

## **Improving Students' Ability in Speaking of Procedural Text with Balabolka ('Text to Speech')**

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### **ABSTRACT**

This classroom action research is an effort to describe the impact of using 'Balabolka Text to speech' to raise the students' skill to produce Oral Procedural Text, especially about the Manual and Tips. It is one of the solutions to rid of the difficulties of English teachers in handling the students' oral learning activity. A test was given to 36 students of Class XI in a senior high school in Sidoarjo that have already applied Balabolka Text to Speech to learn about the Manual and Tips of Procedural Text. The function of this application is to convert any written texts into audio files, which can be used to train the students' skills in speaking about the steps to demonstrate manual and tips. The prospective advantages of the qualitative approach show that the usage of Balabolka Text to Speech in the English classroom may increase the students' skills to understand the oral Manual and Tips of Procedural Text. It includes: (1) improving the students' ability to mention the communicative purpose, ingredients and/or tools, and the steps of performing it after using the application, (2) raising the students' speaking skills to comprehend the text by observing the effectivity of the application.

**Keywords:** speaking skill, procedure text, senior high school, using text to speech, improvement

### **ABSTRAK**

Penelitian tindakan kelas ini adalah sebagai semacam upaya untuk menggambarkan dampak penggunaan '*Balabolka Text to Speech*' untuk meningkatkan keterampilan siswa agar dapat menghasilkan teks prosedural oral, terutama mengenai manual dan tips. Ini adalah salah satu solusi untuk mengatasi kesulitan guru bahasa Inggris dalam menangani kegiatan pembelajaran lisan siswa. Sebuah tes diberikan kepada 36 siswa kelas XI di sekolah menengah atas di Sidoarjo yang telah menerapkan *Balabolka Text to Speech* untuk belajar tentang manual dan tips teks prosedural. Fungsi dari aplikasi ini adalah untuk mengonversi teks tertulis apa pun ke dalam dokumen audio yang dapat digunakan untuk melatih keterampilan siswa untuk berbicara tentang langkah-langkah untuk menunjukkan manual dan tips. Keuntungan prospektif dalam pendekatan kualitatif menunjukkan bahwa penggunaan teks *Balabolka* untuk berbicara di kelas bahasa Inggris dapat meningkatkan keterampilan siswa untuk memahami manual oral dan tips teks prosedural. Ini mencakup: (1) meningkatkan kemampuan siswa untuk menyebutkan tujuan komunikatif, bahan-bahan dan alat, dan langkah-langkah untuk melakukan itu setelah menggunakan aplikasi, (2) meningkatkan keterampilan berbicara siswa untuk memahami teks dengan mengamati efektivitas aplikasi.

**Kata kunci:** keterampilan berbicara, teks prosedur, sekolah menengah atas, penggunaan teks untuk berbicara, perbaikan

## INTRODUCTION

During the English as Foreign Language (EFL) learning process, students should retain their study on the subject with their best skill, capacity, and potential in English language skills – listening, speaking, reading, and writing – to improve their skills significantly. However, most students have difficulties overcoming their boundaries to enhance those skills, especially speaking skills (Al Hosni, 2014). The skill promotes productive communication. It seems to have been blocked by the problems of lack of confidence and time to practice in the first observation of the class.

The discussion of this paper will specify speaking. In the classroom activities, some kinds of speaking performances focus on pronunciation, sound or language components such as intonation, stress, a contraction, and grammatical structure, indicating the communicative purpose of the text, testing students' knowledge of any information in the text, and so on. Furthermore, this is not an easy task for teachers to make their students speak because the language is not expressed in the community, and they also have less exposure to the language itself (Febriyanti, 2011). Students should have more time to learn and practice their speaking skills to improve their competence in the activities.

Many students of this second grade (Class XI) class couldn't reach the minimum standard has been stated by the school or teacher in speaking performance. Less than 40 % of 36 students have 68 in speaking performance (*Source: Curriculum Department: Daftar Nilai Peserta Didik Guru Mata Pelajaran Bahasa Inggris Kelas XI*). They have problems managing time to finish the test, the student lack of ability to recognize the essential words, issues with different accents, mental blocks, etc.

