



Learning Challenges and Perceptions Toward Audiobook-Based English Learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan

Ida Ayu Ketut Ariastini¹, I Putu Indra Kusuma¹, Ni Putu Astiti Pratiwi¹, I Ketut Trika Adi Ana¹

¹Universitas Pendidikan Ganesha, Bali, Indonesia
*ayu.ariastini@undiksha.ac.id

ABSTRACT

English learning for visually impaired students still faces various challenges, particularly due to the limited availability of learning media suited to their needs. This study aims to analyze the challenges and perceptions of teachers and visually impaired students toward the use of audiobooks in English learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan. This research was designed as a qualitative study, with data collected through interviews. Then, Miles and Huberman's theory is used in analysing data where data analysis consists of four parts: data collection, data reduction, data presentation, and conclusion drawing/verification. Researchers used interviews to collect data with one English teacher and four visually impaired students to obtain deeper insights into their learning challenges, experiences with existing media, and expectations of audiobook-based English learning. The study results are. First, teachers faced limitations in accessing and developing learning media, so they relied mainly on braille, WhatsApp voice notes, and the Merdeka Mengajar modules. Second, students experienced difficulties in using braille, felt bored with monotonous media, and required more varied and engaging audio-based resources. Third, both teachers and students expressed positive perceptions of audiobooks, considering them practical, flexible, and capable of enhancing learning motivation. They expected audiobooks with short duration, clear and expressive narration, bilingual content, and replayable features. The findings reinforce the importance of adopting inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered approaches in special education settings, particularly through the use of audiobooks.

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INTRODUCTION

English learning for visually impaired students still faces significant challenges. According to Gargiulo (2012) and Acheampong (2019), visual limitations hinder students' access to written information, which creates difficulties in acquiring language skills. This condition is further exacerbated by the lack of academic and social support experienced by visually impaired students, resulting in their low participation in English learning (Tahiri, 2023). In addition, English teachers in special schools often have limited mastery of specialized teaching strategies and rarely receive training in developing learning materials tailored to students' needs (Sohaib et al., 2021). Zahra et al. (2022) also found that teachers of visually impaired students are frequently burdened with converting visual materials into audio formats, a task that consumes time and reduces teaching effectiveness. Preliminary observations at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan revealed that English learning still relied heavily on braille books and YouTube videos. This means that visually impaired students encounter barriers because not all of them have sufficient braille reading skills, while YouTube videos emphasize visual aspects that do not support their needs. Such limited media variety leads to boredom, decreased motivation, and low student engagement (Guha, 2020; Gunadi, 2023). The implication of this condition is that the quality of English learning in special schools is hindered, affecting both teachers and students. Therefore, this study is interested in investigating the learning challenges faced by both students and teachers, as well as their perceptions of the teaching media used. The urgency of this study is to gain a deeper understanding of the obstacles encountered and to identify the need for more suitable learning media, thereby contributing to the development of inclusive education for visually impaired students in Indonesia.

Currently, the development of digital technology has opened new opportunities for providing inclusive learning media. Features such as screen readers, voice search, and audio-based educational platforms enable visually impaired students to learn more independently and flexibly (Kushariyadi et al., 2024). Technology supports inclusive learning by offering tools such as speech-to-text and adaptive interfaces that allow equal access to educational content regardless of disability. In this context, audiobooks have emerged as one of the most promising solutions. Guha (2020) emphasized that structured narration, clear articulation, and appropriate pacing in audiobooks greatly support the comprehension of visually impaired students. Other studies have also demonstrated that audiobooks improve students' reading, language comprehension, and even speaking skills, while simultaneously increasing their learning motivation (Imawan, 2019; Kocyigit et al., 2015). Sholeha et al. (2024) further showed that audiobooks enhanced memory retention and comprehension among students with special needs. Thus, the use of audiobooks in English learning is highly relevant as an alternative medium that corresponds to the sensory strengths of visually impaired students, while also fostering a more engaging, varied, and

inclusive learning environment.

