

THE IMPLEMENTATION OF E-SPEAK IN EFL CLASSROOM What do teachers think?

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Abstract

The development of technology rapidly affects the education field. Internet connection may ease teachers and learners in getting the learning source including audio for listening activity which can be downloaded easily. Even though it is easy to get listening materials, there is no guarantee that every listening material will cover students' needs or learning objective. The possible solution to this problem is creating the listening material by using Text to Speech. Text to speech namely E-speak may convert text into an audio. It can help teachers to solve the lack of listening material issue. Furthermore, it is also important to know the quality of the output from the E-speak and it can be known from the teachers' perception. Therefore, the researcher is interested in investigating EFL teachers' perceptions toward the use of E-speak in creating listening materials. This study used qualitative method with individual interview technique. There were eight EFL teachers who served as the sample of this research. Several steps were done in order to gain teachers' perceptions toward the use of E-Speak: (1) computer training was done to make EFL teachers familiar with the E-speak; (2) the listening material produced by teachers was put in Google site to be delivered to students; (3) an interview was done to gain EFL teachers' perceptions toward E-Speak. The findings show that EFL teachers give positive responses toward the integration of E-speak. EFL teachers found it useful to use this digital approach in the language learning process.

Keywords: listening materials, text to speech program, e-speak, EFL teachers' perceptions.

Introduction

The development of Information, Communication, and Technology (ICT) may ease teachers in obtaining listening material especially from online sources. There are many listening sources that can be used as native like listening material to encourage the appropriate model for language use. Online sources such as British Broadcasting Company (BBC), British Council, Central News Network (CNN) and other similar websites may help students in getting authentic learning material and direct them to real example of spoken English.

Even though it is easy to get the listening materials, the validity of the material itself could be a problem that will be faced by students, that is, the listening material may lack of universal validity and students experience (Herri Mulyono, Devi Nur Vebriyanti, 2016). The use of audio materials do not suitable with the classroom

procedure, there is no evidence could show that the listening materials could be used in every situation (Sha, 2010). The validity of the material is important to be concerned, since students have their own characteristic that should be along with the listening material prepared by teachers. If teachers prepare listening material which is not appropriate with students' listening skill, it may make students fail to follow the learning process. Besides, there is still other problem due to the lack of students' experience in exposing to native like listening materials. They may find it difficult to comprehend the listening material due to the less of native-like listening materials treatment (Chang & Read, 2006).

Teachers in Indonesia tend to avoid having listening activity in the class because the dependency to the online listening material (Adnan, 2012). They may not find the suitable material so they avoid the

listening section. This dependency leads teachers to face another problems such as the technical problems deals with the facilities and services provided by the school (Herri Mulyono, Devi Nur Vebriyanti, 2016), even though the Indonesian government has provided strong support for technology integration at schools (Firman & Tola, 2008), many English teachers are still restricted to have access to the internet (Son, Robb, & Charismiadji, 2011). Meanwhile, it is already proved that integrating technology is beneficial for language learning (Dashtestani, 2012).

Text to Speech has already been considered as potential tool to be used in language learning. TTS was used in several researches such as research on reading (Robert A. Stoddena, Kelly D. Roberts, Kiriko Takahashia, Hye Jin Parka, Norma, 2012), and pronunciation (Yi-Ching Huang, Lung-Chuan Liao, 2015). Moreover, TTS is seen as the solution for the lack of listening material spoken by native speakers. The TTS program is considered as a benefit for EFL teachers which help them in adapting the native speaker voice to contextualize listening materials and fit the students' English proficiency (Sha, 2010). Besides, The TTS program may benefit students' in term of pronunciation model, reading assistant, and conversational partner (Handley & Hamel, 2005). From those studies, it can be concluded that TTS can benefit the learning process. Since it can convert Text into Speech, TTS is seen as a possible solution to the lack of listening material. Although it may give benefits to student and teachers, it is also important to investigate the quality of the TTS output. In addition, in order to ease students in accessing the learning material, the output of TTS will be put in the Google site. Google sites is one of the feature from Google that may make an online learning is possible. These two applications are considered to be useful for teachers in creating and delivering the listening material. Therefore, the researcher is interested in conducting this

research related to the use of Text to Speech and Google site in EFL classroom. The researcher is interested in investigating the quality of the TTS output and Google site which can be known from teachers' perception.