Mentioning technology in language classrooms is not a weird thing nowadays. Technology, a computer, has been used in teaching and learning activities for the last decades (Vanderplank, 2010). Brown (2000) suggests the sets of alternatives to present technology in the language classrooms, such as; using commercially produced audiotapes/ videotapes, self-made audiotapes/ videotapes, overhead projections, or CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning). The last version – CALL –will be adopted and uses Text-to-Speech software, namely Balabolka. This application makes the possibility for learners to have more practice outside the classroom. Of course, the teacher must control the self-learning process here to ensure that the activity's objectives can be coped and the effectiveness can be managed.

Here, the researcher focus on the learning process of the Procedural Text. The students in their daily life practically need this kind of text. Two types of Procedure Text discussed in Senior High School: Manual and tips (Second Grade/ Class Eleven) and Recipe (Third Grade/ Class Twelve). The first Procedural text is the manual tip that will be used as the material here. Based on the facts above, this study does research related to the effectiveness of using the software to improve the students' ability in speaking skills of Procedural Text. Underlined the background and explanation above, the research questions are formulated as below:

1. Can the students' ability to mention the communicative purpose, ingredients, and tools used in the Procedure text and the steps be improved after using the application?

2. Is the application effective in raising the students' Speaking Skills of Procedure Text?

**ABOUT BALABOLKA**

Balabolka is a Text-To-Speech (TTS) software. In this research, the software converts any written texts into audio files and saves their written and audio forms (Amelia, 2017). Since this application allows the users to alter a voice's parameters, including rate and pitch, this research uses the app to give a time for students to practice with the teacher's supervision for the early activities and practice by the students themselves in their own for more improvements. To create the speech, the users can control the standard play-pause-stop buttons on the keyboard (McClellan, 2011).

**ABOUT THE LISTENING SKILL**

In this paper, the discussion specifies listening. According to Brown (2000), there are six types of classroom speaking performance; reactive (focusing on choral or individual pronunciation), Intensive (focusing on components sound or language components; such as intonation, stress, a contraction, and grammatical structure), Responsive (digging up the learners' knowledge about the topic), Selective (asking the learners to find essential or specific information), Extensive (to develop a global understanding of spoken language), and Interactive (Asking the learners to participate in discussions, debates, conversations, and role-plays). Because of its urgency and in another hand, the students' capacity in this field has not been satisfying yet. Students should have more engagements in the learning and practicing process to improve their speaking skills. Unfortunately, time to study is limited, and the list of material that must be examined is quite challenging, making the efforts to expand it becomes hard work.

About some reasons for the difficulties of teaching English to second language learners, every time they practice or finish their test, they try every word that they lose the important ones. Another reason is that they are often left behind trying to work out a previous work meant, which loses the topic's thread. Next, the lack of vocabulary can also make them not know the important words nor even recognize the words they know. The confusion is caused by the different accent used by the speakers related to some similar-sounding words such as "there", "their" and "they're". The physical condition also takes part in the activity as some learners get tired or lack listening stamina. Emotional points also create problems, especially for those who have poorly graded listening tests at school, exams, or self-study materials. Then, being able to cope with background noise is another skill that does not quickly transfer from the native speakers and builds up along with students' listening and general language skills. The problem here is also can be aroused from the learners' hearing.

In some cases, particular frequencies or background noise problems can negatively influence listening activity. Based on the above issues, the questioners' questions in this research had been set. Related to speaking monologue, Brown (2006) noted that when a speaker uses spoken language for any length of time, the hearer must process long stretches of speech without interruption- the stream of speech will go on whether or not the hearer comprehends.

Indeed, this duration creates problems for beginners as little, or some information or instruction can't be understood nor memorized. However, the process might be avoided by handling more and more practice with such texts. Another problem will probably arise in this kind of matter, especially the limitation of time to study mentioned before. And of course, more regular meetings may create problems than the students' self-service practice can be counted, and the use of technology is the alternative.

