



A Student Review of Duolingo

Students of Language & Linguistics 2014-2015

18 May 2015

www.las.ch

Duolingo
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Dear Duo Owl,

We have been using Duolingo (duolingo.com) off and on all year in a language class that encouraged us to learn whatever world language we wanted. We started with Duolingo and most of us kept using it all school year.

During our last week of class, we'd like to tell you how we used Duolingo, why it did or did not motivate us, and what we think you could do to make it more motivating.

Here are our comments. Our teacher did a bit of editing to make our comments flow better, but he thinks some of the non-native sounding sentences in English are just fine, because almost all of us are non-native speakers of English.

1. How I used Duolingo

Student 1	While using Duolingo I have learned a lot of Spanish and Italian. It makes it easier to understand the basics of these languages. What I liked about Duolingo is how we are scored and given lives to keep us motivated and want to continue learning. What i didn't like about it was the fact that it didn't really influence my conversational learning. I cant have a good conversion in Italian and French because Duolingo is not that strong in that area.
Student 2	I learned three different languages Spanish, Russian and English. I had a good experience learning these different languages. The thing that I liked the most on Duolingo is that there are scores and you should keep them. Also it's really interesting information that Duolingo gives and sometimes I go to Google and start to search about it. Another good thing that I learned is grammar. Duolingo is also a great revision for vocabulary. One time I

	used translation about a football match and I think it's a really great exercise and i liked it. I want to do more translations this year.
Student 3	<p>I think Duolingo is a great tool to learn new languages. I used it most of the day of the week and slowly I realised that I make progress in every single languages that I am learning. In most of the languages I worked on my average levels are between 7 and 12.</p> <p>The only part that I do not appreciate about Duolingo is the lack of flexibility in many languages. They mostly expect you to write their sentences even if you wrote another one which has the same sense.</p> <p>In most of the languages I worked on my average levels are between 7 and 12.</p>
Student 4	I used Duolingo for studying French and Spanish. The repetition helped me put some words and verbs into my head that in the beginning were super hard for me. Duolingo in my opinion only helps us learn the basics of a new language. (I only ever translated an article one time.) I also did a little bit of English which helped me improved my English.
Student 5	For me, Duolingo is a good tool for reading and writing. I studied French and English with it, I learned a lot. I've got great progress. Actually, French is not easy for a Chinese speaker. I have to translate everything from Chinese to English, and then French. So it always took me a long time to type every sentence. In my opinion, the disadvantage for Duolingo is speaking. Although there are many short recordings, I still cannot pronounce words properly. But the vocabulary for each lesson is regular and acceptable.
Student 6	I learned two languages last semester, I finished more than half of the English course and I began to learn French since last month. Because I am not a good English speaker I found it is easier for me to learn languages in my mother tongue. I hope Duolingo can provide more languages courses such as Chinese to French.
Student 7	I have used Duolingo mostly to practice my French, which I am currently studying in school. Duolingo was a great app for it, I learned new vocab and improved my grammar. Then, I decided to try different languages. The basic levels were great, but then there were some 'collapses' such as sentences that did not make any sense or grammar that was sometimes complicated and meaningless. In my opinion, learning a completely <i>new</i> language, when you have no base at all, is very difficult.
Student 8	I think that the Duolingo learning is very useful for the vocabulary and learning words and the pronunciation. The worst part about Duolingo is that even if you finish a language you can't really speak it as you have not had any practice with speaking the language. I am currently doing German and French and I enjoy it.

