THE USE OF AN ONLINE LEARNING SITE 'RANDALL'S ESL' IN TEACHING LISTENING

Puji Lestari[1], Lambok Hermanto Sihombing[2]
[1]Indraprasta University, Indonesia
[2]President University, Indonesia
puji.indraprasta@gmail.com

ABSTRACT

Learning a language, especially English is of the utmost importance because it is not only a widely-spoken tongue but also one that could assist students in their future careers. However, some students in Indonesia continue to believe that learning English is difficult as they are expected to be able to master four fundamental skills which are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. In this study, the authors aim to analyze how Randall's ESL website could be used as one of the options for teachers and students to enhance their English listening skills. The authors utilized a qualitative methodology, and the dataset was obtained from the official "Randall's ESL" website. The authors used Alexander Fedorov's Media Education philosophy. The authors also drew data from other sources, such as journal articles and conference proceedings, to support the research. This study revealed that "Randall's ESL" was one of the most successful options for enhancing students' listening skills and teachers' instructional practices.

Keywords*: Listening Skill, Media Education, Teaching*

INTRODUCTION

Language is an essential means of communication through which we express our emotions and ideas to others. English is the most widely spoken and influential language in the world, and its significance cannot be disputed (Alzamil, 2021). People from both English-speaking and non-English-speaking nations use and study English as an international language. In Indonesia, English is a foreign language with a different pronunciation from Indonesian. Due to these discrepancies, many elementary-level English learners experience trouble (Sundari, 2018). A language is an indispensable tool of communication by which we express our perceptions and emotions to others (Nishanthi, 2018). English is the most extensively used and influential language globally, and its importance cannot be contested (Nishanthi, 2018). Learning English is an obligation and need for Indonesians in the modern day (Ariansyah, 2021). The period of globalization can be regarded as a worldwide process in which the reach of modernity has expanded to encompass all matters that involve the evolution of the times. Learners of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) must regularly listen to the English language to

communicate effectively (Darti, D., & Asmawati, 2017). Therefore, English proficiency is required. However, there are still a significant number of individuals from diverse backgrounds who find it challenging to acquire these foreign languages. The position of English as a foreign language that is distinct from a second language and a first language is one of the many variables that make it difficult to study English (Rintaningrum, 2018).

Various circumstances make it harder for some individuals to learn English, or one could say that these variables hinder the development of English in Indonesia. Among these factors are English is neither a native language nor the first language at birth. Some Indonesians were exposed to the Indonesian language and their respective regional languages from birth. Then, each individual has a unique background. Some parents are genuinely illiterate in English, as not every parent is also fluent in English. Therefore, our parents do not introduce us to English or diminish our English education. Aside from it, some rural residents have difficulty accessing sources of knowledge regarding the skills required to understand and speak English well (Ariansyah, 2021).

According to (Saraswaty, 2018) she argues that listening is essential to everyday life. People listen for various reasons, including amusement, education, and informational needs. Languages are vital for acquiring ideas and knowledge, as well as for achieving success in interpersonal communication. However, many students need help to exploit these opportunities due to listening class-related learning challenges (Saraswaty, 2018).

There are four basic English skills when students learn English language. They are listening, speaking, reading, and writing. Listening is the most neglected and forgotten in second language schools among the other four abilities. Therefore, teachers disregard this skill and teach it haphazardly. In language teaching and learning, proficiency is typically defined as the capacity to speak and write in the target language. Listening and reading skills are positioned second. The difficult nature of the listening skill may be a contributing factor to this circumstance

(Djabbarova, 2020). Listening is the most crucial and often used language skill in real-world circumstances and a fundamental aspect of second language acquisition (hereafter, SLL). Therefore, instruction in listening comprehension (LC) is required to aid students in making the transition from classroom language to natural language more efficiently. In other words, developing general communication skills and English language proficiency is essential (Hwaider, 2017).

Listening is an invisible process, making it difficult to articulate. Listening is, in the broadest definition, the act of hearing. Understanding a foreign language requires a sophisticated network of mental processes that are not visible to the human eye. Numerous characteristics of listening comprehension have become evident (Rost, 2013). These components include the following:

1. Receptive : Receive the speaker's words, comprehend the speaker's notion, and receive the speaker's transfer of images, impressions, and ideas.

