

## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter provides a wide-ranging description of the research. It comprises the background, formulation of the problem, operational definitions, aim of the research, and significance of the research.

#### **1.1 Background**

Technology has come a long way in the 21<sup>st</sup> century and has made life easier for humanity. The advancements in technology have made it more compact and seamlessly blended into our daily lives, such as audiobooks. Currently, people can enjoy a book conveniently. With just a touch of a button on a smartphone, an audio recording of someone reading the book will be played for the listener to enjoy. It is no longer necessary to buy a physical book and find spare time to read it when the audiobook exists. As for its definition, Have & Pedersen (2021) described audiobooks as “an electronic book format which is listened to instead of being read in [the] traditional sense” (p. 198).

In the modern world, where people pay more attention to their smartphones rather than books, the audiobook is the perfect solution for the declining interest in literature. People can access it anywhere and anytime through the internet with the downloadable feature. Nowadays, they are popular even amongst the general masses, which has turned into a flourishing industry. Listeners can listen to a wide range of audiobook titles freely or via paid subscription on websites and applications such as Audible, Audiobook.com, LibriVox, YouTube, Scribd, Story Tel, Libro FM, etc. Recently, there has also been a rising trend of using audiobooks in the educational scope. Various research has suggested the effectiveness of audiobooks for language classroom use (Moyer, 2012; Sekścińska & Olszańska, 2018), although they often only highlight the use of audiobooks for reading comprehension and not listening skills (Kartal & Simsek, 2017). Nevertheless, it could be beneficial for students, especially in the context of improving their listening skills. Since

audiobooks are a listenable medium, it would be a waste of potential not to use them as listening material in the classroom.

In learning a language, there are four essential skills a learner needs to possess: Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. However, even though listening skills are as critical as the other three and complexly intertwined with one another, they are neglected by teachers in the classroom since reading and writing skills are preferred. Teachers tend to assume listening skills will transpire naturally without teachers' intervention, often labelled as "The Cinderella Skill" because of the neglect (Spear-Swerling, 2016). Sulistiyo (2018) explained that Indonesian teachers tend to pay more attention to reading and writing skills when teaching English since most textbooks prioritise grammar and vocabulary building. Some evidence of this phenomenon is the lack of adequate listening labs on school grounds, minimal listening practice due to the limited learning hours, and lack of appropriate material. Most teachers habitually only rely on the given dialogue texts in coursebooks, resulting in a repetitive and lacklustre listening session.

The phenomenon occurred in one of the junior high schools in Tasikmalaya, West Java. Based on the researcher's experience teaching practice in the school-based internship program, the researcher saw that there was still a lack of emphasis on listening in English class. The teacher at the school mostly used only the dialogue in textbook and its use seemed to be very repetitive. Therefore, the researcher interested to conduct this research to see how audiobook can be an alternative medium in teaching listening.

In English as a Foreign Language (EFL), specifically among Indonesian students, listening skills are perceived to be complicated. Hidayati et al. (2020) argued that learning listening skills is an anxiety-inducing activity and could hurt students' learning confidence and motivation. The presence of anxiety is troubling since students will have a more challenging time receiving the lessons. Wang & Cha's (2019) study found that students of low listening proficiency experienced anxiety and self-doubt, which affected their listening

test performance. They did poorly on the test compared to students with higher listening proficiency levels. They also mentioned how students' personalities, confidence, gender, education and learning strategies will affect their anxiety levels. Other factors like poor quality listening material, unfamiliarity with the culture, foreign accents, unheard vocabulary, lengthy texts, fast pace, and environmental conditions could also increase students' anxiety (Gilakjani & Sabouri, 2016).

To encounter students' listening challenges, audiobooks could become an alternative medium for teaching listening skill. The audiobook is excellent for students because of the following reasons: it encourages active listening skill and develops their vocabular and also improves pronunciation since they can hear the words spoken correctly by narrators, who are native speakers (Burkey, 2013). Not only beneficial for students, but it could also help teachers who are struggling to find alternative material for classroom use since it is economical, convenient, and exciting. Teachers could implement it in their classrooms to teach listening skills and enhance students' listening comprehension. The audiobook also could be an additional assignment outside of the classroom.

Other benefits include raising language awareness, introducing students to literary types of language, and raising students' awareness of phonetic components (Carkit, 2020). It can also serve as an exposure to authentic material. Thus, they can learn more about the cultures, accents, dialects, historical events, and settings depicted in the story. Audiobooks can also be a gateway to the literary world and entertain students in their free time.

Similar research has been done about using audiobooks to teach listening skills. The study by Fajry et al. (2016) emphasised using audiobooks to enhance secondary school students' listening comprehension using a pre-experimental study. The results suggest there is an improvement in students' listening comprehension after the usage of audiobooks. Moreover, the study also promotes audiobooks as a suitable medium for learning and teaching listening comprehension. This study will explore the implementation of

audiobooks in teaching English listening skills to junior high school students through classroom research. Unfortunately, study about audiobook usage in teaching listening skills remains under-researched, especially in Indonesia. For this reason, this study aims to explore the implementation of audiobooks as a medium in teaching English listening skills and, subsequently, the impacts of such practice to gain new significant insights.

## **1.2 Formulation of the Problem**

This research aims to observe and describe the integration of audiobooks as a teaching medium in teaching English listening skills and the impacts gained from the process. Thus, the formulation of the problem can be summed up as: “How is the implementation of audiobooks in teaching listening skills?”

## **1.3 Operational Definitions**

To avoid any misunderstanding regarding the terms related to the topic of research are explained as follows:

- |  |  |
|--|--|
| <b>1.3.1 Audiobook</b>                       | An audio recording or spoken version of a book, often narrated by professional voice actors. In this research, the audiobook is a medium for teaching listening skills to 7 <sup>th</sup> -grade EFL Junior High School students |
| <b>1.3.2 Teaching Listening Skill</b>        | The act of transferring listening skills and knowledge from the teacher to the 7 <sup>th</sup> -grade students of EFL Junior High School in their classroom environment.   |
| <b>1.3.3 Listening Skill</b>                 | Listening skills in this research context are a set of abilities needed to understand spoken dialogue or verbal communication from an audiobook.   |
| <b>1.3.4 EFL Junior High School Students</b> | A group of 7 <sup>th</sup> -grade Junior High School students aged 12-13 years.  |

#### **1.4 Aims of the Research**

This research aims to observe and describe the integration of audiobooks in teaching listening skills to EFL Junior High School students.

#### **1.5 Significance of the Research**

##### **1.5.1 Theoretical Use**

This study will enrich the existing literature on audiobook usage for teaching English listening skills.

##### **1.5.2 Practical Use**

This study will highlight the practice of integrating audiobooks as a medium for teaching listening skills and is expected to help teachers as a guide on how to use audiobooks in EFL classrooms.

##### **1.5.3 Empirical Use**

This study will complement previous studies on audiobook usage in classroom use as empirical insights, especially for the next researcher(s) who will take a similar topic.