

State-of-the-art Duolingo Features & Applications

Stamatia Savvani

**MA in TESOL, University of Nicosia
English Teacher**



Preview

- Duolingo: a language learning application
- What are the teaching methods of Duolingo?
- What are the limitations?
- How do new features in Duolingo address them?



DUOLINGO

What is Duolingo?

Why is it worth researching?

What is Duolingo?

App Store Preview

This app is only available on the App Store for iOS devices.



Duolingo 4+

Learn Spanish, French and more

[Duolingo](#)

#8 in Education

★★★★☆ 4.7, 297.4K Ratings

Free · Offers In-App Purchases

Screenshots

[iPhone](#)

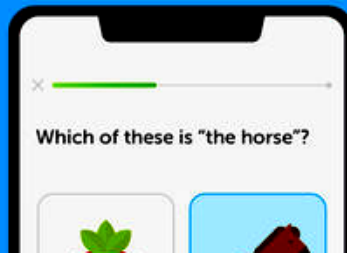
[iPad](#)

[iMessage](#)

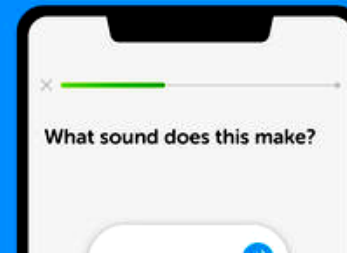
Scientifically
proven way to
master a language



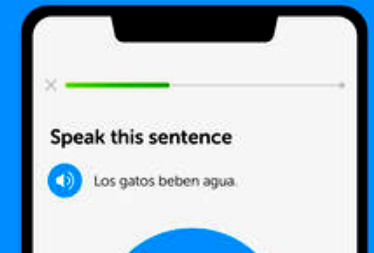
Fun, bite-sized lessons



Learn 30+ languages
for free

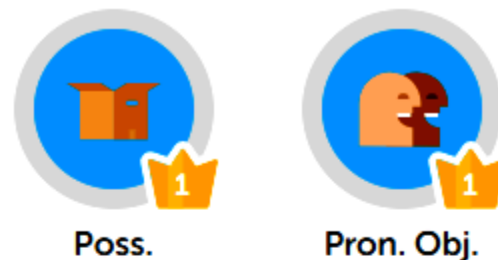


Practice listening
and speaking



What is Duolingo?

- Skill tree as scaffold
- Unlocking lessons
- From simpler to more complex language skills



Checkpoint passed



Clothing



V: Pres. 1



Colors



TEACHING METHODS IN DUOLINGO

Characteristics of teaching methods

Application of the methods in Duolingo & their limitations

Grammar-Translation method

- The dominant method of teaching classical languages
- Memorize vocabulary and grammar structures
- Transfers from L1 to L2
- Emphasis on accuracy



Grammar-Translation method in Duolingo

- Sentence is the basic unit of study

Translate this text

All problems have a solution.

.....



Alla problem har en lösning.

Grammar-Translation method in Duolingo

On the downside:

