



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

Novilsa Chianda Mahesa Ayu<sup>1\*</sup>, Ririn Syahrhani<sup>2</sup>, Yuliana Sain<sup>3</sup>

<sup>1</sup>English Language Education, Muhammadiyah University, Kendari, Sulawesi Tenggara

<sup>1</sup>novilsac@gmail.com, <sup>2</sup>ririn@umk.ac.id, <sup>3</sup>yuliana.sain@umkendari.ac.id

### Abstract

This study explores students' perceptions of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as a digital tool for evaluating speaking proficiency. The research was motivated by the need for accessible and fair alternatives to traditional speaking assessments, which are often costly and limited by human subjectivity. Using a qualitative descriptive design, five English Education students from a private Islamic college in Kendari City were selected through purposive sampling. Data were collected through semi-structured interviews and analyzed thematically. The findings reveal five major themes: students' experiences in using DET Practice, its features and challenges, the reflection of speaking ability, and the influence on confidence and motivation. Students generally perceived DET Practice as practical, engaging, and supportive of self-directed learning due to its user-friendly interface and immediate feedback. However, concerns were raised regarding automated scoring accuracy and the absence of real-time interaction, which limited authentic communicative performance. Overall, the study concludes that DET Practice serves as an effective supplementary platform for enhancing speaking readiness and motivation, but it should be integrated with interactive classroom-based activities to ensure comprehensive evaluation and authentic language use.

**Keywords:** *Duolingo English Test; Speaking Proficiency; Students' Perception; Qualitative Study; Digital Assessment*





## **Introduction**

In the age of globalization, English language proficiency, especially speaking skills, has become a crucial indicator of competence. Tauhid (2023) and Saputra et al. (2023) stated that the ability to speak English plays a vital role not only in academic settings but also in professional and intercultural contexts. However, among the four fundamental language skills, speaking is often considered the most complex to master. Further, Ghafar and Raheem (2023) explained that speaking requires the integration of linguistic, cognitive, and social abilities, making it a challenging skill for many language learners. Subsequently, Sari, Humaerah dan Syahriani (2023), further explained that the inhibiting factors, such as having nothing to say, the lack of participation, and the use of the mother tongue, can be sources of students' difficulties. These challenges highlight not only the need for effective pedagogical strategies but also for valid and reliable assessment methods. Without proper evaluation, it becomes difficult to identify learners' specific areas of difficulty and monitor their progress in speaking proficiency.

Traditionally, standardized assessments such as TOEFL and IELTS have been widely used to measure English speaking ability. However, several studies have reported significant limitations of these tests. Isbell et al. (2023) found that access to such tests remains limited, particularly for students in remote areas or those with financial constraints. Moreover, the human-based scoring process has often been criticized for subjectivity, potentially creating bias that affects the accuracy and fairness of the results. To overcome these issues, recent research has begun to highlight the potential of digital platforms and artificial intelligence (AI)-based tools as alternative approaches to assessing language proficiency. As Chapelle (2018) noted, computer-assisted language learning and testing provide new opportunities for fairer, more flexible, and accessible assessments. One such tool is the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice, which offers convenient access, affordable costs, and integrated speaking tasks within its assessment system.

Several studies have examined the Duolingo English Test (DET) for speaking assessment. First, Isbell et al. (2020) reported acceptable score reliability, yet some test takers perceived that the speaking component did not fully reflect their oral performance. Building on the role of perceptions, Yao (2021) showed that perceived test fairness is associated with learners' motivation and preparation strategies, indicating that acceptance of a test shapes its washback. From a measurement standpoint, Chen (2022) raised questions about DET's construct validity for





academic speaking, suggesting potential gaps between what is tested and the targeted ability. Together, these strands reliability evidence, fairness perceptions, and validity concerns motivate closer examination of how students experience and evaluate **DET** as a speaking assessment.

