

PERCEPTIONS OF EFL STUDENTS ON READING-WHILE-LISTENING USING AUDIOBOOKS

Juanita Maharani Putri

Malang Indonesia

juanitamhrn123@gmail.com

Abstract: Reading-while-Listening (RWL) can be used as an approach to increase students' reading comprehension. It received positive responses from students for improving their reading ability. There are many audiobooks available to assist students to do RWL. Therefore, this study was conducted to gather students' perceptions on RWL using any audiobooks. This study focused on the students' perceptions of the audiobooks availability and quality of audio, the RWL activity, and English skills perceived improvement after RWL. Quantitative survey design was used in this study. The data were collected using a questionnaire distributed to 86 EFL students from the 2023 cohort. The data gathered from questionnaires were presented in the form of bar charts and then were analysed using percentages. The results indicated that the students have positive perceptions on audiobooks availability and quality of audio, the RWL activity, and English skills perceived improvement after RWL.

Keywords: audiobook, reading-while-listening, students' perceptions

Students' reading comprehension can be improved using an innovative approach called Reading-while-Listening (RWL). RWL uses not only one but two language skills simultaneously, which are reading and listening. A study by Kirchoff and Mision (2022) revealed that Japanese university freshmen responded positively to RWL activity since they got valuable language practice, especially in reading and listening.

To support the RWL activity, with the help of the developed technology, books are integrated with audio feature. This kind of book is called audiobook. According to Have and Pedersen (2016), audiobook can be defined as a book that includes audio recordings by a narrator who could be the author, a professional or amateur actor, or a synthetic voice. Audiobooks can now be played on smartphone apps and websites, replacing cassette tapes, CDs, and DVD devices which enabled students, readers, and listeners to listen and read books regardless of location or time (Aydin & Tunagür, 2021).

The availability of this audio authorizes the students to do RWL instead of Reading Only (RO). A study by Çarkit (2020) found that audiobooks greatly impact students, especially their listening habits and the students' development of linguistics as a whole. In the same line, Chang and Millet (2015) also stated that including audio in reading texts can encourage L2 learners to improve their listening competence and gain higher listening scores. The previous study conducted by Milliner (2019) showed that the beginner students within the CEFR level A1 who were in the RWL group gained higher TOEIC scores on both listening and reading sections than those in the silent reading group. Consequently, it helps those who are not keen on reading by delivering new experiences through audio (Tragant, 2018). Furthermore, this RWL experience can motivate students to read and listen more as they are satisfied with the audiobooks (Aydin and Tunagür, 2021).

RWL is also a great help for students seeking to expand their vocabulary. Webb and Chang (2012) argued that RWL or audio-assisted reading effectively improves vocabulary. According to Hossain and Hasan (2022), RWL increased students' vocabulary since they learned how to pronounce it, allowing them to deduce meaning in unknown words. The knowledge of words they learn may contribute to a higher level of comprehension of other language skills, such as listening (Chang, 2011). It helps students use language in their everyday lives. Cited from a previous study by Brown et al. (2008), when students read and listen to many audiobooks, they become proficient in chunking texts and making their aural input more comprehensible, resulting in greater English language fluency.

Previous studies have shown positive attitudes towards RWL activity using audiobooks. Although some research has been carried out on RWL, few have investigated how English language students use the audiobook based on multimedia learning theory by Mayer (2014). According to Mayer (2014), learners can truly comprehend the material that is presented to them by processing it both visually and auditorily. Furthermore, this present study seeks to explain further the students' view on RWL using audiobooks. The research question in this study is "What are the perceptions of EFL students about doing the RWL using audiobooks?"

The results of this study are expected to have theoretical and practical implications for a variety of parties. The theoretical implication of this study, particularly for future research, is to provide greater evidence and clarity regarding students' perceptions of RWL using audiobooks to practice reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition. Furthermore, the practical implication of this study is that the findings allow teachers to use this study as an evaluation tool when

teaching English using audiobooks and the RWL approach. This study also provides information about RWL using audiobooks, so future researchers or those wishing to undertake similar research can use it as a reference.

METHOD

A quantitative survey design is proposed in this research to seek the perceptions of the first-year EFL students who were doing the Reading-while-Listening using audiobooks. This approach is used in this research since it produces data that can be statistically analyzed to answer the research question. The data is obtained through a survey in the form of a questionnaire, which is analyzed in percentages and frequencies. Creswell (2018) stated that descriptive research questions could be answered by using survey design.