- Spoken language is ignored
- The only reference point is L1

Write this in English



El hombre, la mujer

Type

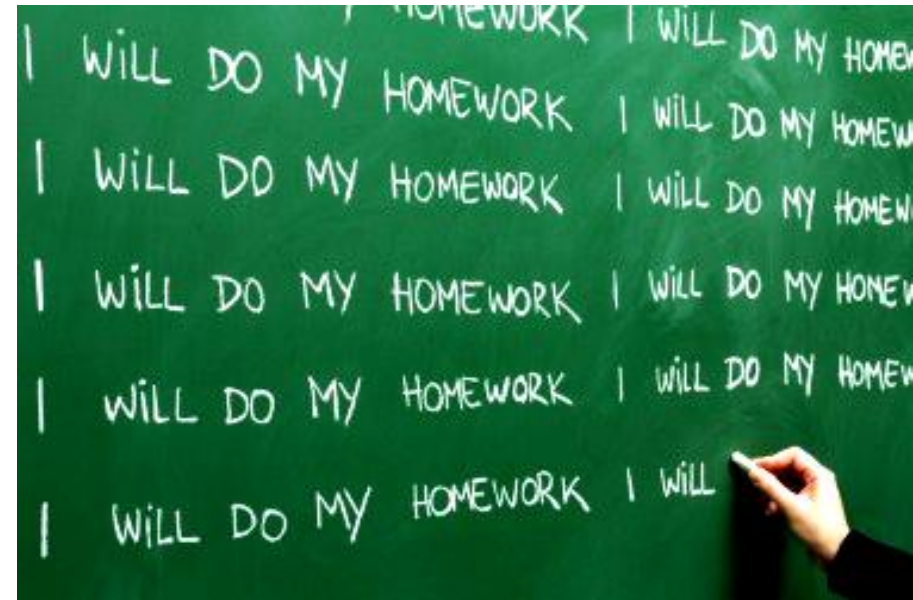
man



Remember that you can always hover over words to see what they mean.

AudioLingual Method

- Behaviorist theory (stimulus-response-reinforcement)
- Self-discovery of rules
- Drilling exercises
- Repetition



AudioLingual method in Duolingo

- Sentences are repeated*

Write this in English



Yo necesito una **camiseta**.

I need a t-shirt

Write this in English



Yo necesito una **chaqueta**.

I need a jacket

AudioLingual method in Duolingo

On the downside:

- Creativity is overlooked
- Meaningful context is lacking

Translate this sentence



Los pájaros leen el diario.

The birds are reading the newspaper.

✓ You are correct

Digital Game Based Language Learning

“the design and use of a diverse array of digital games for the purpose of learning or teaching a second or foreign language”



Frederik Cornillie, Steven L. Thorne and Piet Desmet (2012). ReCALL special issue: Digital games for language learning: challenges and opportunities. ReCALL, 24, pp 243-256

Following a framework for DGBL

- Multimodal: text, visuals, audio, sound effects
- Task Completion: lesson & goal, challenges
- Feedback: achievements, experience points, crown levels

Duolingo Game elements

- Daily goals
- Experience points
- Achievements
- Leader board



Wildfire

Next Level: Maintain a 7-day streak

[View more](#)

Duolingo Game elements

- Daily goals
- Experience points
- Achievements
- Leader board

New:

- No negative feedback (hearts)

Quit 



Translate this text to French

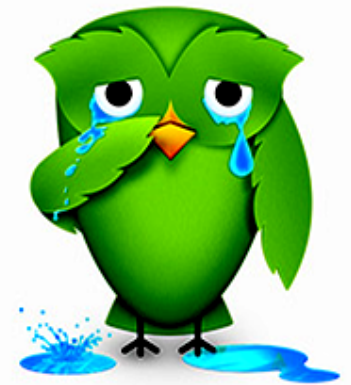
I am a man and she
is a woman .

Je suis une homme et elle est un
femme

 **Correct answer:**
Je suis un homme et c'est une
femme.

Continue

You're out of hearts!



Continue Learning

Duolingo Game elements

- Daily goals
- Experience points
- Achievements
- Leader board

New:

- No negative feedback (hearts)
- Crown levels



Feelings



Pres. Per.



Past Per.



Nature



Vocab 2



V. Inf. 2



Sports

Duolingo Game elements

Select the word for "the boy"

Basic Spanish:

