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Perceptions and Challenges of Undergraduate EFL Students' towards Audiobooks and Textbooks on the Xreading Website

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ABSTRACT

Based on PISA literacy test in 2022, Indonesia gains rank 70 which 5 points higher than previous period in 2018. However, it still needs more efforts to maximize the level of students' literacy in Indonesia. The use of X-reading as the web-based book technology becomes the alternative tools to improve EFL undergraduate students' literacy level. This research aims to explore the undergraduate students' perception and challenge in using audiobook and textbook, that are provided by Xreading website during extensive reading activity. This research is conducted to EFL undergraduate students through qualitative method and purposive sampling technique. Three undergraduate students in Surabaya are involved by using descriptive qualitative method. The use of audiobook and textbook in Xreading website have some positive and negative impacts for students in developing their literacy competence. Audiobook is able to improve the students' listening skill and understand the unfamiliar vocabularies. However, it has some weaknesses such as it needs strong internet data and connection and cannot control the audio speed. The textbook gives the students experience as reading the physical book and the grammatical understanding. Nevertheless, textbook is more time consuming especially for students who have the lower reading skill. Hopefully, this research will be developed into the low level of education not only in undergraduate level, but also in the secondary school and this website expanded into the intensive reading.

Keywords: Xreading Website; Audiobook; Textbook; Perception; EFL Undergraduate Students' Challenge

INTRODUCTION

Reading is one of the important skills that EFL learner must achieve to mastering English language, especially for the undergraduate level. Acquiring reading skill is highly needed for students in the undergraduate level since they are exposed by many literatures and scientific papers. To help students in comprehending these kinds of literature, increasing extensive reading ability is very crucial for students in this level. Extensive reading facilitates EFL students, especially in the university level, to read any literatures as much as possible to gain a lot of knowledge and information (Anindita, 2020). Moreover, extensive reading encourages and provide free space for students to choose the books based on their self-preference (Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi, 2019). This reading activity is created to create the pleasant and enjoyable feelings in acquiring second language. By doing extensive reading, the

EFL undergraduate students could improve their learning performance and being success on their academic career (Milal et al., 2021). Moreover, having good reading skill also helps students to enrich their English reading competences, especially in understanding, analyzing the implicit meaning of the text, and sharpening students' receptive and productive skills (Ateek, 2021; Elviana et al., 2020). In short, the extensive reading is very crucial to helps EFL undergraduate students in developing their literacy skill.

However, improving the Indonesia EFL students' literacy, especially by reading competence is not easy work. Based on the Programme of International Student Assessment (PISA) reading comprehension evaluation, the literacy of level of Indonesian's students is in the rank of 70 (Kemdikbud, 2023). This data shows that the reading level of our students is considered as low level although it has increasing trends from PISA 2018 (rank 75). Although extensive reading has been widely implemented in most of tertiary educational institution and set in curriculum, not all EFL undergraduate have enough capability to mastering extensive reading competence. The first major factor is the lack support in implementing extensive reading activity. Based on the study from Martina et al. (2020), some lecturers still could not facilitate the best treatment to improve their students' motivation in extensive reading. Hermanudin et al. (2019) add that students in tertiary or university level have little time to read books. Most of them are busy and have the other works outside of studying, such as part-time job, organizations, research projects, and many more. In some institutions, the resources of reading are still limited and hard to accessed by students, especially in a rural area (Chan, 2020). In addition, the book or material that is provided in the classroom only emphasized on the structure/grammatical item, such clauses, tenses, passive/active voice, sentence structure, and many more (Syakur et al., 2020). This condition makes the students has the low interest in reading. There is no stimulus for students who have low interest of reading. Therefore, the students only read the book if it is necessary or in a certain time, such as in the classroom session (Susani, 2018). She also reveals that the students hard to find the meaning of the text. It is because the students do not get used to reading extensively. According to Whittingham et al. (2013), the EFL students found the difficulties in translating the vocabulary in their own native language. It's quite time consuming and the students cannot understand well about the text.

