

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Research Background

Disabled students need special treatment while learning because they are different from normal students. A study conducted by Gkora and Karabatzaki (2023), shows that students with disabilities would lack perseverance in classroom activities, showing less motivation and this will affect their performance, because motivation affect students' learning process and learning achievement. Stahopoulou and Siskou (2023) stated that disabled students are actually trying to get good results in learning, but due to repetitive failures in the process, they will likely be demotivated, and unable to set their learning purpose and achievement.

For visually impaired students (VIS), the situation is likely the same with disabled students. Visual impairment is when people have their eyesight partially or completely lost (Gunadi & Binawan, 2023). VIS have difficulties in seeing, even unable to see letters. The loss of vision makes them need special treatment and equipment. They also faces some challenges like the difficulties when accessing the materials, and if they do not have the access to the resources related to the material, they may feel discouraged and become less motivated when learning. (Nabila & Delvi, 2023; Pratiwi & Rahayu, 2020). Limited learning media is also an issue for VIS. Because textbooks, images, flashcards, and any other visual aids which are commonly used in conventional teaching methods are not suitable for them (Belova, 2017).

Despite the limitations, certain learning media can be used to assist the learning process of visually impaired learners. Learning media for VIS such as audiobooks, assistive devices, interactive games, tactile, and braille. These can facilitate VIS while learning. It is important to collaborate with special education teachers when designing the learning media for visually impaired students because they know the situations and the difficulties occurring in the teaching and learning process. A good learning media is a media that can convey learning material effectively, increase students' engagement, and promote a comfortable learning atmosphere (Ratminingsih, 2016). Promoting students' enthusiasm can be done by using innovative learning media such as multimedia-based flipbooks that combine text, images, video, and audio, are easily accessible anytime and anywhere, and are able to present material in a practical manner, thereby increasing interest and learning activities (Sujana and Susiliastini, 2022).

One of the learning media for visually impaired students is audiobooks. A study conducted by Fansury et al., (2019) shows the usage of audiobooks as learning media for VIS in English help learners in the learning process. Audiobooks also increase student motivation, because it makes learning much easier, and the materials are easily accessed from the audiobook. Audiobooks can be life changing learning media for children with visual impairment. It is also in line with visually impaired students' auditory learning style. As a result, the students feel learning is much easier (Guha, 2020). Using audio-visual medium also can improve students' ability to use technology effectively (Citra Wibawa et al., 2023)

The reason why audiobooks are effective for visually impaired students is because they are relying on their smartphone, and also their auditory input when learning. Instruction through virtual networks has a positive effect on the learning achievement for VIS. It would be useful for special education teachers and learners who want to use smartphones for learning purposes (Allahi et al., 2020).

Also, the students nowadays are already familiar with technology, so it should be easy to guide them when using digital based learning media. Because today's generation (Gen Z), born in the era where everything is digitalized and based on the internet, including education. The undergoing transformation from traditional to digitalized educational systems will serve the current and next generations which were born as digital experts (Kohnová & Papula, 2022).

Hence, vision limitation for VIS forces them to learn auditory and orally because that is the most necessary skill in English for VIS (Farani & Aryanti, 2011; Khadijah et al., 2020). One of the major skills needed in order to comprehend English is listening skill. In the early stages of learning, listening skill has to be prioritized compared to other skills (Ratminingsih, 2017). Hikmah et al., (2021) stated that VIS rely on auditory input when learning, in other words listening is essential for VIS. Listening skill is crucial as it is used daily when communicating, or understanding information in different contexts (Deregozü, 2021; Diora & Rosa, 2020). In the same vein Jyoti (2020), stated that students need to practice continuously in order to improve their listening skill in order to be better in communicating.

Without listening skill, students will not be able to acquire language as listening activities provide language input. This was backed up by Nabihev and Idiyev (2022), who stated that listening activities towards the target language improves language ability. It helps the learners to acquire vocabulary, word stress, pronunciation, and syntax. The understanding of messages delivered can be based on intonation and accent, also tone of voice, and the only way to understand that is through listening.