In this case, the perceptions of teachers and students toward learning media play a vital role in determining the success of its implementation. Perception can be understood as the process by which individuals recognize, interpret, and make sense of stimuli, which in turn shapes their attitudes and responses (Omotayo et al., 2020). It can be said that if teachers and students hold positive perceptions of audiobooks, this medium has the potential to enhance engagement, motivation, and comprehension in English learning for visually impaired students. However, if perceptions are negative, the effectiveness of audiobooks may diminish despite their technological advantages. Previous studies have shown that students' positive perceptions of technology-based learning media encourage higher engagement and better participation in learning activities (Inaltekin, 2020). This indicates that perception is a crucial factor that cannot be overlooked, as it directly determines the suitability and success of a learning medium. To date, there has been no study in Indonesia that specifically investigates the perceptions of teachers and visually impaired students toward audiobooks in the context of English learning in special schools, making this an important area for further research. Although previous studies have explored assistive technology, audio-based learning, and challenges in English learning for visually impaired students, research focusing specifically on the combined perspectives of teachers and visually impaired students toward audiobooks in the Indonesian special school context is still very limited. Existing studies primarily discuss general technological tools, reading difficulties, or teacher challenges, but few emphasize audiobooks as a targeted medium for English learning.

Furthermore, most prior studies examine the benefits of audiobooks based on experimental or classroom-based implementation, while research exploring users' needs, expectations, and challenges before the development of audiobook materials remains scarce. This gap makes it necessary to understand how audiobooks are perceived by both educators and learners in real special-education settings, especially in Indonesia where accessible English learning media for visually impaired students remain limited. This study addresses this gap by providing qualitative insights that highlight learning barriers and audiobook expectations from both teacher and students.

With this research question, which is what are the learning challenges and the perceptions of teachers and visually impaired students toward the use of audiobooks in English learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan, this study aims to analyze the learning challenges and the perceptions of teachers and visually impaired students toward the use of audiobooks in English learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan. The use of audiobooks is expected to serve as an inclusive, practical, and flexible learning medium that can enhance accessibility, engagement, and learning motivation among visually impaired students. Furthermore, the findings of this study are expected to contribute to the

development of audio-based instructional materials that are relevant to the needs of students with special needs, as well as to provide references for teachers and special schools in integrating learning technologies that support inclusive education.

METHOD

This research was designed in the form of qualitative research that uses a case study research design. Qualitative research is research that describes phenomena. The type of qualitative research used in this research was a case study research design. A case study is a research that investigates phenomena in real life. The phenomena describe in this study Learning Challenges and Perceptions of Teacher and Visually Impaired Students Toward Audiobook-Based English Learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan, Bali. The study was conducted on visually impaired students of SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan, Bali. In this study, the researcher used interviews to collect data. Qualitative data analysis theory was used for data analysis there were four steps namely; Data collection, Data reduction, Data display, and Verification or Conclusion Drawing (Miles et al., 2014). In the data collection stage, the interviews were conducted with one English teacher and four visually impaired students. It is because to obtain deeper insights into their learning challenges, experiences with existing media, and expectations of audiobook-based English learning. During data reduction, irrelevant responses were eliminated, and the data were categorized according to the research focus: learning challenges and audiobook perceptions. The data were then displayed in the form of descriptive tables that summarize questions and responses. The presentation of data in this study is descriptive; no statistical or numerical analysis was used. Finally, in the conclusion drawing stage, the findings were verified and interpreted by linking them with relevant literature to answer the research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Results

Based on the data from the interview guide, this study found several responses from the teacher and visually impaired students regarding their learning challenges in English classes. The results of the interview can be seen in Table 1. Based on the result of the interview, it can be seen that both the teacher and the students experienced various obstacles in using existing media such as braille, WhatsApp voice notes, and YouTube, which often led to difficulties and boredom in learning.

Table 1. Result on Learning Challenges

Question	Response
How do you usually deliver material to visually impaired students?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher delivers material mainly through braille, WhatsApp voice notes, YouTube videos, and modules from Merdeka Mengajar (T) - Students usually access materials through braille books and smartphones (WhatsApp, YouTube, note-taking apps) (S).
What challenges do you face in providing appropriate learning materials?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher faces limitations in accessing and developing learning media, relying only on braille, WhatsApp voice notes, and teaching modules (T) - Students find braille difficult to use, feel bored with monotonous audio materials, and need more varied and engaging audio media (S)
How easy is it for you to obtain audiobooks or other audio materials?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher has tried using audiobooks, and students were enthusiastic, but access was limited so they could not be used regularly (T) - Audiobooks are rarely provided but are appreciated when available; students listen to stories and novels for fun and learning (S)
Are there any obstacles you face in using audiobooks?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - The teacher notes that lack of resources and time limits hinder consistent audiobook use (T) - The main challenge is understanding difficult content; students prefer audiobooks that can be replayed, not too fast, and simple enough to support comprehension (S)

