Audiobooks Implementation in an EFL Listening Classroom

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Abstract

The development of technology should be followed by all aspects of human life, including education. One of the possibilities of adapting technology development in education is by designing digital learning materials. The aim of this paper is to discuss the ways of using audiobooks as a better replacement material to be used in an EFL listening classroom. Many students face difficulties in listening, like problems in their listening comprehension, having a hard time pronouncing words, and make the connection between what they listen to and what they have already known because they are unable to accurately comprehend spoken materials. Audiobooks give a solution to these complications by presenting them with a native speaker illustration, giving students the proper pronunciation of words. Overall, audiobooks are suitable for enhancing students' listening comprehension capability and diminishing the fossilized problems they have been carried for so long.

INTRODUCTION

It has been known that there are four basic skills that every language learner should know and learn. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. They are equally important in mastering a language. But, in acquiring a language, it all started with listening. As it was explained by Eimas (1971) that states how babies are highly receptive toward speech perception. They hear the language and try to imitate it. This means that listening is the first skill that people acquire, and has a huge part in early process of human language acquisition. That is why the writer feels that this topic would be perfectly suited to be discussed.

Listening is an activity of audio feedback, in a form of words and sentences, going through the ears, and received and processed by the brain (see Rosa, 2012). There are many explanations for the definition of listening. According to Chastain (1971, as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016), "listening is the ability of one's understanding to apprehend spoken communication at average speed". In addition, Morley (1972, as cited in Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016) also states that "auditory discrimination, aural grammar, selecting necessary information, remembering it, and

connecting it to the process between sound and form of meaning are four crucial causes involved in listening communication procedure".

There are few reasons as to why this topic was chosen for writing this paper, but mainly because the writer feels that the educational process of EFL classroom in Indonesia is so far behind. The educational process in America can be a good example of how it is much more advanced than the one in Indonesia. Based on the statistic published by Future Consulting, there are about 60% of K-12 classrooms in USA use Chromebook as their teaching and learning media (Schoolov, 2019). Compared to America, where students are provided with Chromebooks, Indonesia still relies on actual books. Diora and Rosa (2020), for example, report that the main materials used in the listening course at English Department of Universitas Negeri Padang are derived from printed textbooks. Secondly, as time moves forward, human would always try to find a method to perfect themselves, and their ways of living. Changing educational material from prints into digital copy, such as audiobooks, is one of the ways for academic component to grow and advanced forward. Lastly, audiobooks could be applied on many levels of advancements, and many types of materials. This makes writing or discussing audiobooks all-around interesting and exciting.

REVIEW OF REALTED LITERATURE
Listening Comprehension

In general, listening comprehension could be defined as, the ability one develops to comprehend the words being spoken. Listening comprehension is one's ability in listening that can actually be assessed objectively. Goss (1982) explained that listening perception is a sensible cycle where audience members endeavor to cause associations between the importance of words when they to get certain data from the listening source legitimately. In other words, listening comprehension is how one identifies and constructs the meaning of aural inputs through perspective understanding of the spoken language. Aural inputs include; speech, live conversation, and most importantly, audiobooks.

The differences of a communication method in listening and reading classroom could also be the breaking point as to why listening comprehension began to be noticed. The difference is the spoken and the written language. Buck (2001) explained that the written and spoken language retain exclusive qualities that make them easily distinguishable. What can be concluded from his notion is that written and spoken language possess several features that makes them unique. There are several factors that really stand out, like, spoken language be likely to be more simple phrases and sentences while written language is more complex and more likely to pass on more information. There is also, the language used as transition between idea in spoken language is far more informal, such as, and, or, and but. Also, they can be used several times without the students experiencing redudancy. But, in written language the transition is far more smooth and formal such as, however, while, or/and whilst, etc.

Lastly, since spoken language happens right here, right now, as people would say. Speakers would need more time to process the ideas into sentences, hence create pauses. The, spoken language conversation usually carries the upbringing features of the speakers, such as, accent, specific slang/idiom from certain countries, and specific

way of talking. In contrary, written language is more formal, and always sticks to the rulebook. Lastly, spoken language is usually loaded with opinions, and personal involvement with the topics or ideas being presented. Even though, the realization of the importance of listening comprehension skill is rising, there is still some lack of practice of the skill in the EFL classroom. As it was explained by Brown (1987) "listening skill is still considered as the least important skill in teaching showed by how little the courses that are published regarding listening comprehension practice in the classroom". In addition, Vandergrift (1997) explained that regardless of a steadily expanding acknowledgment of the significance of listening understanding for second or foreign language students, the teaching of listening skill stays a fairly disregarded and ineffectively skill of English language learning in numerous ESL or EFL programs.