Another essential skill in English is speaking skill. Since speaking is crucial in communication, it represents the knowledge and ability to use the target language to talk about different topics, express ideas, thoughts, and feelings.

Communication skill is key to success in their respective fields. Without a doubt speaking skill is a must if we want to communicate well in a professional and educational setting (Parupalli Srinivas Rao, 2019). This backed up Akhter et al., (2020), stating that speaking is important in this globalization era to succeed in the desired fields. Communication cannot be done effectively without speaking skill. As English is used all over the world, there is a need for learners to acquire the communication skills to succeed in their respective fields. And the classroom is the ideal place to obtain speaking skill (Malavika & Muthukrishnan, 2021). In the era of technology, EFL teachers and students find it easier to teach and learn English, including speaking, because technology makes it easier to share and access materials, reduces anxiety, and provides more opportunities to practice. (Utami & Santosa, 2023)

But overall, special education schools still have limited learning material to teach VIS. Based on the observation that take place in SLB 1 Tabanan, the students learning media are braille, YouTube, WhatsApp, and utilizing Talkback features from students' smartphones. Special education teachers are struggling to deliver the material towards the students because most of the used media are visual based media, which is inappropriate for students who are visually impaired. If teachers still apply conventional learning methods of lectures such as only sending video materials from YouTube and sending PowerPoint to WhatsApp groups, these can affect students' learning outcome and their learning engagement (Simamora & Oktaviani, 2020). On the other hand, students need a new media to improve their learning experience, because students also mentioned the difficulties of using braille, and the monotony of using YouTube to access learning materials.

In this case the researcher has a strong desire to develop audiobooks for 12th grade visually impaired students to assist the learning activities as interactive multimedia can increase students' engagement in learning (Jampel et al., 2018). The development will be based on the first-semester learning objectives pointed out in Kurikulum Merdeka. The product will be developed by using Heyzine Flipbook, an online platform that has audio features in a form of flipbook. It also has additional features with its keyboard navigation support, ease of access and editing of the audiobooks, and aligned with accessibility tools such as TalkBack, which makes it accessible for visually impaired peers. Studies also showed the effect of using audiobooks for VIS. The implementation of audiobooks can help students to achieve their learning goals. Not only that, students gain motivation when learning using audiobook because it simplifies students' learning (Fansury et al., 2019). Students also can control the pace of their learning process, and address their auditory learning styles, which make their learning activities much easier (Guha, 2020).

1.2 Problem Identification

The challenges faced by special education teachers and visually impaired students (VIS) are well-known, such as lack of accessible learning resources (Gunadi & Binawan, 2023), lack of educational training for the special education teachers who handled VIS (Sohaib et al., 2021), teachers need to convert the learning media into form of audio for the VIS (Zahra et al., 2022), which is the main reason why students with visual impairments are the main focus on this research. For VIS, learning requires unique approaches. For example, the use of Braille learning materials, and access to assistive technology. There are many obstacles when teaching disabled students, especially when it comes to assisting VIS in their learning process.

Selecting and identifying suitable learning materials is needed to fulfill their needs. Because of their condition, learning material that works best for them is audio- based material. The benefit of audio-based material is that the explanation only relies on auditory senses, which make it easier for VIS to comprehend. Nowadays, smartphones are not only used for communication and entertainment, but also can be used for education purposes. Smartphones are an important tool aid for VIS in education as they use it regularly to access materials. Even though some of them face obstacles in using technology, accessing materials and information has become more inclusive with features like screen readers and voice search on smartphones.

