

Pohrebniuchenko Pavlo, MA student
Topachevskiy Serhii, PhD (Philology), As. Prof.
Zhytomyr Polytechnic State University

DUOLINGO, BABEL, COURSERA: A COMPARATIVE ANALYSIS OF OPEN PLATFORMS FOR SECOND LANGUAGE LITERACY DEVELOPMENT

The rapid development of digital technologies has significantly transformed approaches to second language learning, making open online platforms one of the most accessible and widely used tools for literacy development. This paper presents a comparative analysis of three prominent platforms - Duolingo, Babbel, and Coursera - with a focus on their pedagogical approaches, structural features, and effectiveness in developing second language literacies.

Duolingo, with over 500 million registered users, employs gamification as its core pedagogical strategy, offering short, game-like lessons that target vocabulary, grammar, and reading comprehension. Its accessibility and low threshold for entry make it particularly popular among beginner learners. However, research suggests that while Duolingo effectively supports vocabulary acquisition and reading skills, it offers limited development of productive skills such as writing and speaking at advanced levels (Vesselinov & Grego, 2012)[5].

Babbel, by contrast, positions itself as a more structured language learning tool, with lessons designed by professional linguists and a stronger emphasis on conversational language use. Its curriculum is explicitly aligned with the Common European Framework of Reference (CEFR), which allows learners to track their progress against internationally recognized standards. Babbel has demonstrated measurable outcomes in speaking and listening comprehension, particularly at beginner and intermediate levels (York et al., 2021)[3].

Coursera occupies a distinct position among the three platforms, functioning primarily as a Massive Open Online Course (MOOC) provider rather than a dedicated language learning application. Language courses on Coursera, often developed by accredited universities, tend to integrate language instruction with academic content, fostering not only linguistic competence but also academic literacy and critical thinking skills. This approach is particularly beneficial for learners pursuing professional or academic goals in a second language (Godwin-Jones, 2019)[1].

The comparative analysis reveals that each platform serves a different learner profile and literacy goal. Duolingo is best suited for informal, self-directed vocabulary and grammar practice; Babbel offers a more structured path toward communicative competence; and Coursera provides the deepest integration of language and content learning, most closely approximating formal academic instruction. Notably, none of the three platforms fully addresses all dimensions of literacy development as defined by contemporary multiliteracies theory, which encompasses linguistic, visual, audio, spatial, and gestural modes of meaning-making (New London Group, 1996)[4].

The findings suggest that an integrated approach - combining the motivational affordances of gamified platforms like Duolingo with the structured curricula of Babbel and the content-rich environment of Coursera - may offer the most comprehensive pathway to second language literacy development. Educators and learners are encouraged to approach these platforms not as standalone solutions but as complementary tools within a broader learning ecosystem[2].

REFERENCES

1. Coursera Inc. *Learner outcomes report 2023*. — 2023. [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access: <https://about.coursera.org/press/wp-content/uploads/2023/05/Learner-Outcomes-Report-2023.pdf>
2. Godwin-Jones R. Scaling up and zooming in: Big data and personalization in language learning // *Language Learning & Technology*. — 2017. — Vol. 21, No. 1. — P. 4–15. [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access: <https://dx.doi.org/10.125/44592>
3. Loewen S., Isbell D. R., Sporn Z. The effectiveness of app-based language instruction for developing receptive linguistic knowledge and oral communicative ability // *Foreign Language Annals*. — 2020. — Vol. 53, No. 2. — P. 334–358. [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access: <https://doi.org/10.1111/flan.12454>
4. New London Group. A pedagogy of multiliteracies: Designing social futures // *Harvard Educational Review*. — 1996. — Vol. 66, No. 1. — P. 60–92. [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access: <https://doi.org/10.17763/haer.66.1.17370n67v22j160u>
5. Vesselinov R., Grego J. *Duolingo effectiveness study*. — City University of New York, 2012. [Electronic resource]. — Mode of access: https://static.duolingo.com/s3/DuolingoReport_Final.pdf