Extensive reading is one of the reading methods that can be the alternative way to improve the EFL students' reading skill. Extensive reading emphasized on how the students learn to read the text properly instead of read a lot of books/text to learn English (Savitri & Munir, 2022). This reading method firstly introduced by Harold E. Palmer, the second language acquisition expert, in 1917 (Milliner et al., 2019). They also state that extensive reading encourages the students not only to read a lot of books, but also comprehend the meaning or essence of the book they have read. Moreover, the students will remember and understand the vocabulary by accustoming the repetition of the words in the book (Harimurti et al., 2021). In extensive reading, the students are stimulated to read various kinds of book from different title, genre, or type. Therefore, Stoller & Nguyen (2020) also state that extensive reading activity enhance the students' fluency in reading. It can train students do communication naturally. Moreover, extensive reading is also the part of reading enjoyment. The students can choose the various book's genres that they like to read. Ramonda (2020) claims that by doing extensive reading, the EFL undergraduate students are able to have sharing session to discuss their favorite books with their friends and discuss the difficult part of the books in an enjoyable condition.

As the rapid life development, EFL students are able to utilize technological platforms to support their extensive reading activity. Xreading is created to facilitates EFL undergraduate students to have the best experience in doing extensive reading. It was founded by Paul Goldberg to provides a lot of literary works in raise students' passion in reading. He

builds collaboration with some major book publishers such as Macmillan, CUP, and National Geographic Learning (Aprilia et al., 2023). This website provides not only reading resources, but also quizzes and school library management system. The students could record their reading performances in this website (Harimurti et al., 2021). This website is not only beneficial for students, but also for teacher in conducting reading assessment. Teachers are able to monitor the students' reading performance in a certain time (such as in one semester or year). The prominent features that widely used by most of EFL students on the world are audiobook and textbook. Textbook and audiobook are the alternative solutions for EFL students to improve their literacy skill by various media.

The textbook that provided by this website is designed similarly as the printed textbook. Moreover, the textbook contains various illustrations and decorated interactively. Most of EFL students are getting used to utilize electronic book (e-book) in the process of English lecture session. Using this kind of book give several benefits and challenges for EFL undergraduate students to improve their extensive reading competence. The major beneficial impact of digital textbook is the reading flexibility. The students do not need to bring many printed and heavy books to go to the college. Nowadays, most of the undergraduate students are dominated with the savvy generation. This kind of students are highly exposed by the digital technology. So, reading digital textbook and the emerging of the Xreading website is the most comfortable ways of these students in reading books (Har et al., 2019). Moreover, reading digital textbook give the easy facility for students to read a lot of books every time and place. The digital book appears to give unlimited and free access to all the users, especially for EFL undergraduate students (Sidabutar et al., 2022). Manalu (2019) also add the the flexibility of reading is not only focused in readability aspect, but also in financially aspect. Reading digital book is considered as the cheapest way of rasing literacy skill than printed book. The second benefit is creating multimodal learning experience. Digital textbook creates the multimodal learning experiences which encourage students to understand information from various literary media by digital and traditional platform (Li, 2021). In addition, providing digital textbook could introduce many interactive features, such as highlight, annotation, adjust font-size, or zooming to ease the students in understanding book (Ghafar, 2024).

McGovern (2020) adds that utilizing digital textbook imporve students not only in literacy awareness, but also environmental awareness. This kind of book is the best alternative to support of saving earth actions. Although the emerging of digital textbook bring the “wind of change” to create the innovative extensive reading implementation for EFL students, but this kind of book also bring the challenges for them. Some digital textbooks still provided in a paid system. It means that students must pay some money to afford this kind of book (Bachtiar & Puspitasari, 2024). Not all the EFL undergraduate students have some much money to buy this kind of book, especially for students from rural area or from low economic society. Delgado et al. (2018) find the students who use digital textbook for long duration time affects on their vision ability and reading attention. He adds that students feel difficulty to focus on reading. Moreover, the students could open the other website while reading digital textbook makes them distracted in reading digital textbook. Park & Lee (2021) reveal the surprising data that EFL students who read in digital platform have the low grammatical competence than students who read in printed books. It caused by the low focus and flexibility that provided in the digital platform that students always get used to instant things.

