

# CHAPTER I

## INTRODUCTION

### A. Background of the Study

Language is a tool used by humans to communicate. Language is a communication tool that is useful for conveying information, ideas, and feelings. According to Kridalaksana and Djoko Kentjono (in Chaer, 2014: 32) language is a system of arbitrary sound symbols used by members of social groups to work together, communicate, and identify themselves. Meanwhile, another definition of language is a system of arbitrary vocal symbols that allows all people in a particular culture or other people who have studied that cultural system to communicate or interact (Finocchiaro, 1974: 3). To communicate with others, people can use only one language, but it is limited to only one group of people. Because people from a country, region, village, tribe, and others have their own languages. This can be a problem if you want to communicate in a different language from your home environment. As a result, the communication process does not run optimally. Therefore it is necessary to learn another language.

The language that is generally used as the language of communication between countries is English. Currently, English can be said to be an important thing that at least everyone knows a little. Because English is now functioning as an international language of communication between countries. In Indonesia, English is a compulsory subject for students. Even at the university level, they have also prepared English literature or education study programs. For students of English study programs, of course, they need to learn more things than at the school level. English is taught because it has an important role in life, aspects that can be reached such as trade, education, health, tourism and others. Almost all countries use English for international communication. Rita Mae Brwon is an American activist and writer who says:

*“Language is the road map of a culture. It tells you where its people come from and where they are going”*

In learning English, there are four skills that need to be mastered, namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing. The four skills are used together as a communication tool (Anderson, 1969:2). Therefore, the four language skills are taught through communicative

interaction which includes the use of more than one language skill (Cunningsworth, 1984:20). A person's fluency in learning a language can be measured by how well they master the four English skills.

Listening skill is a skill to understand, accept, to be able to describe the message conveyed by the interlocutor verbally in the form of a voice that can be heard. Listening skill is the human process of perceiving other people through the senses (especially the hearing organ), giving meaning to messages, and understanding them (Kutlu & Aslanoglu, 2009). Listening skills can be said to produce speaking skills. After the learner hears a foreign language, the learner can imitate it orally. Speaking skill is a person's ability to use language orally which aims to produce sentences that are efficient, easy for the audience to understand, and speak clearly for effective communication. Harmer (in Tarigan, 1990:12). argued that speaking skills can be obtained by applying three things, namely introducing a new language, practice, and communicative activities.

Furthermore, reading skills help a person to obtain information quickly from various media. Especially in today's life which is filled with various written media. Reading is an activity carried out with the aim of obtaining previously unknown information or knowledge. According to Tarigan (2008: 9) the main purpose of reading is to seek and obtain information, include content, and understand the meaning of reading. Furthermore, writing skills, writing skills can be said as a continuation of reading skills. However, this writing ability can be said to be quite complicated. The reason is, we must understand what grammar or grammar in English is right for use in a sentence. In English, there are many tenses that must be mastered in order to be able to write with correct grammar. In developing learners' grammatical skills, collaborative learning activities and corresponding software tools can help improve children's learning abilities (Guerrero, 2009).

To hone these 4 skills, it is necessary to support vocabulary and grammar mastery. Learning English as a foreign language requires sufficient vocabulary and grammar mastery to be skilled in these 4 language skills. There are 5 important stages in vocabulary learning, namely: 1) having a source for finding new words, 2) getting a clear picture that can be seen (visualization) or heard (auditory), 3) learning the meaning of words, 4) making appropriate constructions. strong relationship between the form and meaning of words, 5) using the vocabulary (Brown & Payne, 1994 in Hatch & Brown, 1995: 373). While grammar is the rules or structure of a language. According to Michael Swan (2005:515) expressed his opinion about the definition of grammar. According to him, grammar is a rule that explains how words are combined, arranged or changed to show several types of meaning. According

to Michael Swan (2005: 515) expresses his opinion on the definition of grammar. According to him grammar is a rule that explains how words are combined, arranged or changed to show some kind of meaning. Grammar has a total of 16 tenses as a reference that must be known when learning English. All tenses have different patterns so it is not easy to learn and memorize, it is also a little confusing because you have to be able to distinguish the differences between each tense.

When learning a foreign language or English we need to know some vocabulary and learn grammar to make it easier to apply when practicing. Vocabulary is words that have a meaning that is owned by humans to be used in language and communication. Valette (1977) suggests that vocabulary is a word or group of words that has a specific meaning. While another definition according to Soedjito (2009: 24) vocabulary is defined as the wealth possessed by a speaker or writer of words, and vocabulary is a list of words arranged like a dictionary along with brief and practical explanations. Mastery of vocabulary is very important in language, the richer the vocabulary a person has, the better a person's language skills will be (Tarigan, 1989). Vocabulary is an early stage to make it easier for us to understand and apply English in the world of education and communication. Mastery of vocabulary in English language skills is an important initial part in teaching English as a foreign language. This means that vocabulary is an early stage to be taught before teaching other aspects of language (Subiyati, 1992:18). Based on some of the opinions of the experts above, it can be seen that vocabulary is a group of words that have meaning to communicate, vocabulary can also be one of the determinants of a person's proficiency in language.

Grammar is a structured set of rules that govern the arrangement of sentences, phrases and words in any language. Ostler (1987:236) grammar is a rule about the use of language that explains the relationship between words, and the relationship between these words is the correct arrangement so that it gives meaning or meaning to anyone who uses the language. Another opinion says that grammar is the core of the rules that explain how a language works (Emmit and Pallock 1992:101). Collerson (1994:2) argues that grammar is a certain way of selecting and arranging words and other elements according to certain principles/rules whenever we use a language, either in speaking or listening, or in writing or reading or just in speaking. By studying English grammar, you can find out the meaning of sentences or words well and at the same time convey them to other people with good understanding and use of good grammar. Based on several definitions of grammar from several experts, it can be concluded that grammar is a rule about the use of language and how a language works, by using the right grammar, the meaning conveyed can be known.