Listening Comprehension Difficulties

The first difficulty that students usually encounter is the lack of ability in perceiving language inputs. Field (2008) explained that this happened because of students fail to differentiate words and sounds of the materials. There are a lot of things as to why such things happen. There are many reasons, such as intonation, or accents of the speaker. Although, it seems trivial but accent heavily affected the meaning of certain words, i.e. affect and effect. Hasan (2000) showed in his experiment that most students find it difficult to understand the text if the speaker talks too fast or using unfamiliar accent. Also, keep in mind that accent works both ways, it could be a trouble for students given that foreign accent is not recognizable by them, or it could be of help if it is the accent from their own origin. This could definitely turn the listening comprehension activities into a debacle.

The second obstacle that students most commonly entangled with is the inability to catch on to the words in the recording. "It includes fail to recall the words, fail to extract a meaning to the words, and fail to anticipate what is to come" (Goh, 2000). To provide the best of quality on the recordings would be the most crucial task a teacher has to accomplish. Things that teachers could do are to find trusted source to extract the material from. Another thing is to proof check all the material so it would be useable in the classroom.

In addition, unexpected vocabularies that students never encountered before also bring several setbacks into student's progress in learning listening. The aptitude of the vocabulary mastery of students are widely ranged. The mastery is also influenced by many factors. In addition, "students found difficulties in choosing the appropriate meaning of the words, for example sometimes they usually overlap those meanings such as the use of do and make. The students are still confused in using the word based on the context. The last, the students are still confused when they found words or expression that are idiomatic" (Rohmahtillah, 2014). The familiarity of words greatly affect students capability in comprehending them. Because it motivates the students to work on the words better since they are familiar with them. Vice versa, it would decrease their motivation to go on, if the words are too difficult. Inappropriate use of words is mostly what cause students to lost in confusion. It would better for teachers to use words that has been studied before. And preferably to use them in most suitable context.

Audiobooks

"Books for the Adult Blind Project" was the first introduction of audiobooks that was created in 1931, that went with the name of "talking book". It's not until the year 1970 the term "audiobook" was used. Anyhow, the function it served has changed over the course of decades. Enhancing reading skill, especially reading comprehension, of the children and illiterate people was the main purpose of audiobooks (Koskinen, Blum, Bisson, Philips, Creamer, & Baker 2000; O'Day, 2002). But, back then, people were still unable to apply audiobooks into a listening classroom and how it would affect EFL students' listening abilities for there hasn't been many researches about it.

The evolution of digital media in this modern era has pushed everyone to abandon certain aspect, traditional aspect, in teaching and learning material method of delivery. "Audiobooks are recently considered as a dominant literacy tool and as one of the most essential resources in the EFL learning process because they might help construct language skills among learners" (Serafini, 2004). Now, in first world country, audiobooks have been used daily as a source of entertainment, therapy, and/or education. "Audibooks have been deemed as a scaffold instrument used for enhancing literacy among users" (Hett, 2012). Meaning that the inevitable future where physical material such as books will be replaced by digital form. Furthermore, the use of audiobooks is not only limited to schools and academic institutions. As it was explained by Harris (2001) that stated "the use of audiobooks has spread since they were implemented in classrooms to develop reading comprehension among kids and struggling readers". Kartal & Şimşek, (2011) added that several studies on audiobooks, that has been done before, were carried out on adolescent learners. Because most of academic institutions and/or schools use audiobooks as introductory in the classroom to give students the nuance of the topic that they are about to learn.

DISCUSSION
Audiobooks Application in the Classroom
Audiobooks is a material that need to be used for a certain amount of time for it to actually show some result. Many experiments that have been done regarding audiobooks took at least one month to bring in the researchers the expected outcome. And the number of students involved is also considerably vast.
Teacher's Preparation
The first thing that needs to be prepared in teaching and learning process is a lesson plan. Lesson plan is the guidance for teachers to go on about their teaching. Lesson plan sets the setting of the classroom teaching ambiance. Secondly, teacher would need to prepare every physical utensil that usually used in the listening classroom such as, the media player. It could range from a simple MP3 player to a personal laptop, a speaker, and the CD or cassette, where the material is stored.
Teaching Activities
Normally, teaching activities will be divided into three steps. They are pre-teaching activity, whilst-teaching activity, and post-teaching activity. In the first step, the teacher will give some encouragement and motivation which cheer up the students during the learning process. In addition, the teacher also gives the preview of the last meeting lesson, so students will be engaged in teaching and learning lessons. In the whilst-teaching activities the teacher will introduce a new lesson, explaining the lesson, and giving the exercises. After completing learning activities, teachers and

students will conclude the learning material, the teacher gives feedback to students' activity by reflecting their performance in post-teaching.

Pre-teaching activity

In the pre-teaching activity, students have to formulate some mental preparations in order to make ready for the classroom. Teacher needs to do some mental preparation for students before the learning process. It can be a form of greetings, playing a song or game relate to the related lesson.

Other things that teachers can do is to engage students on the topic and try to activate students' background knowledge. The teacher can use clues such as predictions, where students are given a little insight of what the text is going to be. The purpose of this step is the students can predict the lesson material that will be learned based on the clues given by the teachers.

Whilst-teaching activity

Whilst teaching activity is the main stage in study progress. This stage consists of four stages, they are setting up the context, pre-listening, listening, and post-listening.