In the other hand, audiobook also provided the different sensation for EFL undergraduate students in conducting extensive reading. This kind of book offers the EFL students to optimalize their listening and reading skills in one time. The book that combined with audio feature. Audiobook gives several benefits and challenges for EFL undergraduate students to improve their extensive reading competence. The use of audiobook gives the

fascinating reading experience for students. Based on the study by Rahman & Hajar (2020), audiobook stimulate students' motivation in reading. They add that using audiobooks has enormous effects for EFL students to gain the listening competence and helps students' difficulty in reading competence. Audiobook could be used not only in synchronous class, but also in the asynchronous class. The students do not need to always follow the lecturer's instruction everytime. They could choose their own title of audiobook freely based on their learning needs (Kim, 2021). Genova (2022) claims that introducing audiobook for students in extensive reading activity could build the better learning engagement, enjoyable reading, and pay more attention on grammar and pronunciation easily. Although audiobook give a free chance for EFL students to use it everytime, but it could not be effectively done and give significant impact for EFL students in reading skill without teacher guidance (Rizal et al., 2022). Moreover, the audiobook that has longer duration and story plot make the EFL students feel bored and easily distracted (Tusmagambet, 2020). The longer text contributes to the students' difficulties in connecting what they have listened and what they have already understood (Assiddiqhi & Rosa, 2020). The hard vocabulary level and lack of pronunciation make the situation becomes worse.

Besides of its advantages and disadvantages of the digital reading platforms, such as audiobook and textbook, there are still few research which focused on the students' perception and challenges in using audiobook and textbook while using Xreading website. The previous study from Munir and Savitri (2022), Harimurti et al (2021), and Milliner et al. (2019) emphasized the implementation of audiobook and textbook in Xreading website in the high school students' context with the quantitative approach. Moreover, the other previous research focused on the Xreading website in the aspect of vocabulary and grammar improvement (Nurhayati, 2023). In addition, the research of digital reading tool is mostly focused on its effectiveness on the students' reading competence in general dimension instead of focusing its features such as audiobook and textbook comprehensively (Ali et al., 2024). By considering these studies, this research aims to explore deeply about the students' perception and challenges when using audiobook and textbook in Xreading website in descriptive qualitative method.

From those problems that arised in the background part, there are two questions to direct this research:

1. How is the EFL undergraduate students' perception toward the implementation of audiobook and textbook in using Xreading website during extensive reading activity?
2. What are the challenges faced by EFL undergraduate students while using audiobook and textbook in Xreading Website during extensive reading activity?

Corresponding to the formulation of the research questions, the researcher conducting this research to:

1. Analyze the EFL undergraduate students' perception toward the implementation of audiobook and textbook in using Xreading website during extensive reading activity.
2. Explore the EFL undergraduate students' perception toward the implementation of audiobook and textbook in using Xreading website during extensive reading activity.

This research is conducted hopefully to provide the beneficial impacts for:

1. Teacher and lecturer, who could create the better learning atmosphere in teaching reading competences for students, especially in undergraduate level. Moreover, the lecturer is ease to monitor and evaluate EFL undergraduate student' in reading performance
2. EFL Undergraduate students, who could easily access unlimited reading sources to improve their reading skill. It also important to helps them in stimulating their productive skills, especially in research works.

METHOD

In this research, we analyze and explore the EFL undergraduate students' perception and challenges when they implement audiobook and textbook in using Xreading website. Since we gathered the comprehensive and in-depth data, the descriptive qualitative method is conducted to gain the research data (consists of students respond after using audiobook and textbook in the Xreading website). According to Chowdhury & Shil (2021), qualitative research help the researcher to have intimate interaction to the respondent in order to understanding their experiences and internal perception in gathering the research's data. Based on the previous study that have been stated in the introduction chapter, the research that focused on the implementation of audiobook and textbook in Xreading website is carried out in the quantitative and correlational study. This esearch is conducted by the descriptive qualitative method.