2. Constructive : Create, represent, and capture the speaker's mental state.

3. Collaborative : Respond to the speaker's words, indicating which concepts are understandable and acceptable.

4. Transformative : Create meaning through participation, empathy, and creativity (Rost, 2013).

Modern approaches to teaching listening skills include interactive exercises and multimedia materials. The greatest way to acquire or enhance listening skills is through easy and entertaining activities emphasizing the learning process rather than the result (Djabbarova, 2020). Furthermore, technological advancement has benefited language learning at various educational levels (Sari & Wahyudin, 2019). The education sector's quality has increased through the application of technology. The development must be applied in order to meet and balance the requirements of this technology approach in order to advance it. In 4.0 era, technology has produced educational consequences and responses (Ping & Maniam, 2015). Almost all students in developing and developed nations are enthusiastic about and proficient

with technology. In addition, the role of learning media in the learning and teaching process is an essential element of the educational landscape. Learning media could be utilized to transmit a message from sender to recipient to stimulate students' ideas, emotions, attention, and interests to learn (Tafonao, 2018).

To enhance students' comprehension in listening English, the students and teacher can use Randall's ESL website. Since 1998, Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab has provided ESL and EFL students with online listening comprehension assignments. The activities in Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab emphasize the comprehension of daily English at three different levels depending on the content, voices, vocabulary, and natural speed. Included are the voices of adults, adolescents, and children. Randall has designed many additional ESL listening tasks to enhance your comprehension, speaking, vocabulary, and cultural knowledge (Randall's ESL Cyber Listening Lab - For English Students, 2019).

In this study, the authors utilized Alexander Fedorov's concept of Media Education. The development of information technologies and new electronic media has altered the classifications of traditional educational media taxonomies: new technologies change educational practices and revitalize their application (Peraya & Rickenmann, 2006). The objectives of media education may vary depending on the specific topic and objectives of a class, the age of the students, the theoretical underpinning, etc. Despite this, life reveals that many media instructors can, in some manner, determine their most crucial objectives with relative clarity (Fedorov, 2001).

Hence, in this study, the authors focus on how the students can improve their listening skill through an on online learning site ESL Randall's as learning listening is not easy because they must understand the spoken language from a native speaker.

MATERIALS AND METHOD

This study utilized a qualitative approach. The authors analyzed how Randall's ESL website used as a learning platform to enhance student's listening abilities. To support this analysis, researchers applied a qualitative approach and Media Education concept from Alexander Fedorov. There were some stages that we completed. First, the authors began the analysis by introducing the features in Randall's ESL web to determine what the students can discover and learn using from the web. Second, the authors connected the object of the study with Media Education hypothesis. The last, the authors made a conclusion.

RESULT AND DISCUSSION

To analyze how Randall's ESL web could be used as a digital platform to help the students' in comprehending the listening part, the researchers introduced the features of Randall's ESL web in Figure 1.

Figure 1. ESL Lab features

Source : https://www.esl-lab.com/

In Figure 1, we can see that Randall's ESL web has various features. They provide us, the teachers and students with the Listening Activities with graded skills. They provide us with Easy level, Intermediate, and Difficult level. This graded skill is helpful either for teachers or the students. The teachers can assign the students to listen to the audio based on their level in the class. Then, for the students, they can access and use this website as medium in improving their listening competency. It means, they can be autonomous learners as they improve

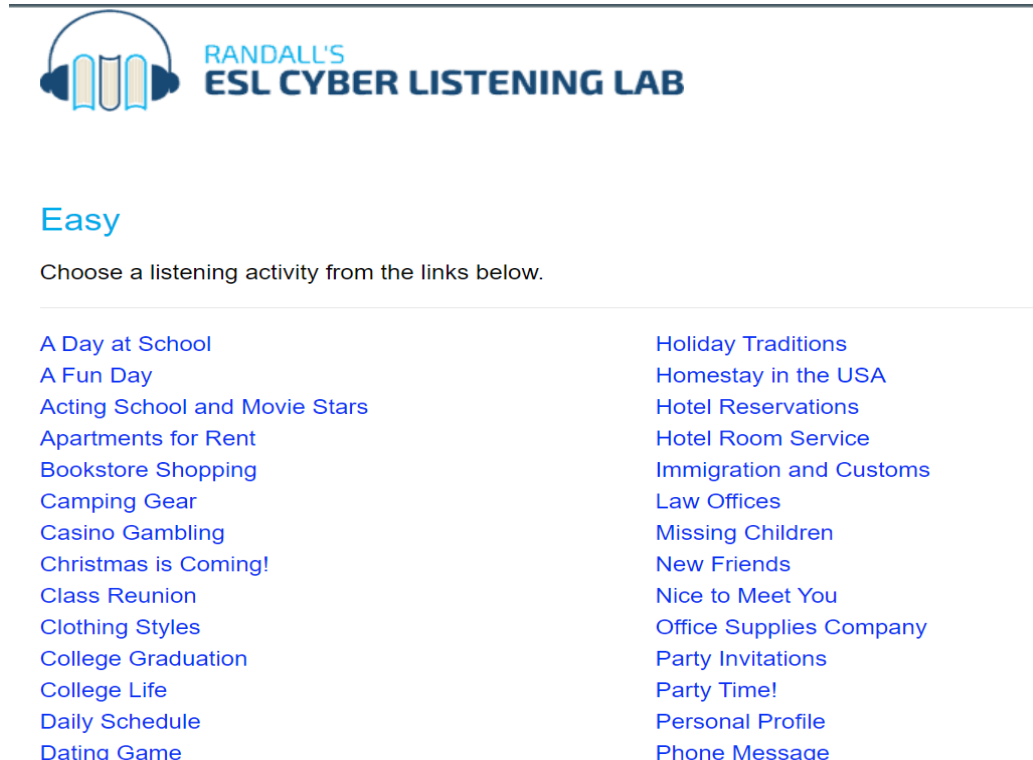their ability themselves based on their needs. Another variety of Randall's ESL web is shown in Figure 2.