Student 9	Duolingo is a very fun online tool language. I studied English, French and German. I only completed the English tree, but I am in level 10 in German and level 9 in French. I think that the skill that you can improve using Duolingo is the writing skill. I also did some translations from Spanish to Duolingo, about football articles.
Student 10	I used Duolingo to learn Italian, and to continue working on my Spanish skills. I mostly focused on Spanish since it is easier for me, and it has helped me a lot. Duolingo has allowed me to learn more Spanish vocabulary and be able to have a basic conversation. Duolingo was very helpful and fun for me, and I would definitely recommend it to others.
Student 11	I used Duolingo to further my knowledge of Portuguese and French. I started using Duolingo when I started learning French in school. It wasn't my main way of learning; I used it as a reinforcement of what I learned in class. I also used Duolingo to test my Spanish skills and also to see exactly how accurate Duolingo could be since I am a native Spanish speaker. I also started to do English from Spanish. It was interesting to see how different it was to go from Spanish to English rather than English to Spanish. I think it's a very innovative way for people to start learning a language.
Student 12	I haven't used Duolingo a lot. There was something I didn't like before they made the change. There are some of the sentences that are grammatically right but don't have any sense in real life. Also, the grading system is a little bit too specific (with the former hearts). I tried for a month, then I stopped using it, because I didn't really like it.
Student 13	I used Duolingo to enhance my French, Spanish and Portuguese writing skills. It is not really a useful tool for anything else, but for someone who just wants to improve his writing or spelling skills or just pass the time, it is a perfect tool.
Student 14	With Duolingo I studied three languages: French, Spanish, and German. In French and Spanish I translated articles and did the lesson paths. Currently, I am in the third tier of French translation (where I have 31 upvotes and 1 down vote) and in the second tier of Spanish. In my French translation.
Student 15	I learn French and Spanish on Duolingo. I also translate articles to English sometimes (level 1, 46 upvotes). I use them on both phone and laptop. I use this to continue my studies in school classes and to prepare myself before I travel to foreign countries.
Student 16	I've used Duolingo for learning French and Spanish, it helped me to memorise some words which are not that difficult. And for listening, I could understand some sentences if I paid attention. Anyway, Duolingo is the best online learning tool for me now.

2. Why Duolingo did or did not motivate me

Student 1	I am only motivated when I am full of energy. I am not always motivated by Duolingo because it is not always exciting. After a while it becomes repetitive and boring. The only thing that keeps me motivated is the class goal to get 150 points every week.
Student 2	Sometimes Duolingo motivates me and sometimes I hate Duolingo. For example when you are doing the test and you failed it more than 4 or 5 times you started to hate Duolingo (when the heart system was being used). But Duolingo has really good and interesting exercises in it and you want to do them everyday and increase your score.
Student 3	Duolingo motivated me by the fact that today it is great to speak new languages. Also the application sends me every night an email with my daily reminder, which is a great idea for me, so I can stay on track.
Student 4	It did not motivate me because when I got three things wrong I needed to do the section all over again and because of that it discouraged me to try over and over again.
Student 5	Duolingo is a pretty interesting tool and I love the pattern of lessons. After it updated, we don't get failed anymore. Each time when I finish one lesson I will get a strong sense of pride. That's make me more powerful to learn next. So Duolingo actually motivated me very well.
Student 6	It has motivated me, It helped me to learn a lot of new words in English, and it also helped me to review the English grammar and spelling.
Student 7	I don't think the problem was in motivation at all, I think Duolingo was just not interesting and 'breathtaking' for me. There are many pros as well as cons. One of the biggest cons is that there was nothing 'life saving' for an actual use in real life. Maybe more cultural and real life phrases can improve the situation. If I will go to Italy, I would not be able to speak/ understand/ ask people. Thus there is no point of memorizing things that I will not be able to use while travelling.
Student 8	It did not really motivate because I was always doing it the computer rather than with an actual person, but a part from that I wanted to continue learning German and my only motivation was not to forget this language.
Student 9	Duolingo motivated me when I started because the idea of the lingots and that you can spend lingots in extra lessons, that is a really good idea. When I did all the extra lessons I was not motivated again because I had a lot of lingots but there are no more lessons or others things where I can spend the lingots that I got by doing each lesson.