The data are gathered to answer the questions that emphasized on how the EFL undergraduate students feel and their difficulties which they faced when applying audiobook and textbook in Xreading website during the process of extensive reading activity. This data becomes the evidence of how the website work and impact on students' extensive reading activity process so far. Open-ended questionnaire is utilized as the instrument to gain the in-depth data of this research. The questions list is adapted from Whittingham et al., (2013) and Joseph (2023) to discover and observe students' experiences and perception in using audiobook and textbook in Xreading website. The open-ended question is used to provide the chance for the researcher and subject of the research to explore the data deeply and comprehensive.

There are three undergraduate students from one university in Surabaya that are involved in this research. They are from two different cohorts, such as 2019 cohort (one student) and 2020 cohort (two students). Those students were chosen based on the purposive sampling technique. There are two considerations as the reason of choosing these students. First, these students, especially from 2020 cohort are chosen to be the participant of this research because they have mandatory task to join the program (Xreading website program) by their college. Second, they have explored more than 10 books (audiobook and textbook) in the Xreading website. Third, these students have accomplished the Extensive Reading course. Those consideration also conducted based on the preliminary study that involved lecturers of this university. The data of the research was conducted by having semi-structured interview. The interview was held by using video call. The interview was conducted three times in a day since the interview was conducted one by one.

After all of the data are gained, then we analyzed the data by several steps. The first step, the data from the video call are recorded and transcribed into the notes. The second step, we select the appropriate data that in-line with the research questions and objectives. The data which is not inline with the research questions and objectives are eliminated and separated from the other appropriate data. After selecting the data, the next step is categorizing the data based on the research questions. The data that becomes the answer of the first RQ (Research Question) are put in the first place. The last step, the data are ready to be interpreted as the report of the research.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

a. Students' Perceptions in Using Audiobook and Textbook in Xreading Website

These three students gave the various responds and experiences especially when using audiobook and textbook during the extensive reading activity after use the Xreading website for 1 year. Through observations and interview, all students who becomes the participant of this research agree that they use this website as the mandatory program of

this college and get the high score of Extensive Reading course.

“My lecturer recommends us to use this website. It can help us in improving our reading skill” (S1)

“My department has the agreement with the Xreading website developer to implement it to the students as the mandatory program when we take the Extensive Reading course.”(S2)

However, two of three students get more beneficial impacts in utilizing audiobook and textbook through Xreading website than the other platform or physical books.

“The Xreading website provide a lot of booksand easily accessed by my own device” (S1)

“I can find my favourite genre of book that I cannot find it in the printed version, such as Shakespeare’s books” (S2)

“The book that I wanted is expensive. In thiswebsite, I can read it freely.” (S1)

“The website is able to be opened in every device, such as laptop and cellphone.” (S3)

All of the participants agree that Xreading website give a lot of beneficial things in the improvement of their English skills and competences, especially in reading.

“Xreading website help me increase my vocabulary level” (S1)

“This website improves my speed reading skill” (S1)

“I can know how far the level of my reading skill” (S2)

“Although we are the first timer of this website, we can read the book in the higher level” (S2)

“The textbook also provides audio platform ifI feel bored in reading. It can increase my listening skill.” (S3)

“Each level has the quiz that encourage me to get the highest point. Moreover, my department also give the achievement for those who get the highest point of Xreading.” (S3)

The website provides the two kinds of book, audiobook and textbook. All of the students feel the positive impact after using these books. Audiobook help the students to increase their reading and listening at the same time.

“I understand how to pronounce some difficult and unfamiliar words in the book” (S1 and S2)

“I can read the book everywhere, such as when riding my motorcycle” (S1)

“I can know the different English accent of people” (S3)

“Audiobook can sharpen my listening skill” (S3)

All of the students also get the beneficial things when utilizing the textbook. Textbook trains them to improve their reading skill.