Figure 2. Easy level in Randall's ESL

Source : https://www.esl-lab.com/

In Figure 2, we can see that Randall's ESL provides various topics in every level. For instance, in Easy level, they have provided the topics such as A Day at School, A Fun Day, and many more. This topic is essentially important so that the teachers could choose the best level for their students. As cited in Fedorov (2001), he said that depending on the lesson's exact topic and objectives, the students' age, and the theoretical underpinning, media education objectives may vary. For further observation, we view that Randall's ESL web does not only provide topics but also various themes with different cultural context.

The following observation is shown in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Pre-Listening Activity

Source : https://www.esl-lab.com/

In Figure 3, the researchers took a sample of one topic entitled "College Life". This topic is taken in Easy level. From this topic, Randall's ESL web has provided us with Pre-Listening activity which focuses on understanding the idioms. The idioms that the students can learn are :

"**a walking encyclopedia**" = someone who seems to know everything
"*My roommate would do well on a trivia game show. He's a walking encyclopedia*."

"**have the right stuff**" = have the needed skills to succeed
"*Susan has the right stuff to get into any school she chooses* " (https://www.esl-lab.com/).

From those samples, the students can get new vocabulary to learn. As supported by (Brown, H. D., & Lee, 2015) pre-listening is necessary as it is part of a schemata-activating process that can help the learner prepare for listening. They can have vocabulary, ascertain background knowledge essential for comprehension, gain a hint about the topic, and investigate any contextual factors that might otherwise make listening challenging. Thus, the researchers view that

pre-listening activity that has been provided by Randall's ESL could give more exposure for the students.
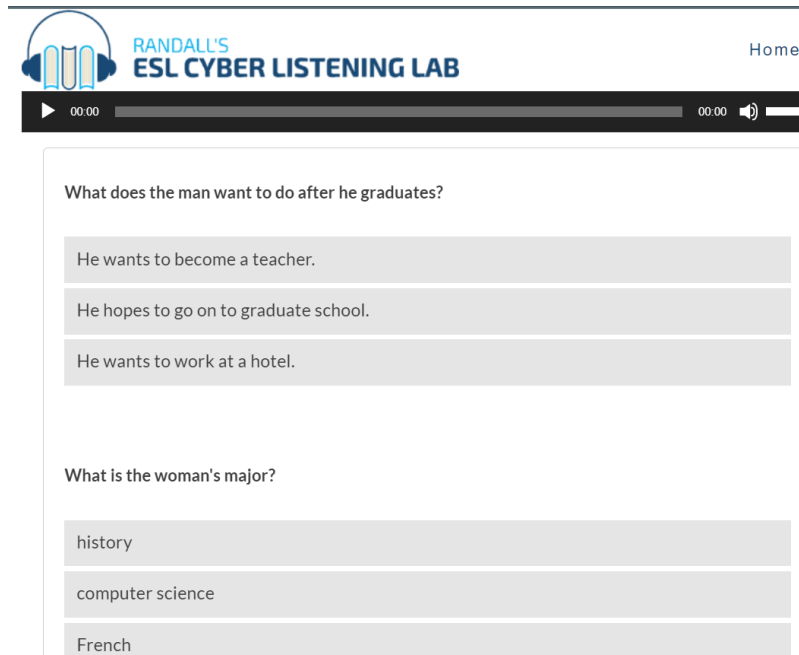
The next analysis is in Figure 4.

Figure 4. While-Listening activity

Source : https://www.esl-lab.com/

In Figure 4, we can see some questions to solve. In While-Listening activity, the teacher can ask the students to scan the questions and answers. After that, they will start listening to the audio. According to (Brown, H. D., & Lee, 2015) while-activity is the second phase that susceptible to neglect. We may believe that simply instructing our students to "listen to the audio or video" we are about to play is adequate. Not true! Effective pedagogy will give students something to "do" while listening, such as taking notes, filling out a chart, noting a sequence of events, listening for the main idea, and listening for specific details. Listening is an active process, and ensures that our students actively engage in something while listening (Brown, H. D., & Lee, 2015).