Student 10	Although Duolingo definitely helped me improve my Spanish skills, I still find it hard to keep up and do it on my own free time since it can get frustrating and boring, since it is the same type of questions every time. Also because there aren't many options of exercises, it was either the lessons (which are all the same) or translating, which about a certain amount of time got really boring.
Student 11	Duolingo was a very interesting experience in my opinion. Duolingo did and did not motivate me. It was very frustrating when I kept having to do a lesson over and over again before they changed their system. Yet, at the same time when I would take the test and have such a success rate it meant that I was actually learning this new language that before seemed so foreign and strange. Duolingo helped in the experience of memorizing the vocabulary and it helped me want to put these words that I learned to use.
Student 12	It doesn't really make me interested when i use it. Most of the things I learned with Duolingo are hard to be used in my real life. For example I'm a high school student, I won't use any of vocab and sentences related to a wedding. However I do it sometimes just because it makes me feel good when I finish a lesson. Like playing games.
Student 13	It motivated me well enough for me to get the points I needed to pass the week but doing it for my pleasure was not a recurrence. I would not really use Duolingo in my personal time because I don't like spending time on screens, but if it would be a side exercise for a language class, for example, I would think it would be perfect.
Student 14	Duolingo failed to motivate me simply because of its imperfections in the way the lessons were set up. One example in which this is prevalent is how you lose half your score when you miss one question. For the majority of the time that I was attempting to study on Duolingo I found myself off topic.
Student 15	I think I would like it better if I discovered this website on my own, and if I chose to do this by myself. The fact that this has something to do with the school and grades discourages me. However, the system is really a good way for me to learn new things. I would introduce this to other people for sure. It is easy to get on and get used to.
Student 16	Sometimes it actually motivated me when I looked at the score graph, and I wanted to make it look better (make some score every day.) And the other reason why is that you won't fail when you are learning even if you make over than 100 mistakes, you still have chance to pass it. It also reminds me how much I improved every day.

3. What you could do to make it more motivating

Student 1	I think they need more ways to teach rather than that some boring page where you read and translate. Maybe if there was a way to make it more interactive it would be better.
Student 2	I think Duolingo should include movies or short videos that will help to learn language. Also they should make different kinds of tournaments.
Student 3	I think Duolingo should had more flexibility between the languages and some new interfaces of learning.
Student 4	I think they should keep a record of what you did wrong and at the end of the day when you stop using duolingo you can see all the mistakes and the next day your first lesson would be reviewing your mistakes.
Student 5	I think maybe Duolingo should add a new lesson about speaking. So that we can test our pronunciation. For every word or sentence, Duolingo will grade it like A, B, C, D, and F means “not good enough”. Although that’s strict, but it will make Duolingo more interesting and improve our skills more quickly.
Student 6	I really hope Duolingo can provide more courses, that we could have more choices, I really want to learn French by Chinese but it still does not come out. For a free language learning tool, Duolingo is the best.
Student 7	There is not enough cultural, real life and ‘for travelling’ courses that I can actually use while going to another country. One of the things I think may be interesting is ‘web-practice’. As an example, I’d say after completing part of a language tree you can find someone who speaks or learns the language you’ve learned and talk to them online on Skype. Thereby you will practice language skills, improve listening, speaking and make new friends.
Student 8	If there were more activities it would be better and they have to fix their lingots issue because I have 200 something lingots and I bought all of the things that I could and I still have a lot. I think that the fact that I want to remember German keeps me going.
Student 9	I think that they could show you like a topscore of the total points and your position by country or in the whole world so you are motivated because you want to have the most points in the world. They could also add things in the lingot store where we could spend our lingots because I have more than 200 lingots.
Student 10	I think that it would keep me more entertained if there were more options of learning skills. Such as having vocabulary games, videos, or just different types of question for each lesson skill. I also think it would be fun if once