The survey was conducted at a public university in East Java. The survey had 86 participants, out of total population 212 students, 120 from English Language Education (ELE) and 92 from English Language Literature (ELL). There were 43 students (36% of the total population) from ELE and 43 (47% of the total population) from ELL who participated in this survey. Arikunto (2017) states that if the population is larger than 100, the sample size should be 20-25% or more. As a result, the sample size in this study is acceptable because it represents more than 25% of the total population in each study program. All of the students that participated in this survey were from the 2023 cohort, and their gender demographics are displayed in Table 1. There are more female students than male students.

Table 1. Participants' Gender Demographics

No.	Gender	Total
1	Male	24
2	Female	61

The sampling technique used to collect data is convenience sampling. This technique selects participants based on convenience, availability, and willingness (Creswell, 2018). The convenience sample method was utilized since the questionnaire was distributed to the participants while they were in class, and the lecturer asked them to fill it out. The survey's participants or the sample consisted of all students present in that class at the time the questionnaire was distributed. Furthermore, the questionnaire was also distributed to students via WhatsApp and Instagram, so those who were willing may fill it out.

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Moreover, data collection was done by using an online survey platform, Google Forms. The questionnaire instruments are adapted from Kirchhoff and Mision's (2022) study entitled "Audio-assisted Extensive Reading: Learners' Experiences and Attitudes" with changes. Some items are also adapted from Harimurti, et al. (2021) study, especially questions regarding the students' perceived improvement. This adaptation was done because the research has a similar field of topic: audiobooks and RWL activity. The changes were made to make it more relevant to this study's topic.

The questions are translated to Bahasa Indonesia to avoid language barriers, and there will be an improvement in the quality of data obtained when the questionnaire is delivered in the participants' mother tongue (Dörnyei and Csizér, 2012). Each question has 4-point Likert scale style responses, which are: (1) strongly disagree, (2) disagree, (3) agree, and (4) strongly agree. The neutral option is omitted, and thus, the participants have to decide to choose between disagreement and agreement options (Chyung, et al., 2017). The questionnaire contains a total of 11 questions. The questionnaire design is presented in the following blueprint in Table 2.

Table 2. Blueprint Questionnaire

No.	Variable	Indicators	Question Numbers
1	Students' perceptions	Students' perceptions of the audiobooks availability and audio quality.	1, 2
		Students' perceptions on reading-while-listening activity.	3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8
		Students' perceptions on English skills perceived improvement	9, 10, 11

Before the questionnaire was widely shared, there was a test regarding its validity and reliability. The questionnaire was shared with 12 students outside the research participants from the English Department 2023 cohort for the validity test. They were asked to answer the questions in the questionnaire. After their answers had been collected, the results were analyzed through Pearson Correlation test on SPSS to determine whether the items measured

what was intended to be measured (Field, 2005). The results revealed that 11 of 17 questions were valid because they had $r > R$ table (0.6614). The six questions which were not valid were removed to elevate the validity score.

Following the results of the validity test, a reliability test was conducted. According to Gliem and Gliem (2003), the most suitable reliability measurement is using Cronbach’s Alpha when using Likert-type scales. If the value is > 0.60 , it can be concluded that the questionnaire is reliable (Taherdoost, 2016). The reliability test revealed the result value is 0.942, meaning the questionnaire items are consistent and meet the coefficient measurement. After the questionnaire's validity and reliability were established through testing, the questionnaire was spread to English Department 2023 cohort students.

After collecting the data, the result was counted using frequencies and percentages. Bar charts, or column graphs, were used to display the examined data because according to Evergreen (2019), the data can be more persuasive when displayed in graphs. Furthermore, the perception categories for each indicator were interpreted based on the criteria presented in Table 3. The interpretation guideline were adopted from Sugiyono (2021).

Table 3. Perception Score Interpretation Guideline

No	Score Range (%)	Category
1	0 – 19	Very low
2	20 – 39	Low
3	40 – 59	Moderate
4	60 – 79	High
5	80 – 100	Very high

The questionnaire used four Likert scales of agreement. Thus, to obtain findings that can be interpreted using the interpretation guideline in Table 3, the percentages of values 1 and 2 were added to represent the negative perception, and values 3 and 4 were added to represent the positive perception. Furthermore, the average percentages of each perception was counted to interpret the results.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

This section describes the results of this study’s questionnaire about the students’ perceptions on RWL using any audiobooks.