“I can understand the structure of the paragraph and some grammar points, such as the tenses from the text” (S1)

“Since I am a visual learner, the textbook is more suitable for me in improving my reading skill” (S1)

“I found a lot of pictures, especially in the lower level books. It is interesting to break myboredom in reading” (S2)

“I can adjust the screen (zoom in and zoom out) to make me comfortable in reading” (S2and S3)

By applying the Xreading website, all participants can achieve the goal of their academic career.

“I got the high score in my Extensive Reading course” (S1)
“This website teaches me how to read the book properly. I can implement my skimming and scanning method effectively” (S2)
“I can enrich my literary skills through this website” (S3)

In addition, two of three students can find their favorite genre/book title in this website and it have the different level of reading.

“I can find my favourite book which entitled “Princess Diana” and “Pinocchio” in English version. It is very hard to find this book in the bookstore around my city” (S1)
“Each title of the book has the different level. The higher level of the book, the more difficult of the book’s vocabulary. One of the unique things from this website” (S2)

b. Students’ Challenges in Using Audiobook and Textbook in Xreading Website

Although the audiobook, textbook, and this website bring the beneficial impact on students’ performance in reading, some participants found some difficulties and limitations in applying those kinds of book in the website.

The first difficulty that faced by the participants is appeared by the use of the website. The problem that faced by the participants is related with the website features, display, or usage.

“Some features are confusing. There is no clear guidance how to operate the website” (S1)
“Too many advertisements in the website, especially when we open it through cellphone” (S1)
“To access all of the books’ collections in this website, we have to pay a lot of money which is taken from our tuition fee.” (S2)
“Sometimes the word count tool is error” (S3)
“Not all the people can access this website since the high/expensive cost” (S2)
“Some buttons in the website are too small” (S1)
“The developer does not provide the application version for mobile phone users” (S2)

The second difficulty that participant found during the extensive reading activity is from the book collection. Although the website provides a lot of books by various genres and types, but the participants still found the problem in enjoying book collection in it.

“I cannot find the other genre of book especially in non-fiction genre, such as self-development book.” (S1)
“Most of the book that provided in this website is old published and have the boring content.” (S3)

Although there are many beneficial impacts that students perceive in using audiobook, there are some weaknesses in implementing this kind of book.

“It is hard for me to identify and understand what the speaker said in the audio” (S1)
“I can’t set the speed level of the audio. I can set it to be slower or faster.” (S2)
“It cost more internet data.” (S3)
“It really needs the good internet connection. If the connection is bad, the audio cannot work better.” (S3)

The textbook also gives some challenges for the participants although they are more familiar in using textbook in their daily life. Since the textbook is provided in the digital platform, it gives the different experiences than the physical/manual textbook.

“Textbook is more time consuming.” (S1)
“There is no newest published book in the website.” (S2)

There is also one student who have the problem in the quiz session because he cannot answer the quiz freely. The answer must be the same with it is written in the textbook

"I must answer the quiz based on the textbook and I have to write it same with it is written in the book. I cannot answer the question with my own word although it also has the same point/meaning." (S2)

Discussion

The implementation of Xreading website policy in this campus facilitates students to encounter the positive and negative impacts in using Xreading website during the extensive reading activity. First, most of the students find the beneficial things when they applying the Xreading website. The students enjoy the easy accessibility in using this website. They could access the website and enjoy its features by various devices, such as laptop, computer, or mobile phone. The students can access all of the book freely, eventhough they cannot find it in the physical book in the bookstore. It is in line with Sidabutar et al. (2022) that web-based book technology such as Xreading provide unlimited and comfortable access to abundant reading resources. In this website, they also enjoy a lot of books based on the genre and title they like to read. It helps them to read books in any conditions and places. This facility can enhance the students' extensive reading ability that is also in line with the finding from Savitri and Munir (2022). The students know directly their score or level of reading skill in this website. It is supported by Ghafar (2024) that web-based book technology offers a lot of easy way to read books.