As the use of DET Practice continues to increase, important questions emerge regarding its effectiveness in measuring overall speaking ability, particularly from students' perspectives as direct users. Considering the challenges and the essential role of speaking in both academic and real-world communication, this study focuses specifically on speaking skills rather than other language components. Understanding students' opinions is crucial for improving and refining the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as a valid and reliable speaking evaluation tool.

The development of technology-based alternatives such as DET Practice marks a significant shift in language assessment. As Kurniawan and Buriyanti (2024) explained, DET Practice is affordable, online-based, and utilizes adaptive AI systems to evaluate participants' language proficiency, including speaking. This makes it a more practical and inclusive assessment option. However, behind these advantages lie questions about the accuracy and fairness of the results. To what extent do DET Practice outcomes genuinely represent a person's speaking ability? Do participants perceive the test as fair, beneficial, and trustworthy?

Existing studies have largely explored Duolingo's role as a learning aid rather than an assessment tool. Kemalasari, Hadina, and Yoni (2021) reported that students felt motivated and supported when using Duolingo to enhance their English learning. Similarly, Fitria (2023) found that nearly ninety percent of students believed that Duolingo helped them improve their speaking ability. Yet, few studies have specifically focused on learners' perceptions of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as a means of evaluating speaking performance. This research gap highlights the need for deeper investigation into how users interpret and respond to DET's speaking tasks.

The growing reliance on AI-driven assessment tools introduces both opportunities and challenges. While DET Practice offers accessibility and objectivity, issues such as user trust, digital literacy, and technological inequality among students remain significant. As Kurniawan and Buriyanti (2024) noted, varying access to technology can shape students' perceptions and experiences with AI-based evaluations. Therefore, understanding how learners from diverse





backgrounds perceive DET Practice is essential for ensuring fairness and inclusivity in modern language testing.

To provide a strong theoretical foundation, this study employs the Gestalt theory of perception as its guiding framework. According to Koffka (1935), Gestalt theory emphasizes that individuals perceive experiences as organized wholes rather than fragmented parts. In the context of this research, it helps explain how students interpret their experiences with DET Practice holistically, integrating aspects of ease, challenge, and motivation into an overall perception. This theoretical lens allows for a deeper understanding of how learners form judgments about the test's reliability and usefulness based on their integrated experiences.

Recent studies also highlight the psychological factors influencing speaking performance, such as growth mindset, self-efficacy, and self-regulation. Fathi, Rahimi, and Derakhshan (2024) found that these factors significantly affect learners' speaking outcomes. Since students' perceptions of DET Practice may also be shaped by confidence and motivation, these constructs are relevant to this study's discussion of perception and engagement in digital testing environments.

Gestalt theory further introduces several perceptual principles that are directly relevant to this study: Pragnanz (simplicity), Figure Ground, Similarity, Proximity, Closure, and Continuity. Pragnanz refers to the tendency to perceive forms in the simplest and most stable way possible. Figure-Ground explains how individuals distinguish a focal object from its background. Similarity and Proximity describe how elements that are alike or spatially close are perceived as belonging together. Closure suggests that people mentally fill in missing information to create a sense of completeness, while Continuity refers to perceiving connected patterns rather than disjointed ones. Applied to this research, these principles describe how students may perceive DET Practice not as separate features but as an integrated, meaningful experience that shapes their overall evaluation of the test.

Therefore, this study aims to explore in depth how students perceive the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as a tool for evaluating speaking proficiency. It also seeks to contribute to ongoing discussions on how technology-based assessments may complement or even replace traditional testing methods in the digital era (Isbell et al., 2024; Kurniawan & Buriyanti, 2024).





## **Methods**

This study employs a qualitative approach to explore the perceptions of students from the English Education Department at a private Islamic college in Kendari City regarding the use of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice in evaluating their speaking skills. Qualitative research seeks to understand the complexity of human experiences and the meanings individuals assign to them, which aligns with the aim of this study to gain a deep understanding of students' perceptions (Yin, 2016). The richness of qualitative data lies in the voices of participants, illuminating the nuances of their experiences (Creswell, 2018).