- Crown level 0



el hombre 1



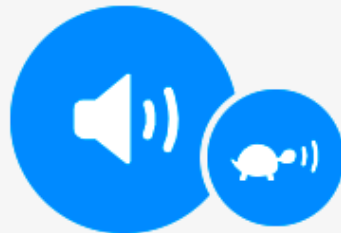
el niño 2



la niña 3

Type what you hear

- Crown level 3



Una nina|



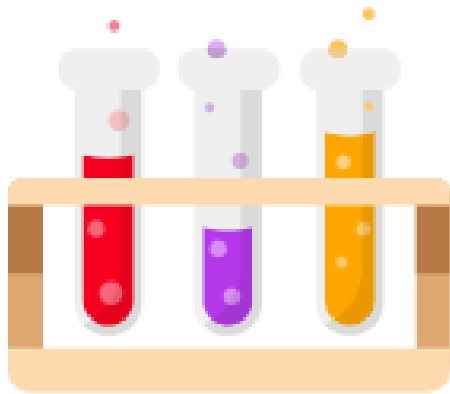
NEW FEATURES & APPLICATIONS

What is new in Duolingo?

Have the new features improved the original design?

New features & Applications

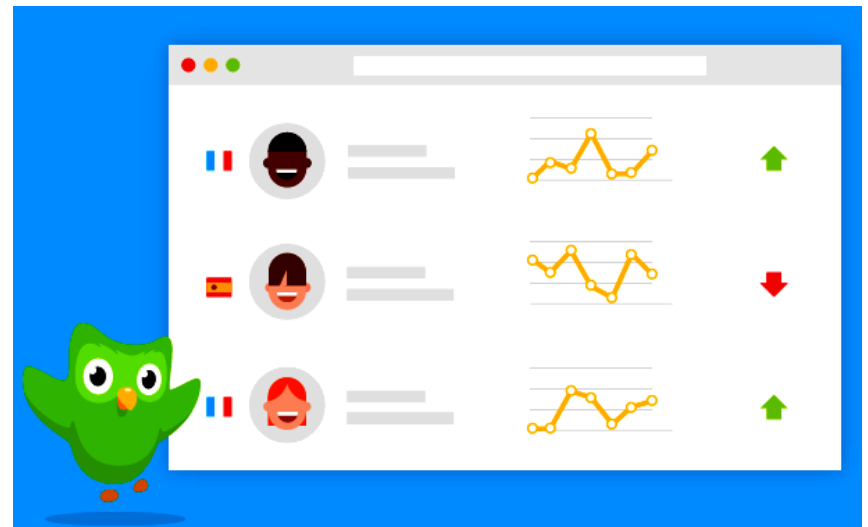
✓ Duolingo Labs



- Events
- Podcasts
- Stories

✓ Tinycards

✓ Duolingo for schools




Stories

- Short humorous stories
- Text & narration
- Frequent pauses for comprehension questions

✕

¿Puedes hablar?



NARRADOR

▶ Sara descansa en su sofá mientras su perro Tito duerme en el suelo.

↓

✕

NARRADOR

Sara está cansada de escuchar quejas de todo el día.

SARA

▶ Tito, ¡qué bien se siente...

¿Qué sigue?

... visitarte.	<input type="radio"/>
... llegar a casa.	<input type="radio"/>
... estar en tu oficina.	<input type="radio"/>

Stories

- Language in context
 - Multimodality
 - Listening and reading skills
 - Towards a more communicative CALL
- Only available in Spanish, French, Portuguese, German

Set One



¿Te conozco?



¿Puedes hablar?



Cuidando un pájaro



Tenemos que hablar



Encerrada en el baño



La peor cita de mi vida



Bellas artes



Sigue las flechas



La carta perdida



Capítulo dos
PARTE 1 DE 2

Set Two



Capítulo dos
PARTE 2 DE 2



Tres deseos



¡Renuncio!



¡Ayuda a Alicia!