Moreover, the EFL undergraduate students in this research feel that they could increase their grammatical skills, such as understanding tenses or sentence' structure rule. The textbook also gives the beneficial things. They can understand more the structure and grammatical points in the text. These findings argue the Park & Lee (2021) claims that digital reading, such as audiobook and textbook, reduce the students' grammatical skills. In addition, the students also find books based on their reading level and teach them in other reading competences, such as skimming and scanning method. The Xreading website also can help the students to increase their vocabulary skill and speed reading. Moreover, audiobook that is provided by this website encourage students to improve their listening skills. They can understand the content of the textbook by listening the word's pronunciation from the speaker. In addition, audiobook train them to identify the different English accents. Manalu (2019) agree that Xreading also give EFL undergraduate students in improving students' competence in reading and listening simultaneously and raise their literacy skill. This website provides various challenges in reading book. If the students reach the higher level of the book, they find harder vocabularies in that book. It could stimulate students to always improve their reading skill. They also find a lot of illustrations in the book/text by adjusting the screen of their device/gadget. Rahman & Hajar (2020) also claim that this kind of technology facilitate challenging sensation that could improve students' motivation in reading. The students also find that the use of audiobook and textbook in this website could save their money. It is in line with Manalu (2019) that the use of digital reading platform could save the user's money than buy the printed books.

The students find difficulty in accesing audiobook and textbook in this website. The students are could not fully understand the audiobook content. It is in line with Rizal et al. (2022) that although audiobook and textbook give a free chance for EFL students to use it everytime, but it could not be effectively done and give significant impact for EFL students in reading skill without teacher guidance. The students cannot control the speed level of speaker. Moreover, they cannot identify the speaker/audio especially for those who have the low level of listening skill. In addition, audiobook need more internet data and strong connection. If the connection is low, the audiobook cannot work properly.

In the other hand, the textbook also giving some difficulties for the undergraduate students. The students need more time to read every single word in the text. It is different when they listen to the audiobook. They have shorter time to comprehending the content/story

of the book. It is supported by Assiddiqhi & Rosa (2020) that longer text could emerge difficulty for EFL students to understand the content of the book. This is also show that students still make a mistake in answering questions related to the book. In addition, some books (audio and textbooks) are still not free access. They have to pay some money to obtain audio and textbooks. It is in line with the research from Bachtiar & Puspitasari (2024) that not all reading sources are set in a free access. In addition, most of the book that are provided in this website are old published. The students need to learn and read the newest books.

Creating effective and feasible web-based book technology is very crucial to raise the EFL undergraduate students' reading skill. Providing good quality audiobooks and textbooks with free access could stimulate students to be interested in using Xreading website. Moreover, the the size of the audiobook must be fit and do not cost a lot of internet data. In addition, giving more updated reading resources, especially audiobook and textbook, is the best solution to make students enjoy the moment of reading. It is also in line with Chanthap & Wasanasomsithi (2019) that extensive reading activity must be enjoyable for students. It should be supported by the newest audiobooks and textbooks based on the recent trends and students' level.

CONCLUSION

The audiobook and textbook have the positive and negative sides in the process of students' extensive reading improvement. The audiobook is proved to be effective to improve the students' listening skill and understand the unfamiliar words' pronunciation also easy to use in every condition. However, the audiobook has some weaknesses such as it needs strong internet data and connection. The students also cannot control the audio speed. In the other hand, textbook is more beneficial to students in the aspect of experience as reading the physical book and the grammatical understanding. Reading textbook also help students who have the low level of listening skill in comprehending the book. Nevertheless, the use of textbook is more time consuming and takes more time for students who have the lower reading skill to understanding the book. It is also hard for those who lack of book material. Hopefully, this research will be developed into the low level of education not only in undergraduate level, but also in the secondary school. In addition, the students could utilize audiobook and textbook in the more focused reading activity, such as intensive reading. Lastly, the EFL teachers and lecturers could apply the audiobook and textbook in Xreading website as the best alternative to teach reading and raise students' awareness in literacy skill.

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