The participants of this study consist of five students from the English Education Department, including one student from semester 4, two from semester 6, and two from semester 8. They are selected using purposive sampling, a non-random technique in which individuals are chosen based on specific characteristics, such as being active students of the English Education Department, having experience using the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice, and being willing to participate voluntarily in this research. This sampling method allows the researcher to select subjects capable of providing rich and relevant data regarding the phenomenon under study. According to Dudovskiy (2024), purposive sampling is used when researchers deliberately select participants based on their relevance and expertise to the research problem. This technique ensures that the data collected are comprehensive and informative (Scribbr, 2022). To maintain gender balance, the participants consist of two male and three female students. Including students from various semesters helps capture diverse perspectives on the use of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice as an assessment tool.

The main instrument in this study is the researcher themselves (human instrument). As explained by Moleong (2019), the researcher functions as both the primary data collector and analyzer. The researcher conducts in-depth, semi-structured interviews to explore students' perceptions of the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice in evaluating speaking proficiency. The interview guideline is designed based on the research objectives to gather data about students' experiences, perceptions, and readiness in using DET Practice. The interview covers three major aspects: students' experiences in using DET Practice, their perceptions of its challenges and ease, and comparisons between DET Practice and other speaking tests. The interview consists of ten open-ended questions that allow participants to express their thoughts freely and deeply. These





questions are developed based on relevant literature and are pre-tested for clarity and suitability. Semi-structured interviews, according to Harrell and Bradley (2009), use flexible open-ended questions that allow emerging topics to be explored, resulting in richer and more meaningful data.

The data collection process begins by contacting the selected participants through phone or messaging applications such as WhatsApp to explain the study's purpose and invite their participation. After obtaining their agreement, the researcher schedules meetings and asks participants to read and sign an informed consent form to confirm voluntary participation. Before the interview, participants retake the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice to refresh their familiarity, particularly with the speaking section. A brief demonstration test is also given to help participants recall the speaking component, since DET Practice randomly includes various language tasks. The interviews take place in a quiet and comfortable environment preferably in a campus room or another agreed location to ensure privacy and minimize distractions. Each interview is recorded using a digital voice recorder or a smartphone with the participant's permission. Each session lasts approximately 30 to 45 minutes to allow adequate discussion without causing fatigue. The interviews are conducted primarily in Bahasa Indonesia to help participants express their ideas naturally, although English is occasionally used when relevant to their test experience. During the interviews, the researcher also takes field notes to capture non-verbal cues and immediate reflections. To strengthen data credibility, member checking is applied by summarizing key points during the interview and confirming them with the participants, enhancing the validity and trustworthiness of the data (George, 2022).

The data collected through interviews are analyzed using thematic analysis. This method is suitable for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning or themes in qualitative data (Braun & Clarke, 2019). The researcher follows the six steps of thematic analysis described by Braun and Clarke (2006): familiarization with the data, generating initial codes, searching for themes, reviewing themes, defining and naming themes, and producing the final report. Through this process, the data are analyzed systematically and transparently, ensuring credibility and depth in the findings.

This research adheres to essential ethical principles to protect participants and maintain research integrity. Before data collection begins, participants give their informed consent after





being fully informed about the research purpose, procedures, rights, and data use. As emphasized by Creswell and Poth (2018), “Qualitative researchers have an obligation to respect participants and the research site” (p. 55). To maintain confidentiality and anonymity, pseudonyms replace real names, and no identifying information is included in the report. All recordings and transcripts are securely stored and accessible only to the researcher. The study also follows the principle of non-maleficence avoiding any form of psychological or emotional harm. The interview questions are designed carefully to prevent discomfort. Ethical approval is obtained from the university’s research ethics committee before starting the study. Throughout the process, the researcher maintains a respectful and non-judgmental attitude to ensure that participants’ voices are represented fairly and accurately.