Table 2. Interview Results on Audiobook Perceptions

Question	Response
What is the ideal duration for an audiobook?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - 3–5 minutes, not too long to keep students focused and avoid boredom (T) - Students prefer short duration with clear, repeatable content (S)
What kind of materials should be included in the audiobook?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Vocabulary from daily life, public places, short stories, activities, and simple conversations (T) - Students like stories and games, especially when tired, and also interactive questions with audio prompts (S)
What kind of voice or tone do you expect in the narration?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Clear, natural voice (not robotic), background music may be included but should not overpower (T) - Clear voice with appropriate intonation, bilingual narration (Indonesian for explanation, English for content) (S)
How should the audiobook be used in learning?	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - As a tool for both independent learning and classroom reinforcement; should support speaking and listening (T) - Students want audiobooks they can interact with (answering questions) as long as they are not too fast and can be replayed as needed (S)

Furthermore, based on the results of the interview sessions, there are several perceptions of the teacher and students toward the use of audiobooks. First, both

teacher and students agreed that audiobooks should be short in duration, around 3–5 minutes, with clear and repeatable content. This feature was considered important to keep students focused and to avoid boredom during the learning process. Second, they emphasized the importance of the audiobook content. The teacher suggested vocabulary from daily life, public places, short stories, and simple conversations, while the students expressed preferences for stories, games, and interactive questions to make the learning more engaging. Third, regarding delivery style, the teacher highlighted the need for a clear, natural voice with possible background music that does not overpower the narration, while the students expected expressive intonation and bilingual narration. In terms of usage, the teacher expected audiobooks to serve as tools for both independent learning and classroom reinforcement, while students hoped for interactive features that allowed them to participate and repeat the content according to their needs. These findings indicate that audiobooks are not only viewed positively but also considered highly relevant and adaptable to the specific needs of visually impaired learners.

Discussion

Based on the interview results regarding learning challenges, both the teacher and students face significant obstacles in learning English. The teacher was limited to using braille, WhatsApp voice notes, the Merdeka Mengajar modules, and YouTube videos, while students found braille difficult to understand and felt bored with monotonous media. These findings indicate that the availability of learning resources suitable for visually impaired students is still very restricted. This is consistent with the study of Gunadi (2023), which emphasized that visually impaired students still face difficulties in accessing appropriate learning resources. Similarly, Aftab et al. (2022) found that many special education teachers are not yet adequately trained to design audio-based media, leaving students dependent on conventional resources such as braille. Research by Zahra et al. (2022) also stressed the importance of converting learning materials into audio formats so that they can be more effectively accessed by visually impaired students. These challenges show that English learning for visually impaired students has not yet become fully inclusive. The available media tend to be repetitive and unengaging, which affects motivation and classroom participation. According to Tomlinson (2011), however, good learning materials should be engaging, relevant, and aligned with students' learning styles. In the case of visually impaired students, this means that audio media should be interactive, varied, and easy to access. This finding highlights the need to diversify English learning media in ways that better match the auditory strengths of visually impaired students. Teachers may consider using audiobooks as an alternative to inaccessible visual media, while schools should also provide opportunities for teacher development in creating audio-based learning resources.

Based on the interview results regarding perceptions of the teacher and student

toward the use of audiobook, both groups expressed positive attitudes toward this medium. The teacher regarded audiobooks as practical and flexible, supporting both classroom learning and independent study. Meanwhile, students expected audiobooks with clear, expressive, bilingual narration, short duration, and replayable features. These findings are consistent with Guha (2020), who demonstrated that audiobooks can enhance speaking skills and English comprehension among visually impaired students. Similarly, Kocyigit et al. (2015) found that audiobooks in foreign language instruction increased motivation and engagement for visually impaired learners. Imawan (2019) also highlighted the important role of audiobooks in improving reading comprehension and language proficiency through repeatable narration. Thus, the interview results strengthen the empirical evidence that audiobooks are not only seen as alternative media but are also highly relevant and well-suited to the learning needs of visually impaired students.