Setting up the Context

In this step, students are given several questions related to the topic. The purpose of this step is the students can predict the lesson material that will be learned based on the clues given by the teachers. Next, the teachers create a general discussion. Through the topic and these clues, the teacher asks them to predict what they will be learned or make their own questions related to the clues that have been given by the teacher.

Pre-listening

Several selections of activities that teachers can apply in this part of teaching according to are; brainstorming, which an activity where the lecturer will tell students the topic they are about to learn. Then, the lecturer would ask what is the first thing that comes into their minds when they hear the topic. Second is vocabulary pairing where students are put in pairs to practice their words, vocabulary, and pronunciation mastery with their peers.

Listening

Teachers can actually use any kind of text because audiobooks are basically teaching media, so it could be used with any materials compatible, such as recount text, narrative text, or descriptive text. In this stage students will be given a recording of a narrative text called "The Black Cat" by Edgar Allan Poe. The nineteen-minutes recording of this simple narrative text is chosen because of the length and the words difficulty displayed by the speaker is suitable for foreign students. The teacher has to make sure if the students have completely understood or not by giving a follow-up activity later in the post-listening section of the teaching process. the purpose of the activity is to build up students' background knowledge and relate it to the material.

Post-listening

In this session the teacher will be doing match the picture activity. In this activity, students will be given some pictures that landmark the important turn of "The Black Cat" story in the recording.

Post-Teaching Activity

Post-teaching activities are the end of activities in the course. The teacher asked the students to summarize the material by giving them some questionnaire.

Advantages in Using Audiobooks

Audiobooks is beginning to take a rather huge part in an EFL classroom for it is a straight-forward and effortless teaching material toward teachers and students alike. There are several experiments or researches that were done to find some beneficial effects of audiobooks in an EFL classrooms. Brown (2002) also discovered that audiobooks assist teacher to help students understand the topic they are getting into by establishing a situation, or settings of the topics that are being talked about. So, it is safe to say that audiobooks really are huge help for teachers and students alike. It proves that audiobooks could be the imperative materials that should be used by students in an EFL classroom. Furthermore, a research done by Richardson, et al (2018) found that students feel more connected to the material when it was delivered auditorily, rather than through audiovisual materials.

Audiobooks facilitate teacher with many choices of topic, and many ways of teaching. In addition, O'Day (2002) stated, "audiobooks help students to find the confidence to actively reading by themselves". Many features of audiobooks that are also beneficial for students include; allowing students to be independent since the implementation of audiobooks does not require a live speaker to operate. Brumfit, Flevell, Hill and Pincas (1978) also added that many prints materials that are published and used in EFL classroom attached with cassettes to assisst the written text in the print materials. They are just as useful as the prints materials because not only helping students, thay also aiding foreign teachers understand the materials a whole lot better. Those cassette that come with the prints materials, such as, books also help out students with their pronunciation problems.

Obstacles and Solutions

Teaching audiobooks involves students' ability to interpret the text. To achieve that goal, many factors must be taken into consideration, such as, the quality of the recording, the availability of the medium, and the stability of students' attention and motivation span. These are the kinds limitations that teachers would encounter while applying audiobooks in the classroom. Alrawashdeh (2017) explained that the lack of resources, the situation of the educational progress in the classroom, and the lack of facilities that support listening classroom bring some inevitable complications in the classroom.

There are several precautions that teachers could take to prevent these obstacles to take place in the classroom. First try to find the best source for the material. You can take the material from a trusted source. Second, you have to understand thoroughly the process of the teaching, that way you will have clear ideas on what to prepare. Lastly, you have to keep the classroom interesting. You have to connect to students, not just academically, but also personally. You have to acknowledge their capability so they would feel appreciated hence increasing their motivation to take part in the teaching process

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTION

Listening is crucial in the process of communication, the one of the most significant goal of learning a language. In a conversation, having excellent set of listening skill is vital. In order to achieve an exceptional aptitude in listening, students must excel in their listening comprehension skill. Listening comprehension is a skill people use to make meaning through words input that they receive through many kinds of media. The input later would be turned into information that they later use, be it in a classroom or just casual conversation between people. More often than not, students face some difficulties in listening; they still have problems with their listening comprehension, they cannot interpret the words they hear and make the connection between what they listen to and what they have already known because they are unable to accurately understand spoken materials. So, the teacher must apply an appropriate strategy for these problems.

It can be concluded that audiobooks are useful to invite students to act in all processes of learning progress, especially for listening comprehension. In preteaching, students are being motivated to get into the learning process. In whilst teaching activity, audiobooks turn rather tedious process such as listening to a non-native speaker, to a more immersive process of listening activity because it would be done by native speakers, with a better intonation, and correct pronunciation. Lastly, in post-teaching activity, students are given the chance to conclude the material that they have learn that day. Overall, this way, teacher would have the chance to explore and exploit audiobooks' potential to the fullest. Resulting in the increase of students' understanding and comprehension toward the text.

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