Methodology

The present study used qualitative method with narrative qualitative design. The researcher used purposive sampling for conducting the research. Participants of this research are EFL teachers from private English course. The study was conducted in a private English course. First, computer training was done in order to help teachers familiar with TTS and Google site. After several meetings, teachers were asked to make their own listening material and put it in Google site. Then, teachers delivered the prepared listening material to students. Finally, interviewed was done after several meeting using TTS listening material.

Findings and Discussion

Most of the teachers respond positive toward integration ICT in English language learning. They stated that the integration Text to Speech and Google site help them in preparing material to be delivered in the classroom. Text to Speech and Google Site are considered as an accessible and easy program to be used as the learning assistance.

“I think TTS will help me preparing listening material because it's quite accessible for both teacher and learners. Not to mention, we can evaluate the material we have given to our students” - Teacher A-

“Google Site is a very good aid in assisting teacher to deliver materials. It can be an efficient mean to present the material, submit tasks, and provide feedback for both teacher and learners. The layout is clean, minimalist, and pretty handy so basically everyone can use it” -Teacher A-

“This is the first time for me to use Google site and it is interesting. It is a good way in delivering material especially in online service. It is easy to be used and I can create my own online class by using Google site. I can put my learning objective and also the material there, even I can create a good visual for a web like, additionally it can be accessed whenever and wherever by my students, so distance won’t be a problem anymore” –Teacher D-

EFL teachers also confirm that TTS may help their students improving their listening comprehension skill since TTS and Google site are easy to be accessed, so students may have more time to learn English independently. Additionally, by integrating ICT during the learning process, they think that it can boost students’ enthusiasm toward the given lesson.

“I think the students will benefit in a way that they can have the access to the materials and train themselves independently. Moreover, integrating this kind of ICT form in learning may boost their enthusiasm regarding to the lesson given” –Teacher B-

“the audio is a native like listening material, so by using TTS I can help my students to be familiar with spoken standard English, then I think it can help them in improving their listening skill”-Teacher D-

In terms of the output of the TTS program, most of EFL teachers said that it can be used for teaching listening comprehension. The output is already like native speaker especially the pronunciation of every single word. Teachers may choose the speakers, even they may choose the spoken English dialect that may lead to the various type of the audio or output.

“in terms of pronunciation, the output produced by TTS is already native like and the audio is also clear” –Teacher A-

“anyone can choose what accent they want to have from this application, so

they can have the native ones as well” –Teacher C-

Besides, they also mentioned that the output of TTS program corresponded to the classroom needs. TTS lets them create listening material which is appropriate with the learning syllabus include its competence and objective.

“I can create my own material which will appropriate with the syllabus”-Teacher F-

Moreover, the output of TTS leads teachers and students to get the appropriate pronunciation. Teachers also stated that TTS output appropriate to students’ English proficiency and their daily live situation.

“It is the first time for me to use this program, and it is very useful. It helps me in preparing listening material, and I also can make it based on the syllabus and my students’ English competence, it is also easy to be used” –Teacher C-

Furthermore, while using TTS in creating listening material and deliver it using Google site, EFL teachers also found some weakness that is being problem in integrating TTS and Google site in learning process. The first weakness of TTS is the way of the output producing system, since teachers need to get right pronunciation, some typos might be a problem, because TTS only convert words to sound without any confirmation whether the typed word is correct or not. Besides, for several text such as narrative text or conversation text, TTS can’t produce a good intonation to be considered as natural output for listening comprehension, additionally TTS can’t produce appropriate tone for some punctuations such as question mark. These weaknesses make the output of TTS become less interesting because the tone is not various.

“Although TTS output already spoken by native speaker, and already native like listening product but sometimes for

several kinds of text, it is a little bit strange to listen to it. When we want to make conversation using this program, the intonation of speaker is kind of flat, so it doesn't sound natural, it can reduce students' attention and less interested in joining the class. Additionally, when there are some punctuations, the app can't interpret the appropriate intonation for those punctuations"-Teacher E-

"The weakness of TTS is the speaker's tone and voice doesn't vary that much so it can confuse the listener." -Teacher B-

While preparing the listening materials, EFL teachers also found some technical problem related to TTS and Google site integration. They did not find advanced setting for better output in TTS program, besides they also find it difficult in uploading the material to Google site since they need to upload it first in Google Drive. Moreover, when students find problems while listening, there is no chat bar that can be used for contacting the teacher and friends in order to solve students' problem by discussion.