The last observation is in Figure 5.

Vocabulary Practice

Do the vocabulary quizzes using the words from the conversation for more practice:

- Mixed-Up Sentence
- Multiple-Choice Questions
- Sentence and Vocabulary Matching
- Gap-fill Exercise

Post-Listening Exercise

Interview another student about the topics below and report your findings to the class:

- online education programs and graduate schools
- entrance requirements and exams
- classroom environment
- teacher-student relationship
- student housing
- part-time employment
- club activities

Figure 4. Post-Listening activity

Source : https://www.esl-lab.com/

In Figure 5, we can see that Randall's ESL web provides us with Post-Listening activities. In Post-Listening, we can assign the students to interview their friends about online education, classroom environment, student housing and many more. Besides that, when we have additional time, we can also assign the students to do Vocabulary Practice at the end of the class. Basically, this Vocabulary Practice is essential to be taught at the very beginning. However, if the time is still enough, the researchers view that game can also be played to make the students more engaged.

In a closer observation, the researchers view that teachers can create their own activities. However, we cannot avoid that technology in education also helps and involves a culture of involvement with media, creative and communicative abilities, critical thinking, perception, interpretation, analysis, and evaluation of media texts, in addition to various forms of self-expression utilizing media technology (Federov, 2003).

CONCLUSION

Technology advancement helps teaching and learning process more interactive and effective. Randall's ESL web is one of the key solutions for English education. The students not only learn the content of the audio but also the issue in any cultural context. Another benefit of using Randall's ESL web is that they provide educators with pre-listening, while and post-listening activity. As the teachers have been familiar with the features of Randall's ESL web, they can assign their students to practice their listening outside the class. As a result, the students could be more autonomous.

REFERENCES

Alzamil, J. (2021). Listening Skills: Important but Difficult to Learn. *Arab World English Journal*, *12*(3). https://doi.org/10.24093/awej/vol12no3.25

Ariansyah, A. (2021). *Why is learning Engslish difficult?*

Brown, H. D., & Lee, H. (2015). *Teaching by principles : An interactive approach to language pedagogy*. Pearson Education.

Darti, D., & Asmawati, A. (2017). Analyzing students' difficulties toward listening comprehension. *English, Teaching, Learning, and Research Journal*. https://doi.org/https://doi.org/10.24252/Eternal.V32.2017.A9

Djabbarova, F. O. (2020). Modern methods of teaching listening skills. *Science and Education*, *1*(Special Issue 2).

Federov, A. (2003). *Media Education and Media Literacy: Experts' Opinions.* The Thesis of Thessaloniki, First Version.

Hwaider, S. M. (2017). Problems of Teaching the Listening Skill to Yemeni EFL Learners. *International Journal of Scientific and Research Publications*, *7*(6).

Nishanthi, R. (2018). Important of learning English in today world. *Important of Learning English in Today World*, *3*(1).

Peraya, D., & Rickenmann, R. (2006). New perspectives for media education, theory and practice. *Educational Media International*, *21*(1). https://doi.org/10.1080/0952398980350213

Ping, N. S., & Maniam, M. (2015). The Effectiveness of Facebook Group Discussions on Writing Performance: A Study in Matriculation College. *International Journal of Evaluation and Research in Education (IJERE)*, *4*(1). https://doi.org/10.11591/ijere.v4i1.4489

Rintaningrum, R. (2018). lnvestigating Reasons Why Listening in English is Difficult: Voice from Foreign language Learners. *Asian EFL Journal*.

https://www.researchgate.net/profile/KhadijahMaming/publication/329625974_The_Asian_EFL_Journal/links/5c12766c299bf13   9c756b1d3/The-Asian-EFL-Journal.pdf.

Rost, M. (2013). Teaching and researching listening, second edition. In *Teaching and Researching Listening, Second Edition*. https://doi.org/10.4324/9781315833705

Saraswaty, D. R. (2018). LEARNERS' DIFFICULTIES & STRATEGIES IN LISTENING COMPREHENSION. *English Community Journal*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.32502/ecj.v2i1.1003

Sari, F. M., & Wahyudin, A. Y. (2019). Undergraduate students' perceptions toward blended learning through instagram in english for business class. *International Journal of Language Education*, *3*(1). https://doi.org/10.26858/ijole.v1i1.7064

Sundari, W. (2018). The Difficulties of Learning English for the Beginner English Learners. *Culturalistics: Journal of Cultural, Literary, and Linguistic Studies*, *2*(1). https://doi.org/10.14710/culturalistics.v2i1.2050

Tafonao, T. (2018). PERANAN MEDIA PEMBELAJARAN DALAM MENINGKATKAN MINAT BELAJAR MAHASISWA. *Jurnal Komunikasi Pendidikan*, *2*(2). https://doi.org/10.32585/jkp.v2i2.113