

Students' Perceptions of the Use of Duolingo English Practice Test for Evaluating Speaking Proficiency: A Qualitative Approach

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Abstract

The rapid adoption of technology-mediated assessments raises questions about how students experience and interpret their effectiveness. This study investigates perceptions of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as a tool for evaluating speaking proficiency among English Education students at a private Islamic college in Kendari City, Indonesia. Using a qualitative design, five purposively selected participants from semesters 4, 6, and 8 took part in semi-structured interviews, analyzed thematically through Braun and Clarke's framework. Findings reveal five interrelated themes: diverse experiences with DET Practice, supportive yet challenging features, contested reflections on speaking ability representation, its influence on self-confidence, and its motivational effects. Students valued DET Practice for flexibility, accessibility, and fostering self-regulation, but noted limitations such as time pressure, minimal feedback, and lack of authentic interaction. The discussion interprets these perceptions through Mobile-Assisted Language Learning and Gestalt principles, highlighting DET Practice as a strategic but complementary tool. The study contributes to understanding how technology-based testing can motivate learners and support confidence while underscoring the need for integration with interactive, face-to-face speaking opportunities in higher education.

Keywords: duolingo English test, speaking proficiency, motivation, mobile-assisted language learning, higher education