## Findings and Discussion

### *Findings*

This section presents and interprets the findings regarding students’ perceptions of using the Duolingo English Test (DET) Practice in evaluating their English-speaking proficiency. The analysis of interview data reveals five major themes: **Students’ Experiences in Using DET Practice, Features and Challenges, Reflection of Speaking Ability, Influence on Self-Confidence, and Influence on Learning Motivation**. These findings are discussed in light of Gestalt theory and relevant literature, emphasizing how DET Practice operates not only as an assessment tool but also as a learning medium that shapes students’ holistic experiences.

### **Students’ Experiences in Using DET Practice**

Students’ experiences demonstrate a blend of enjoyment, challenge, and adaptation. They found DET Practice to be a new and engaging digital space for developing speaking skills. P1 expressed appreciation for the platform’s interactivity and feedback:

*“My experience when using the Duolingo English Practice Test is quite enjoyable because I find it easy to understand. In the speaking section, I can immediately record my voice, and the system automatically provides feedback. So, I feel like I am being trained directly even though it is actually in the form of a test.”*

Similarly, P5 shared that the tool’s simplicity encouraged him to continue using it despite initial nervousness:

*“At the beginning, when I first tried the test, I was a bit nervous because speaking is still a big challenge since we rarely practice. But after trying once, it turned out to be quite*





*interesting. Duolingo is very simple—you only need internet access and a phone, and you don't have to pay to practice speaking.”*

P2 described his experience as both interesting and challenging, noting that the unpredictable test structure required cognitive flexibility. P3 initially struggled with confusing instructions but later found the platform more effective after updates improved its interface. Meanwhile, P4 emphasized the learning opportunities DET Practice offered, claiming that

*“it helps me discover things I didn't know before.”*

These responses reveal that DET Practice is perceived as an engaging and practical assessment medium. Although students faced a period of adjustment, they appreciated its accessibility and technological innovation. From a Gestalt perspective, their perceptions reflect the **principle of Pragnanz**, as learners organize their diverse experiences into a coherent and meaningful whole, perceiving DET Practice not as a fragmented test but as an integrated learning environment.

### Features and Challenges in DET Practice

Students identified several features that supported their speaking development as well as challenges that limited their performance. P1 valued the combination of listening and voice-recording components but pointed out difficulties with time management:

*“The most helpful feature for me in the speaking section is when I listen to the question and then record my answer. This feature allows me to practice pronunciation, fluency, and confidence. But the most challenging part is when there is a time limit. Sometimes I get nervous or run out of time, so I cannot finish my response.”*

P2 and P5 noted that the **photo-description task** was particularly demanding because of limited time and vocabulary. P3 commented on the system's **AI speech recognition**, stating that

*“it recognizes my speech quite accurately, but sometimes my accent causes problems.”* P4 added that *“the recording feature makes me more confident, but describing the picture can be confusing.”*

These accounts illustrate how DET Practice balances ease and challenge. The automated feedback, visual prompts, and time-limited responses simulate real communication, yet they also trigger anxiety and cognitive overload. This interplay echoes the **Figure Ground principle** in Gestalt theory: students focus on the primary task (figure) while navigating constraints like time pressure and limited vocabulary (ground). Similar to findings by Amelia et al. (2019) and Puspita Sari et al. (2020), time constraints and lexical limitations remain dominant barriers for EFL learners. Nonetheless, DET Practice is valued for enabling authentic, self-directed oral practice.