El mayor tesoro

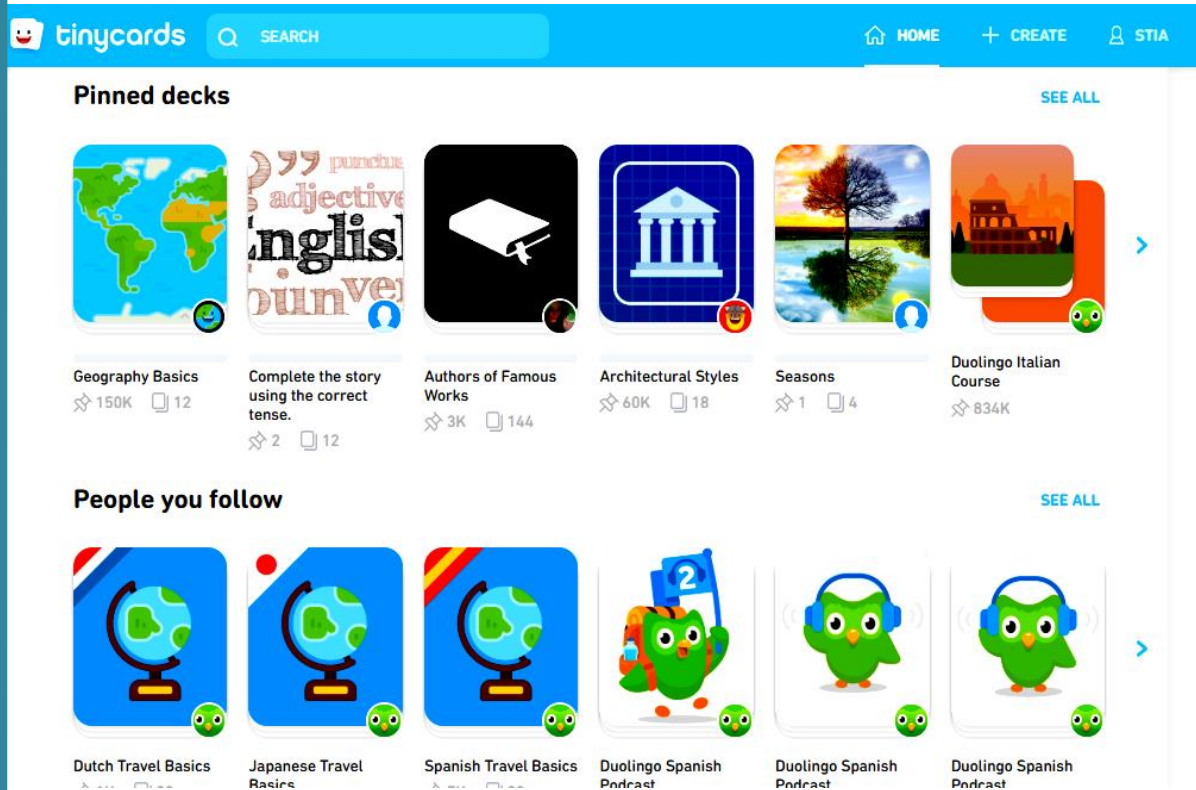
Tinycards

- Digital two-sided flashcards
- Create (and play) sets of Tinycards to review language from sciences in the target language.

The image shows two screenshots of the Tinycards application interface. The top screenshot displays a card flip action. On the left, an orange card with a watermelon slice illustration is shown. Below it, the text reads "Click card or press to flip". To the right, a white card with the Korean text "수박" (watermelon) is shown. Below it, a blue "CONTINUE" button is visible, with the text "Press to continue" underneath. The bottom screenshot shows a card selection screen. On the left, a white card with "수박" is shown. On the right, three cards are displayed in a row, numbered 1, 2, and 3. Card 1 is orange with a watermelon slice, card 2 is orange with an apple, and card 3 is green with a lemon.

Tinycards

- Creativity: crafting your own tinycards
 - Multimodality
- Few game elements
 - Only peer-reviewed





FINAL WORDS

Conclusions & Discussion

Are the limitations addressed?

Limitations of Duolingo

- Creativity is overlooked
- Meaningful context is missing

New features

- Tinycard creation address higher order thinking skills
- Stories provide a purposeful role and context to language

Key Takeaways

- Many DGBLL apps use repetition, translation
- Provide an *engaging, meaningful, relevant* context
- Allow/solicit for learners' creativity



Thank you!

Questions? Comments?