From a theoretical perspective, these results support Tomlinson's (2011) principles of material development, which emphasize that learning materials should be engaging, relevant, and suited to students' learning styles. Audiobooks designed with short duration, contextual content, and expressive narration clearly meet these criteria. Furthermore, audiobooks enable visually impaired students to participate more actively and independently in the learning process, which aligns with their auditory-based learning style. These findings suggest that audiobooks should be developed specifically for the needs of visually impaired students, not only to support listening but also to encourage speaking practice through interactive activities. Schools can also integrate audiobooks into the Merdeka Curriculum to provide more inclusive and motivating learning experiences.

In summary, this study shows that the challenges faced by teachers and visually impaired students in English learning are largely caused by the limited and monotonous nature of existing media such as braille, WhatsApp voice notes, and YouTube videos. These limitations reduce motivation and hinder active participation in the learning process. At the same time, the positive perceptions of both teachers and students toward audiobooks indicate that this medium can serve as a relevant and effective solution to address these issues. By incorporating audiobooks tailored to students' needs short in duration, with clear and expressive narration, bilingual content, and replayable features English learning at SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan has the potential to become more inclusive, engaging, and aligned with the auditory learning style of visually impaired students. This emphasizes that audiobooks are not only capable of overcoming current barriers but also create new opportunities for the development of audio-based media to support inclusive education in Indonesia.

CONCLUSIONS

Based on the data findings, English learning for visually impaired students at

SLB Negeri 1 Tabanan still faces significant challenges, particularly due to the limited and monotonous use of braille, WhatsApp voice notes, and YouTube videos. These constraints hinder students' engagement and reduce their learning motivation. However, both the teacher and students expressed positive perceptions toward the use of audiobooks, recognizing them as practical, flexible, and capable of enhancing motivation. The teacher emphasized that audiobooks should provide short, clear, and accessible materials that could be integrated into both independent and classroom learning. Similarly, the students expected audiobooks with expressive voices, bilingual narration, and replayable content to support their comprehension and participation. These expectations align with previous studies that highlight the effectiveness of audio-based learning for visually impaired students in improving listening comprehension, speaking skills, and overall engagement. Therefore, audiobooks hold strong potential as inclusive and effective alternative learning media for visually impaired students. Their systematic implementation can contribute not only to better English language acquisition but also to the advancement of inclusive education practices in Indonesia.

This study has several limitations that should be acknowledged. First, the sample size was limited to one English teacher and four visually impaired students from a single special school, which may restrict the generalizability of the findings to broader contexts. Second, the study relied solely on interview data without triangulating with observations or document analysis, which may limit the depth of behavioral insights. Third, the study explored perceptions and challenges but did not test or implement any audiobook intervention in the classroom, meaning the effectiveness of audiobooks was not empirically evaluated. Finally, the analysis was descriptive and qualitative in nature, which may not capture the full range of individual differences among visually impaired learners. Future studies should expand the sample and include practical trials of audiobook materials for more comprehensive results.

Furthermore, the findings of this study provide several important implications for English learning among visually impaired students. First, the study highlights the urgent need for schools to diversify audio-based learning media beyond braille and simple voice notes. The positive perceptions of teachers and students toward audiobooks indicate that audio materials are not only accessible but also capable of increasing students' engagement, comprehension, and motivation. Therefore, schools and teachers should consider integrating audiobooks as a formal learning component. Second, the results imply that teachers require further professional development in designing and producing audio learning materials that match the auditory learning style of visually impaired students. This includes training in narration techniques, audio editing, and material adaptation. Third, policymakers and curriculum developers should support the implementation of inclusive digital learning resources by providing adequate technological

infrastructure, accessible platforms, and guidelines for developing inclusive audio-based materials. Overall, the findings reinforce the importance of adopting inclusive, flexible, and learner-centered approaches in special education settings, particularly through the use of audiobooks.

Based on the findings and limitations, several suggestions can be made. For teachers, it is recommended to integrate audiobooks more systematically into English learning activities, ensuring that the narration, pacing, and content are tailored to the needs of visually impaired students. Teachers should also seek training in producing audio-based materials to enhance learning quality. For schools, it is important to provide technological support, such as accessible audio platforms, recording equipment, and teacher training programs. Additionally, schools should collaborate with educational technologists or universities to develop professional audiobooks that support inclusive education. For future researchers, it is suggested to conduct experimental or design-based studies to evaluate the effectiveness of audiobooks in improving specific English skills such as listening, pronunciation, and vocabulary mastery. Expanding the research to multiple schools and involving larger samples would also strengthen the generalizability of the findings. Researchers may also explore students' long-term engagement and learning outcomes using audiobooks.

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