Results and Discussion of Students’ Perceptions of the Audiobooks Availability and Audio Quality

The first part of the questionnaire discussed the students’ perceptions of the audiobooks availability and audio quality that is displayed in the form of bar chart in Figure 1.

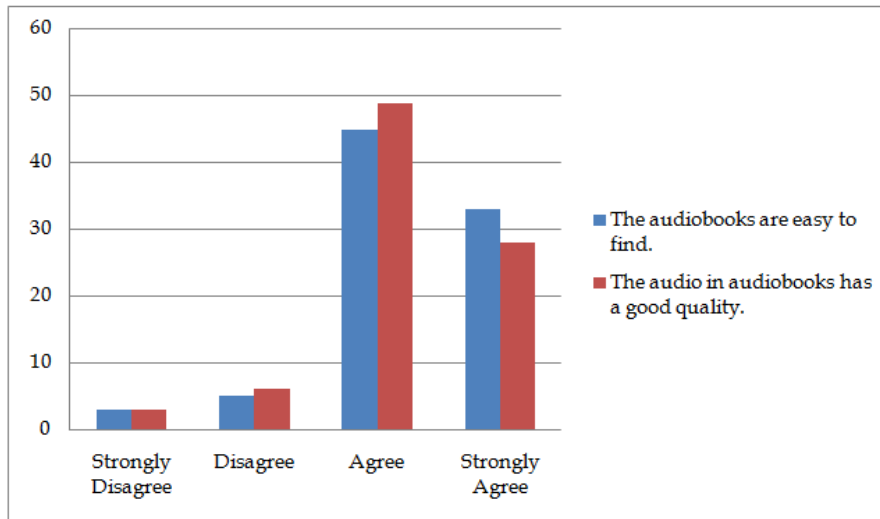


Figure 1. Results of Students’ Perceptions of the Audiobook Availability and Audio Quality (N=86)

Overall, the data indicate that both items received high responses on agreement than on disagreement. It can be clearly seen from the chart, both items received great proportions in the agree option. The highest number is received by the agreement on the high quality of audio item (49 responses), followed by the item about the audiobooks availability with 46 responses. Only less than 10 people felt that audiobooks are difficult to find and lack high-quality audio.

The added percentages of strongly disagree and disagree for the first item are 9.3%, while for the second item are 10.3%. The average percentages for disagreement for this indicator is 9.8%. On the other hand, the percentages of positive perceptions for two items in this indicator are 90.7% and 89.7%, respectively, and the average is 90.2%. It can

be inferred that the positive perception is in very high category, implying that students have positive perceptions on the audiobooks availability and the quality of the audio.

Most of the participants agreed that audiobooks are easy to find and have a good audio quality. This finding is consistent with Elislah, et al.'s (2022) study, which found that there are many free audiobooks on the internet, among which are Spotify and Storynore, as well as high-quality audio. Having easy access to audiobooks and high-quality audio can make RWL easier for students to get through.

Results and Discussion of Students' Perceptions on Reading-while-Listening Using Audiobooks

The second part of the questionnaire asked participants on their perceptions on RWL activity using audiobooks. There are six questions were included in questionnaire to gather students' perceptions on RWL activity using audiobooks. The results are displayed in Figure 2.