## Reflection of Speaking Ability through DET Practice

Participants offered varied opinions on whether DET Practice accurately reflects their speaking proficiency. P1 perceived it as partly valid, explaining:

*“In my opinion, it reflects my ability quite well, although not entirely, because DET helps me practice pronunciation and fluency. However, the test situations are not the same as speaking directly with other people, so the social pressure is not there.”*

P2 disagreed, stating that *“if I had more time, I could arrange my words better, but in Duolingo I must think quickly.”* Meanwhile, P3 found the test reliable because *“the score becomes higher when I do it seriously, so I think it is valid.”* P4 viewed it as a true reflection of spontaneous ability, saying *“I truly become myself, expressing what I know.”* In contrast, P5 argued that *“speaking directly with a person shows ability better than speaking into a phone.”*

Collectively, these views suggest that DET Practice partially measures speaking skills but lacks the interpersonal dimension of authentic communication. While its automated scoring offers transparency, the absence of human interaction limits contextual fluency. These findings resonate with Isbell et al. (2020) and Chen (2022), who questioned whether DET fully captures real-world oral performance. The participants’ interpretations exemplify Gestalt’s notion that perception arises from the **integration of elements** feedback, ease, time, and emotion into an overall sense of validity rather than from isolated components.

## The Influence of DET Practice on Self-Confidence

Most students reported that DET Practice positively influenced their confidence in speaking. P1 acknowledged that it helped reduce hesitation:

*“Duolingo helps to increase my confidence because it gives me the opportunity to record my voice and express my answers independently.”*

P3 and P4 also appreciated the test’s private and pressure-free nature:

*“I become more confident because no other people are watching me while I’m speaking. Usually, in IELTS or in class, there’s an examiner listening, and that makes me feel less confident.”*

*“Since the feature can only be accessed by ourselves, it increases confidence because we can see our progress over time it even creates interest to keep using it.”*

However, P2’s perspective differed, noting that the absence of an audience limited emotional growth:

*“If I were tested in front of people, that would affect my confidence more. In Duolingo, it’s just me and my phone.”*





Meanwhile, P5 described that DET Practice gradually built her speaking confidence through repetition and familiarity:

“At first, I was nervous even though it was only me and the phone, but after several practices, I started to feel more relaxed and confident to speak naturally.”

These findings reveal that DET Practice fosters technical confidence the comfort of producing speech but not necessarily social confidence. The privacy of the test environment reduces anxiety and promotes self-expression, aligning with Shofia et al. (2021), who found that speaking anxiety often diminishes in non-evaluative contexts. Interpreted through Gestalt’s Figure Ground relationship, the “figure” of focused speech overshadows the “ground” of social fear, allowing students to concentrate on linguistic production.

### **The Influence of DET Practice on Learning Motivation**

All participants agreed that DET Practice stimulated motivation to enhance speaking ability. P1 and P3 emphasized that visible progress and flexible access encouraged persistence:

*“I feel more motivated because I can see my progress over time. The score encourages me to keep trying.”*

*“My motivation increases because this test can be accessed anytime. Whenever I want to do it, I can, and that motivates me.”*

P2, P4, and P5 similarly reported being motivated by the feedback that revealed their weaknesses:

*“After seeing my score, I know what to improve.”*

These narratives indicate that DET Practice transforms assessment into a learning cycle, where feedback drives self-regulation. The accessibility and gamified elements sustain learners’ engagement, consistent with Lei et al. (2022), who found that mobile-assisted platforms enhance motivation through autonomy. Gestalt’s **Closure** and **Continuity** principles explain this process: students fill in feedback gaps by reflecting on their weaknesses (Closure) and sustain effort through continuous practice (Continuity). Hence, DET Practice operates as both a motivational and diagnostic tool.

### *Discussion*

#### **DET Practice as a Strategic Tool for Enhancing EFL Students’ Speaking Skills**

The findings collectively portray DET Practice as a strategic, mobile-assisted language learning platform that merges assessment and learning. Students perceive it as practical, flexible, and accessible characteristics aligning with Alisoy and Sadig (2025), who argue that MALL (Mobile-Assisted Language Learning) provides efficiency and self-paced engagement. From a





Gestalt perspective, students interpret their DET experiences holistically, integrating emotional comfort, feedback, and task difficulty into a unified perception. This resonates with Koffka's (1935) assertion that individuals perceive experiences as organized wholes rather than disjointed stimuli. Thus, learners' judgments of DET Practice's validity and usefulness stem from the entire testing experience, not from isolated features.