	you achieve a certain amount of points, you could unlock a certain activity or lesson of your choice, that we couldn't do before then.
Student 11	To make it more motivating I think Duolingo should have a test where people have to distinguish the language that they are studying compared to others that they might know or don't know. Also, I think in their personal information people should put what languages they are already fluent in. This way the pace of the lessons could go according to how easy it is for people to learn a new language similar to their native one. Additionally, Duolingo could have a customization system where people use their Lingots to personalize their background space and profile.
Student 12	I really want to make a competitive category which you can play against with your friends. Sometimes it's boring to do it alone. In my case, friends are one of the elements that can motivate me most.
Student 13	You should invent some kind of "group maker" where you could put a whole classroom in the same group and give the lowest student minus points for example, and the highest student extra points/lingots/exercises. Maybe win a little reward at the end of the week for the person with the most points, and maybe a "punishment" for the one with the least points. I really think that you would have completely different results with the scores at the end of each week and maybe after that people would be more self-motivated.
Student 14	In order to make Duolingo more motivating I believe they could create more interesting things to buy with the lingots. Another thing that Duolingo could improve on is merging people on Duolingo together. To do this Duolingo could maybe have a way to have to people work on one sentence together.
Student 15	I think that the diversity is already very impressive, but it can be better. I know that you already have a Chinese option, but I can't translate Chinese articles to English. These are some things that I think won't be hard to set up on the website. I am looking forward to this option. Also, it does make me mad when the sentence I typed is the same meaning, but just because it was not worded the same way, I can't pass. It will be nice to put more correct answers choices.
Student 16	I think it's better to create a new program which can make users listen to the sounds with their own voice (which means they make their own listening part).

4. Finally, I'd like to add this thought

Student 1	I think that they should change the format of the website every now and then, for example on Halloween. They should always change it for special
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	occasions. They should also make games where you can play against people. For example, a game to see who can identify a word faster. They should also have a chat feature where you can have conversations with other people learning the same language.
Student 2	To change the background theme of Duolingo, because sometimes it's really boring to see the same thing everyday. Also to chat online with your friends like Facebook. I think it will be fun to chat with the person that you want to. For example, you can chat with a person who studying different language so people will help each other to learn faster by chatting.
Student 3	Duolingo is a great program.
Student 4	Duolingo helped me fixed some new vocabulary because of the constant repetition but they should add some videos in Duolingo. It would make some days more interesting.
Student 5	Duolingo will be better if it can create different parts of listening, writing, reading and speaking. So we can choose to improve our skills in a more targeted way. I believe Duolingo will be more popular.
Student 6	Duolingo can provide some easy game to help us to learn the languages, it can give us more fun during we learning languages.
Student 7	Duolingo is a very nice app, but with the improvements users suggest it will become even nicer if not perfect. Thank you for the opportunity that we have. Wish you good luck with the upgrading your website to the best online language learning tool.
Student 8	It was a good way of learning new or continue learning language. In general it was a good tool. It has a lot of different languages to offer and the best thing is that it is free.
Student 9	I really enjoy spending time learning languages. I think that everyone would enjoy Duolingo even more if they add more types of exercises and speaking exercises. Even if I think that Duolingo would be a little bit better if add some exercises and something in the lingot store, Duolingo is a very good and addictive online language tool.
Student 10	Duolingo was the most helpful language learning website I found. Although it could have some improvements (such as the ones listed above), it really helped me with my basic Spanish like no other website I tried. Also think Duolingo should have more varieties of language skills, and would be interesting to have more cultural aspects taught, to keep it more fun.
Student 11	Duolingo was most interesting in the very beginning. As I got into the harder content I begin to feel as if though the lessons were very repetitive. I lost motivation and concentration. It did help spark my interest in many

	different languages that before seemed very distant to me. Now, I am studying French and working on my Portuguese. It helped me realize that learning a language was not that far off as I made it seem. Although the website could use some improvement I think that the idea of Duolingo is ingenious. With a bit more work it could be a golden language learning tool.
Student 12	NA
Student 13	I think you guys should add some sort of section that is only reserved to tourism. For example a whole section on each country or different cities, where you can do exercises where you have to find different monuments of the cities, and at that point you would unlock activities in the language you are learning.
Student 14	Adding sections that would quickly help travelers get by in the country they are going to may be beneficial. If Duolingo were to add more lessons on culture or the history of each language it could help in maintaining motivation.
Student 15	Include more about culture and have sentences that is more likely to appear in normal life routines. I see many sentences that does not really make sense. I don't think I will ever know French fluently, so I hope the things I learn are useful.
Student 16	Duolingo can create a game (like a competition) that make Duolingo users together to see who's the fastest typer or something like that.

Thank you very much for taking the time to read our feedback. There is more at <http://www.las.ch/academics/laser/edresearch/>.

Sincerely,

The Language and Linguistics Class of the Leysin American School