The use of innovative learning resources, such as Quizizz, educational videos from YouTube, and WhatsApp Group, facilitates education at SLB 1 Tabanan, Bali. Based on the observation, VIS in SLB needs special learning materials tailored for them to match their needs, especially in English learning due to several problems such as boredom in learning activities due to monotonous media, inappropriate learning media that supporting students' auditory senses in learning, as teachers mainly use visual based media while teaching. Creating appropriate audio learning materials will be a stepping stone for improving their language skills. Audio based materials are beneficial for VIS because it is simply the appropriate form of learning materials for them due to their condition (Khadijah et al., 2020). Hence, VIS at SLB 1 Tabanan needs audio learning material media that assist their learning process, and audiobooks are one of the best options. VIS at SLB 1 Tabanan greatly benefits from the use of audiobooks.

Audiobooks offer better access to learning resources for students who learn more through auditory senses. Also, students can listen to proper intonation and emphasis through audiobooks, which helps them understand linguistic nuances and contexts. Audiobooks provide VIS the freedom to control their learning pace (Guha, 2020).

This encourages independent learning and allow flexibility in time management (Fansury et al., 2019) Previous studies develop audiobooks with the ADDIE model, for example by Saputra et al., (2022) develop audio-based learning media, showing that a systematic instructional model can enhance students' understanding and accessibility. Research by Sholeha et al., (2024) developed an audiobook for grade seventh with intellectual disabilities shows that it can enhance students understanding and retention of the material. Evaluation, however, only occurred in later stages.

Although studies show that audiobooks are beneficial for visually impaired students, ADDIE sequential order makes it less efficient in inclusive education settings as it require iterative development, where revision and suggestion will be incorporated during the development process (Dewi et al., 2024). This research will use SAM Two Phase instead of ADDIE for its iterative and rapid instructional development, the Evaluate-Design-Develop cycle in this model supports continuous revisions based on feedback (Allen, 2012). However, the lack of usage of SAM in developing learning media for VIS adds novelty to this research. Expert validation is also important to ensure the suitability of the material (Buitrago et al., 2023; Tomlinson, 2011). Therefore, the problem identified is the lack of structured and validated English audio media development specifically for VIS in Indonesia.

1.3 Research Questions

- a. What challenges do English teachers and visually impaired students at SLB N 1 Tabanan perceive regarding the potential use of audiobooks for learning English before they are introduced?
- b. How are the audiobooks that meet the needs of visually impaired students in English language education developed?
- c. How is the quality of the audiobook for visually impaired students at SLB 1 Tabanan?

1.4 Research Objectives

- a. To point out the obstacles that occurred in the teaching and learning process at SLB 1 Tabanan and the potential use of audiobooks.
- b. To design and develop appropriate audiobooks that can facilitate visually impaired students in learning English.
- c. To evaluate the quality of the audiobook in facilitating visually impaired students' English learning process.

1.5 Limitation of the Research

This study focuses on the development of English learning material for teaching English for VIS grade 12th at SLB 1 Tabanan in the form of an audiobook. The materials will be delivered through Heyzine Flipbook, an interactive online platform that will have certain technical limitations, such as reliance on internet connectivity and compatibility with specific devices. The study will evaluate the quality of the materials based on expert judgment, and will not directly measure its effectiveness on students' learning outcomes.

1.6 Research Significance

This study is important as it give several insights for both other researchers and readers. There are two significances of this study:

1.6.1 Theoretical Significance

This study main focus is on developing the learning material in form of audiobook for visually impaired students (VIS). As it poses promising benefits for visually impaired students. This research is expected to assist teachers, researchers, and education media developers to develop effective learning tools.

The results of this study should enrich references for the development of inclusive English learning theories and practices for visually impaired students.

1.6.2 Practical Significance

1. For Teacher

This study presents alternative and accessible learning media to assist English learning for visually impaired students. The developed audiobook will assist teachers when explaining materials towards the students and minimize the usage of visual based media. Teachers might use the findings in this study as a reference in making a learning media for visually impaired students

2. For Students

The audiobook which is tailored for visually impaired students will improve their learning experience as it is in line with students' auditory senses and encourages independent learning. It also provides easy access for the students, so they can study anytime and anywhere they want.

3. For Other Researcher

This study might act as reference for other researchers that are interested in developing audio-based learning media. This method used in this study might be a groundwork to other researchers with similar interests.