However, DET Practice's limitations remain significant. The system's dependence on automated recognition can misinterpret accents or intonation, while time constraints create stress that may hinder authentic expression. These challenges correspond to Chen's (2022) concern about construct validity and Isbell et al.'s (2020) observation that DET may fail to represent complex oral competence. Yet, the learners' adaptability suggests Pragnanz in action they simplify the imperfect digital environment into a manageable, meaningful task, focusing on what the system enables rather than what it lacks.

Psychological effects also emerge prominently. The scoring mechanism and instant feedback enhance self-efficacy and self-awareness key components of speaking success (Fathi et al., 2024). Students internalize DET feedback and translate it into personal learning strategies, reflecting Gestalt's Closure and Continuity as they complete missing evaluative cues with self-reflection and sustain progress over time. In this sense, DET Practice functions not just as a test but as a continuous, self-regulated learning process.

Despite its strengths, DET Practice cannot replace interactive speaking practice. Real communication involves negotiation of meaning, emotional reciprocity, and turn-taking—all of which are absent from AI-based testing. The lack of these elements can hinder students' development of natural speaking ability, as authentic communication requires not only linguistic accuracy but also emotional and social engagement. This limitation reflects a broader issue identified by Sari, Humaera, and Syahrani (2023), who found that students often face speaking difficulties due to inhibition, low participation, and the lack of real interaction. These factors show that the speaking process is deeply influenced by social dynamics and confidence, which cannot be fully cultivated in isolated, technology-driven environments. Therefore, integrating DET Practice with classroom discussions or peer interactions would ensure pedagogical Continuity between digital and social learning. This echoes Syahrani's (2025) argument that technological tools should complement, not substitute, humanized learning contexts.

From a pedagogical standpoint, the study underlines DET Practice's dual potential: (1) as an equitable, low-cost assessment alternative for students in resource-limited settings, and (2) as a motivational platform for self-directed improvement. Policymakers and educators should therefore frame DET Practice within inclusive digital literacy strategies to minimize technological inequality (Kurniawan & Buriyanti, 2024). When aligned with sound pedagogy, DET Practice can enhance both linguistic performance and learner confidence.





Nevertheless, a more critical examination reveals that DET Practice may privilege learners who are already digitally literate or confident in self-directed tasks. Students from rural or low-resource contexts might experience technological anxiety or inconsistent internet access, which affects their test performance rather than their actual speaking ability. This digital gap questions DET's fairness as a standardized tool. Therefore, educators must ensure preparatory digital training before integrating DET Practice, so the assessment reflects linguistic competence, not merely digital familiarity.

Moreover, the reliance on AI-generated scoring raises concerns regarding authenticity and fairness. Automated systems primarily assess pronunciation, fluency, and coherence but struggle to evaluate pragmatic competence, creativity, or emotional tone—core aspects of real communication (Isbell et al., 2020). From a Gestalt viewpoint, this reductionist measurement breaks the holistic unity of communication by isolating technical components from social meaning. Consequently, DET Practice may promote surface fluency rather than communicative depth. A balance between automated evaluation and human feedback is thus crucial for maintaining assessment validity.

In terms of learner psychology, DET Practice can also shape self-perception in both positive and negative ways. While the instant feedback loop enhances motivation, it may also create over-reliance on numerical scores or AI validation. Some students might interpret lower scores as personal inadequacy rather than as learning opportunities. This phenomenon aligns with the Figure–Ground principle: the “figure” of numeric feedback may dominate the “ground” of holistic self-evaluation, leading to distorted self-assessment. Teachers need to contextualize DET results with reflective discussions to preserve balanced confidence and resilience.