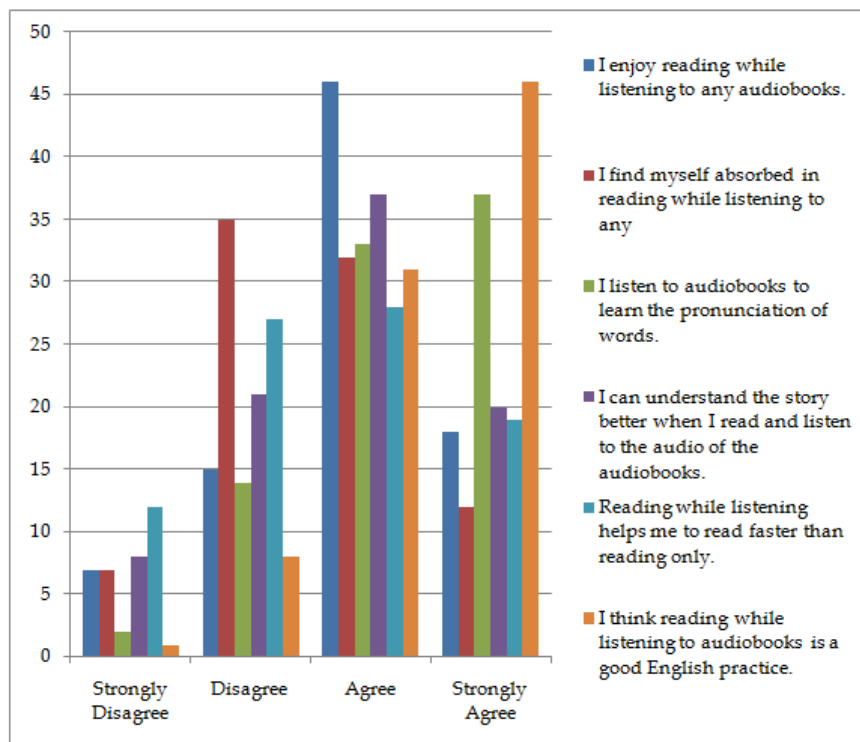


Figure 2. Results of Students' Perceptions on RWL Activity Using Audiobooks (N=86)

As shown in Figure 2, the item about enjoyment on RWL received the highest responses in the agree option (46 responses), the item about RWL being a good English practice received most responses in strongly agree option (46 responses), whereas the item about getting absorbed in RWL had the most disagreement responses (35 responses). Following the first and sixth items, the items concerning how RWL helps students understand the story better (37 agree responses) and how RWL helps them acquire pronunciation (37 strongly agree responses) received the most agreement. Surprisingly, the item asking if RWL can make their reading speed faster had close total responses, with 27 responses in disagree and 28 responses in agree option.

The positive perceptions percentages for each item in this indicator are as follows: 74.4%, 51.2%, 81.4%, 66.3%, 54.7%, and 89.5%. Thus, the average percentages of positive perception for this indicator is 69.6%. Hence, the average percentages of negative perceptions is 30.4%. The numbers indicated that the positive perception is in the high category, meaning that students have positive perceptions of RWL activities using any audiobooks.

It revealed that students have positive perceptions on RWL activity using audiobooks. They believe that RWL is enjoyable and is a good English practice because it helps them understand the story. In accordance with the present result, a previous study by Kirchoff, et al. (2022) has demonstrated that students enjoyed RWL because it made reading more fun. A similar finding is also reported in Kartal, et al.'s (2017) study which revealed that RWL to audiobooks helps students understand the sentences and the stories better because of the narrator's chunk-by-chunk reading. Mayer (2014) also stated that using multimedia learning, specifically visual and auditory through text and audio, helps students understand the content better. The information obtained from RWL activity is processed in their brains and then integrated with their prior knowledge and experience, allowing them to comprehend the content and retain it in their long-term memory (Mayer, 2014). Thus, RWL can be utilized to assist students in understanding the story of the audiobooks they read.

Students also believed that RWL would help them learn how to pronounce words. According to Çarkit (2020), listening to audiobooks can assist students learn word stress, intonation, and pronunciation through the narration's reading voice. However, this finding does not support the previous research by Stephens, et al.'s (2021) study, which

found that RWL does not help students with pronunciation since the audio does not provide complete information about pronunciation, such as lip movement. As a result, RWL to audiobooks needs to include additional information, such as lip movement, to assist students in acquiring pronunciation.

The next point is talking about being absorbed and their reading speed. It is shown that these two items are categorized as moderate in agreement options. This is in line with Kirchoff et al.'s (2022) study that mentioned reading while listening to audio did not completely help the students to be absorbed in reading and increase their reading speed because the audio is too slow than their reading speed. Students must follow the pace of the audio, which is slower than their reading speed, causing them to read slowly and unfocused.

Results and Discussion of Students' Perceptions on English Skills Perceived Improvement

Following the previous statement that RWL is a good English practice, this part of the questionnaire asked participants to identify which skill they perceived improved after RWL activity. The results are displayed in Figure 3.