"it doesn't have advanced setting for intonation, or event a setting that can help me to put some backsound for making better output, it doesn't speak appropriate intonation for punctuations. There is no setting to make it into MP3 directly" -Teacher E-

"when I want to upload my prepared material, I need to use my Google drive, so it kind of take time, I need to upload it in Gdrive then I upload it again to my Google site, there is no direct button to transfer my material to Google site" -Teacher D-

"what I found is kind of technical problem such as when my students want to have the audio from the Google site, they need to download it first, they can't listen to it directly from the Google site, moreover material that we upload sometimes cannot be opened. Then, when they find any problem during the online learning process, there is no such kind of chat bar that can help them to

have discussion with their friends or me as their teacher. We may say that this Google site promote one way learning"-Teacher B-

The findings show that teachers give positive respond toward the use of Text to Speech in English language learning and also the support of Google site as the delivering media. Most of them stated that Text to Speech program may help them in teaching listening by using native like listening material. They consider that the output of TTS program is qualified enough to be used as the listening material. The developed material should be relevant to students' experiences and background, their target need, and their effective needs (Graves, 2000; Aryuliva Adnan, 2014). Besides, the Text to Speech program also lets them creating material based on the given syllabus and curriculum. This finding appropriate with criteria for developing material which is the material should have the relationship with the curriculum used (Nunan, 2009; Adnan 2014). Meanwhile, due to the use of Google site as the delivering media, they consider that it is useful to be used since it can help them in creating their online class, so the effect is letting their students accessing the material where ever they are.

Furthermore, the integrating of Text to Speech program and Google site lets EFL teachers to integrate technology, pedagogy, content, and their knowledge. The integration of those components may help them in improving their own professionalism. Teaching without following the development of technology may cause the teachers left behind from their students. Adding technology to the existing teaching and content domain is not the real meaning of a good teaching, it is more about the introduction of technology causes the representation of a new concept and requires developing a sensitivity to dynamic (Matthew J. Koehler, Punya Mishra, 2005). A new concept of teaching is important to be considered since the education environment is dynamically changed. The improvement of

technology should be beneficial for teachers and students. Besides using technology only, teachers need to develop pedagogical understanding when they would like integrate technology in their teaching in order to benefit students, so then they will be able to integrate pedagogical, content of their teaching, and technology which will be developed through their experience in using technology (Matthew J. Koehler, Punya Mishra, 2005).

In terms of the problem or weakness while using Text to Speech and Google site. The findings show that the output of TTS program is similar to native speaker since it can produce correct pronunciation although sometimes when the speed is reduced, the tone of the output become less natural. The reduced speed actually may help students in improving their listening comprehension (Griffiths, 1990; Zhao, 1997). It may happen because the reduced speed may give students time to comprehend what speakers say. It lets them processing the given information to get better understanding. But unfortunately, during the reducing speed, it may cause the monotony in the TTS output. Sha (2010) argues that if the speed of the output being reduced, all vowels and some consonants are strained; yet voiceless consonants remain unaffected, then it may cause the quality of the output become less natural. While for the Google site, the main problem is about technical problem such as there is no chat bar for discussing and sometimes they find it difficult in uploading the listening material since they have to upload it in Google drive first.

Conclusion

This research is aimed to know EFL teachers' perception toward the integrating Text to Speech and Google site during language learning especially for listening comprehension section. EFL teachers give positive response toward these two learning aids. They think that TTS program makes teachers be able to create their own listening material based on the students need or be

appropriate with the provided syllabus. EFL teachers consider that TTS is very useful to be used in teaching listening comprehension since it can produce correct pronunciation that may help students in improving their listening comprehension skill. Moreover the use of Google site also consider beneficial since it lets teachers creating their own online class which can be accessed by students whenever and wherever they want.

Although both TTS and Google site consider beneficial, there are some problems faced by EFL students while using those two teaching aid. The main problem for the TTS output is the audio which will be less natural if the speed was reduced or if there are some punctuation which cannot be converted to speech, so it leads to the monotony of the sound. While for Google site's problem faced by teachers are there is no chat bar that can be used for online forum and while uploading the listening material, they cannot directly upload it, EFL teachers should upload the material in Google drive first then re-upload it to Google site.

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