In order for students to be able to master the four English skills, vocabulary, and English grammar, a supportive media is needed for learning. Munadi (2013:2) argues that the use of media and tools is widely recommended by education practitioners to actually support the learning process activities both inside and outside the classroom. This shows that the media can facilitate the learning process so that the learning objectives are achieved adequately. In this digital era, we can easily find many learning media with the internet. The influence of the internet can be felt in everyday life.

The internet has developed into a medium that has many benefits for human life. Some of the benefits of the internet that we can feel on a daily basis are that it helps make work easier and more efficient, facilitates means of communication, facilitates the dissemination of information, and can be used as a means of playing or entertainment. Everything from various aspects can be easily accessed via the internet by young people to adults, one of which is the education aspect. The definition of the internet according to Allan (2005) explains that the internet is a collection of computer networks that are physically connected to each other and also have the ability to read and describe certain communication protocols that we often know as Internet Protocol (IP) and Transmission Control Protocol (TCP). The protocol itself, further defined by Alan as a simple specification of how two or more computers can exchange information with each other.

Another definition put forward by O'Brien (2005), the internet is a computer network that is growing very rapidly that provides benefits for several interests, such as the interests of education, business, to government interests. With the ease of accessing the internet, it can have a positive impact in the world of education, namely offering a comfortable learning environment where every individual or group can access learning resources globally. Evidence of technological developments in education is the existence of scientific information, examples of questions and answers, electronic books, electronic dictionaries and much more. Some of these media can be accessed with one device, namely a computer and smartphone.

Nowadays, most people use computers or smartphones, apart from communication, it can also be used to expand their branch of learning information. Smartphones are not a new thing nowadays, even according to a research report from Stock Apps in July 2021, there are around 67% of smartphone users from the entire population of the earth. A smartphone is a phone that combines the latest features, it is a type of Wireless Mobile Device (WMD) feature that can function like a computer by providing features such as a personal digital assistant (PDA), Internet access, email, and a Global Positioning System "GPS" Backer

(GPS). 2010). According to Onno W. Purbo (2005), the internet is a medium that allows a communication process to take place efficiently by connecting it to the application. Through computers and smartphones, users can download desired applications to support people's work. According to Hengki W. Pramana, an application is a software unit created to assist the needs of various activities, such as trading systems, community service games, promotions, or most processes that are almost done by humans. Applications can also be interpreted as computer programs created to help humans in solving certain problems (Noviansyah, 201: 56). One application that is widely used by students to learn English is the DuoLingo application. This platform has many features that can help students in learning English. That way students can use their computers or smartphones.

DuoLingo is a free language learning platform. This platform was created by Luis Von Ahn and Severin Hacker, launched in November 2016. The initial launch of the DuoLingo application offered several languages such as English, French and Spanish. However, after the development of technology and seeing consumer interest in learning other languages, DuoLingo now provides many languages to learn such as German, Italian, Japanese, Chinese, Russian, Korean and many more.

The learning method in this application is interesting. At the beginning of entering the DuoLingo website or application, users will be asked which target language they want to learn. Then they will be offered to learn from scratch or have little mastery of the target language. For users who really learn the language from scratch there is no need to worry. Because in this application you will be given the earliest learning stages starting with understanding basic phrases, expressing common phrases, discussing phrases grouped by aspect. It also provides how to use plurals, express possession, use object pronouns, use verbs and much more.

The way it works is that users will be given a light quiz that looks like a game. The quizzes consist of improving the visualization of letters from the target language, combining words with proper grammar, guessing the translation from the target language to the source language and vice versa. What's even more interesting is that there are game-like levels, so the user can see how much has been learned.

Some of the features found in DuoLingo can be a medium for learning English. Based on this explanation, the researcher wanted to know the students' perceptions of the use of the DuoLingo application as one of the media aids in learning English to master the four English skills, vocabulary, and grammar. In addition, researchers also hope that this research

can educate students to be wiser in using the internet and smartphones to be more useful and not have a negative impact.

## **B. Problem Identification**

Based on the background of the problem, the problems in the research can be identified as follows:

1. Students' perspective on the DuoLingo platform.
2. The use of DuoLingo to improve English language skills for students.
3. Maximize the features of the DuoLingo application for learning English media.

## **C. Limitation of the Study**

Taking into account the ability of the researcher, the problem of this research is limited to the students' perspective on the use of online dictionaries to assist the process of mastery in English at Muhammadiyah University of Surakarta for 20 students of English education. Limiting this problem is done so that researchers are more focused and obtain optimal results.

## **D. Problem Statements**

Based on the identification of the problems above, it can be seen that some of the problem formulations in this study are:

1. How are students' perceptions on the use of DuoLingo platform to improve their English Skills?
2. What are challenges of learning English as a foreign language on DuoLingo platform?
3. What skills are more developed after using DuoLingo platform?

## **E. Objectives of the Study**

The research objectives to be achieved from this research are:

1. To find out if Muhammadiyah Surakarta University students usually use the DuoLingo platform to learn English.
2. To find out the effectiveness of the DuoLingo platform on mastering English skills, vocabulary and grammar based on student perceptions.
3. To find out students' perceptions of using the DuoLingo platform as a medium for learning English vocabulary.

## **F. Benefits of the Study**

The expected benefits of this research are as follows:

1. Theoretical Benefit

Contribute ideas for students in the context of developing English learning media so that they can improve language skills.

## 2. Practical Benefit

The researcher hopes that this research will be useful to provide a basis for other researchers in conducting other similar studies in order to improve students' English language skills.