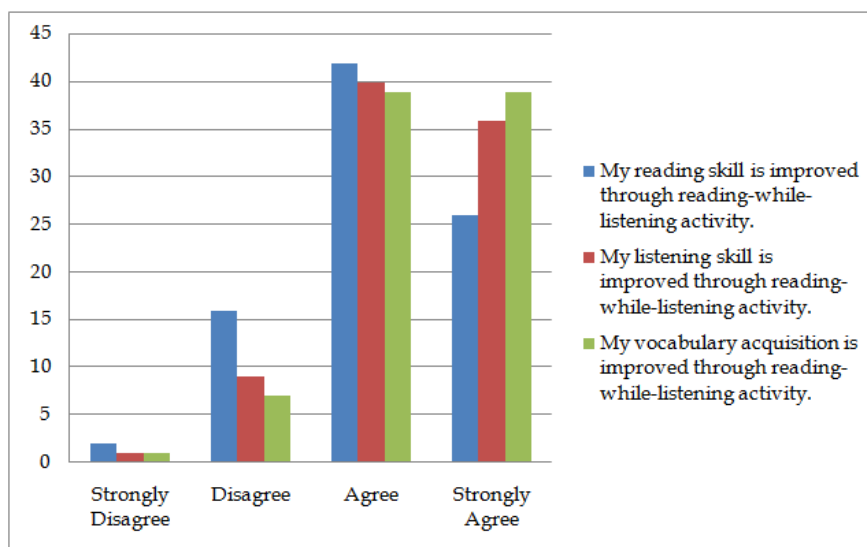


Figure 3. Results of Students' Perceptions on English Skills Perceived Improvement (N=86)

The figure shows that all of the items in this indicator received a high proportion of agreement options, both agree and strongly agree. The highest amongst them all is about students' reading skill perceived improved after RWL with 42 responses in the agree option. Following by the item about listening skill and vocabulary acquisition with 40 and 39 responses in the agree option, respectively. The vocabulary acquisition perceived improvement received same proportions in the agree and strongly agree options (39 responses).

If the numbers are counted using percentages, the positive perceptions of the three items are 79.1%, 88.4%, and 90.7%, respectively. The average percentages of the positive perception is 86%. This number is indicated very high according to the guidelines in Table 3, which means students also have positive perceptions on their reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition perceived improvement.

The first skill that is expected to be improved after RWL is the students' reading ability. According to the questionnaire results, the majority of participants believe that RWL improves their reading skills. This result is also in line with Milliner's (2019) study which revealed that students who were in RWL group were able to improve their reading comprehension and fluency than students who were in RO group. RWL helps the students to efficiently process the text by connecting the spoken words from the audio and the written words (Chang, 2011). Thus, RWL to audiobooks make students perceive improvement in their reading skills.

The second skill being discussed is the perceived improvement of students' listening skills. Almost all participants in this present study had a positive perception of how RWL could help them perceive improvement in listening. This finding is corroborated by a previous study by Aydin, et al. (2021), who found that RWL to audiobooks can appeal to students' auditory senses, which is useful for improving the students' listening comprehension skills. Students can listen actively through RWL.

The following skill, vocabulary acquisition, is the next skill that is perceived to improve through RWL. The majority of participants viewed this statement positively. This finding is consistent with the study of Brown, et al. (2008) which found that participants who were in RWL group gained more vocabulary knowledge than those who were in reading only or listening only group. According to Hossain, et al.'s (2022) study, participants in the RWL group improved their spelling, grammar, and meaning, allowing them to acquire new vocabulary. Webb, et al. (2012) also claimed that by reading and listening at the same time, students can understand the texts as meaningful chunks of language rather of reading them word-by-word. RWL effectively helps students in developing connections between form and meaning to gain a better understanding of language (Tragant, et al., 2018). By utilizing RWL to audiobooks, students can perceive improvement in vocabulary acquisition.

Overall, the result of the survey concluded that students viewed the RWL activity using any audiobooks positively, but there are some aspects that have more similar ratio between positive and negative perceptions compared to others.

CONCLUSION AND RECOMMENDATION

This study sets out to seek the perceptions of students on RWL using any audiobooks. From the findings, it can be concluded that the students have positive perceptions on the availability of audiobooks and the quality of audio, the RWL to audiobooks activity, and their perceived improvement on reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition.

Overall, this study supports the idea that multimedia learning, in this study is reading and listening at the same time, can help students understanding the materials and perceived improvement in reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition. This study suggests that it is recommended for educators to utilize RWL to audiobooks for students to perceive improvement in their English skills, especially in reading, listening, and vocabulary acquisition.

Furthermore, the limitation of this study is that the data-gathering technique is solely survey-based. Hence, there is no cross-checking of the survey results with participants. Future research employing in-depth data collection procedures, such as interviews, or observations, will be required to cross-check the results of this current study and provide a thorough explanation regarding students' perceptions of RWL using audiobooks. Despite its limitations, the study provides some insights into RWL utilizing audiobooks, particularly in the application of multimedia learning theory.

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