Furthermore, future research should explore how DET Practice can be pedagogically integrated with collaborative and communicative approaches. Hybrid models where DET is used alongside role-plays, peer evaluations, or project-based speaking tasks could sustain Continuity between individual digital learning and social interaction. Longitudinal studies are also needed to determine whether DET-based improvement translates into real-life communicative competence. This would extend Gestalt's principle of Closure, verifying whether learners' fragmented digital experiences eventually form a coherent, enduring linguistic skill.

Another important consideration involves cultural attitudes toward technology and assessment. In EFL contexts such as Indonesia, learners often associate “testing” with high-stakes performance and teacher authority. DET's automated, self-directed format represents a cultural shift that challenges this traditional mindset. Some students may initially perceive DET as less legitimate because it lacks human evaluation, while others may value its neutrality. This dynamic reflects Gestalt's Similarity principle, where students' prior experiences with testing influence how they group and interpret new learning experiences. Understanding these cultural dimensions is essential for educators seeking to integrate DET effectively within local pedagogical norms.





Additionally, ethical implications of AI-driven language testing deserve closer scrutiny. Data privacy, algorithmic bias, and the lack of transparency in scoring systems pose potential threats to fairness and accountability. If DET's algorithm is trained predominantly on Western English accents or linguistic norms, students from non-native backgrounds might be systematically disadvantaged. This raises critical concerns about linguistic equity. In Gestalt terms, the "figure" of technological innovation might obscure the "ground" of ethical responsibility. Therefore, both developers and educators must promote transparency and culturally responsive calibration of automated assessments.

Lastly, the evolution of DET Practice highlights a broader pedagogical challenge: balancing technological innovation with human judgment. While digital tools can expand access and efficiency, they cannot replicate the nuanced, empathetic feedback that human teachers provide. Gestalt theory reminds us that learning is a holistic process involving emotion, context, and perception not merely stimulus and response. Future frameworks should thus position DET Practice within ecological validity, ensuring that digital assessments contribute meaningfully to communicative growth in authentic contexts. Only by merging technological precision with humanistic insight can DET Practice evolve from a mere digital convenience into a transformative tool for developing EFL learners' speaking proficiency.

### **Concluding Remark**

In summary, DET Practice is perceived by students as more than a digital proficiency test it represents a holistic learning experience that fosters confidence, motivation, and self-regulated growth. While technological constraints and lack of human interaction limit its authenticity, its accessibility and adaptive features make it a powerful complementary tool for speaking assessment. Interpreted through Gestalt principles, students perceive DET Practice as a unified, meaningful process integrating challenge and progress. Consequently, DET Practice contributes not only to evaluating proficiency but also to cultivating sustainable communicative competence among EFL learners.

### **Conclusion**

This study explored students' perceptions of using the Duolingo English Practice Test (DET Practice) to evaluate speaking proficiency. The findings revealed that students perceived DET Practice as a practical and engaging platform to enhance their speaking skills. They appreciated its accessibility, user-friendly interface, and immediate feedback, which supported independent learning and encouraged consistent practice. Moreover, the real-test simulation feature was perceived to help reduce speaking anxiety and improve students' confidence.





Nonetheless, several concerns emerged regarding the accuracy of automated scoring, limited interaction, and occasional technical disruptions. These issues indicated that while DET Practice promotes self-directed learning, it lacks the authentic communicative elements—such as negotiation of meaning, emotional reciprocity, and real-time feedback—that are essential in developing natural speaking fluency. Thus, the tool should not be viewed as a replacement for human-mediated assessment.

In conclusion, DET Practice serves as a valuable supplementary platform for enhancing speaking readiness and motivation. However, to ensure a more comprehensive evaluation of speaking proficiency, it must be integrated with interactive classroom activities and teacher feedback. This balanced approach bridges digital practice and authentic communication, fostering both linguistic competence and communicative confidence.

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