo. Benefits include easy access to language practice, interactive learning methods, as well as the ability to study independently. Challenges include limited direct interaction, difficulty understanding the cultural context, and the need for high levels of motivation and self-discipline.

The research also considered the problem of students who were forced to take English lessons due to parental pressure, despite not liking the subject at

school. This factor can influence students' attitudes and motivation in learning, as well as the expectations of parents who encourage their children to focus more on English speaking skills.

F. **Conceptual Framework**

This study examined a conceptual framework consisting of closely interrelated theories to show how they relate to each other to improve students' speaking skills at Permatha Center's tutoring center. Speaking is one of the basic skills that must be learned to master the English language. According to Kusumayati (2014), speaking is an important skill in English language learning.

According to Tarigan & Nadhira (2023), English-speaking ability is one of the most important aspects. Therefore, most people learn a language to be able to speak it. Mastering the ability to speak in English not only improves communication skills but also opens up wider opportunities in the world of education and employment.

Syafitri et al. (2019) stated that mastering speaking skills in English requires a lot of practice and the use of language in daily communication. One effective way to improve these skills was to use the Duolingo application as a learning aid. Duolingo was considered the most suitable practice tool as it provided interactive exercises that could be done independently and consistently. This helped users improve their English speaking skills comprehensively.

The Duolingo application itself is one of the applications that can help users become more proficient and is considered effective for developing foreign language skills, Duolingo is also supported by the availability of various languages including English (Nursyamsiah, 2021), and Duolingo provides various interactive learning techniques that are easily accessible because Duolingo has the concept of "playing while learning" to make it feel more fun and easy to use for all ages.

According to Widyastuti & Kusumadewi (2018), Duolingo is an increasingly widely used language learning tool and an effective educational program for teaching and learning languages such as English. Duolingo's effectiveness is supported by its features that motivate users through gamification, interactive exercises, and instant feedback. Thus, this study will explore the impact of using Duolingo in improving students' English skills and evaluate their experience in using this app. It is hoped that the results of this study will provide a deeper insight into the potential of this app as an aid in English language learning, especially in the context of speaking skills

G. Previous Studies

This research focused on the use of technology to promote language learning. Duolingo is one of the modern applications that facilitates the mastery of a second language. Several previous studies focusing on improving students' speaking skills using the Duolingo application had shown that this strategy was effective.

The first research by Windya et al. (2023) focused on the use of Duolingo in language education at the junior high school level. This study used a quasi-experimental design, dividing students into two groups: one group received traditional teaching, and the other used Duolingo as a supplementary tool. The results of this study showed a significant improvement in speaking skills in the group using Duolingo compared to the group receiving traditional teaching. Interactive features, gamification elements, and the accessibility of the application made it an engaging and effective learning tool. Additionally, student feedback indicated increased motivation and interest in language learning.

The second research Niah & Pahmi (2019) focused on the effectiveness of using Duolingo to improve the speaking and listening skills of students at SMP IT Al-Hafit Pekanbaru. Using a quantitative research method with the ASSURE model (Analyze, State, Select, Utilize, Require, and Evaluate), this study involved 58 eighth-grade students as samples. The results showed that

the use of Duolingo was effective in improving students' speaking and listening skills. The obtained "t" values indicated significant differences between before and after using the application for both speaking and listening skills in the two classes studied. This study provided strong quantitative evidence regarding the effectiveness of Duolingo in the context of language education at the junior high school level.

The third research Stevani (2024) explored the use of Duolingo among university students to improve language skills. This community service project investigated the effectiveness of integrating Duolingo into the language learning curriculum and its impact on students' listening, speaking, reading, and writing skills. This research was conducted online through Zoom meetings, providing flexibility in terms of space and time, and allowing for broader student participation. The results of this study showed that Duolingo created a more engaging and interactive language learning experience and increased students' satisfaction and motivation in language learning. This study provided insights into the potential of technology, particularly the Duolingo application, as an additional tool in language education in university settings.

The fourth research from Syahputra Pane et al. (2023) This study focused on examining the effect of training and mentoring in the use of the Duolingo application on students' English language skills. The study found that through the training, students were not only able to understand and operate the Duolingo application, but also showed improvement in their English language skills, particularly in the aspects of listening, reading, writing, and speaking. In addition, this activity aims to improve the professionalism of teachers through training in making Duolingo-based digital teaching media, which in turn can meet the learning needs of students more effectively.

The fifth research from Kusuma et al. (2024) is titled "The Effectiveness of Duolingo as Technology-Based Instructional Media in Learning English Speaking". This study underlines the effectiveness of Duolingo as a technology-based instructional media in developing English speaking skills. In

this study, the participants were 25 grade XI students in a public high school in Jombang, East Java. Using a pre-experimental design, the results showed significant differences in students' speaking skills before and after using Duolingo, particularly in the aspects of fluency, accuracy, pronunciation, and vocabulary. This study suggests using Duolingo as an alternative app for out-of-class learning to improve students' speaking skills.

Research on the usage of Duolingo to improve English speaking skills at various educational levels has shown that it is an effective modern learning tool. Studies conducted in junior high schools, senior high schools, and universities consistently found that Duolingo considerably enhanced students' speaking abilities. This app's interactive features, gamification components, and ease of use made it an engaging and successful language learning tool. Furthermore, students reported improved desire and interest in learning the language with Duolingo.

Furthermore, these research found that Duolingo may be successfully integrated into standard language learning courses, giving an additional tool to improve the overall learning experience. The program not only benefited students by increasing their language skills, but it also helped teachers create digital teaching resources. These findings suggested that Duolingo was an invaluable resource in school settings, providing a comprehensive and fun method for studying a second language.

Therefore, based on previous research that has been conducted, it was known that Duolingo is effective in improving students' language skills as a learning medium in educational institutions, whether in schools or universities. Therefore, the researcher conducted a follow-up study on the use of Duolingo in improving students' English speaking skills at a tutoring center.