In this case, speaking about technology in the language classrooms directed to the computer has been used widely for the last few decades (Alshenqeeti, 2018). And the usage of the last version – CALL (Computer-Assisted Language Learning) – is well known with many options like the one we use to study here. This Text-to-Speech software – Balabolka- has been used by eleventh graders who will be taken as the research subject. The software had been applied in a previous project for another material. The result positively impacts their listening skill (Herawati, 2016). To convince about the effectiveness of the software, the personal skill in listening and academic background of the learners and the receptivity and effectivity are also noted as the topic of discussion.

## **METHOD**

The method used in this research is the qualitative method with 2 (two) considerations of questions in the questionnaire: Listening Ability and the respondent's attitude toward the usage of the software. In Listening Ability, the respondents are given questions about their ability to understand what other people say (five questions); auditory memory (five questions); academic achievement (five questions), and Receptivity/ Effectivity of the application when it is used in the learning process (ten questions). All of the questions have a range of response scores from 0, 1, 2, 3, and 4. Each number's score will then be timed to the number of respondents who choose the response. All of the scores were added and divided by 36, as the number of the students.

## **FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION**

### **THE ABILITY OF STUDENTS TO UNDERSTAND WHAT OTHER PEOPLE SAY**

The questions related to students' ability to understand what other people say are about the necessity of repetitions to information or instructions before the students understand. The next question is related to the response given by the students, whether they will answer directly or need a few seconds if they are asked or told something in English. The following question is about their capacity to distinguish some similar sounding words, which are – in English- vary. The following questions are the difficulties in remembering/following more than one or two directions and understanding monologue.

The analysis of this ability shows that the most challenging matter related to understanding what other people say is that most students get the problem of similar-sounding words (2.18), followed by the difficulty of understanding monologue (2.06). The subsequent problems are following more than one or two directions (1.68), saying excuse of being absent of any question/ statement (1.66), and in the last position is the necessity of repetition (1.62). This result is quite similar to the experts' statements above that the students need more time and practice to upgrade their ability on the points.

### **THE SPEAKING SKILL AND SCHOOL ACHIEVEMENT.**

When the students ask whether they have difficulty hearing and understanding background noise such as TV, other people talking, music, children playing, or so, it becomes the most annoying matter (2.4). The next problem while listening is when another input form appears on the answer sheet or students' worksheet, like the speaker's face, an illustration, or another reading (1.86). Students also get the problem of remembering the order or sequence of spoken

information (1.78). They are easily disturbed when listening (1.62), but the tiring some/sleepiness is not an ignorance during the listening section (1.58).

The subsequent discussion is about the students' academic achievement at school. The top range answer related to the students' lesson is on the difficulty of reading comprehension (1.78). It has been known that the range of vocabulary is not merely the only problem of understanding the listening section well because the personal mental block can be a matter, too. This problem is followed by difficulty remembering questions when they must be called upon in a class or meetings (1.74). Students ought to focus on the oral learning process during classroom performances. Still, when the presentation is a must, the psychological factor can affect self-confidence then any comment or question is hard to be understood. This matter is also close to a mental problem that arose during the performance, which blocked them from having difficulty reading fluency (1.62). Some respondents get problems with their scores in the listening test as discussed above; then, their scores are mostly less than satisfactory (1.62). The last is about spelling. Even though many difficulties related to listening skills, spelling is not a problem for them (1.52),

#### **THE RECEPTIVITY AND EFFECTIVITY OF BALABOLKA**

To summarize the receptivity and effectivity of Balabolka, respondents are given questions about practicing using the software. And the result shows that reading fluency can be practiced using the application (3.02). With the teacher's control of giving a task of creating a project using the application before the research had been done, students have got satisfactory on applying the software. The following result is that they better understand monologue using the application (2.5), similar to reading fluently. The questionnaire shows that the students' self-learning is also effective in making them better. It allows them to make repetitions, which helps them understand the text better (2.44). Besides, the software's self-learning process has made the learning process effective (2.3).

In the following result, respondents find out that information or instructions can be better understood with the software & reading comprehension can be improved using the software (2.24). After the treatment using the software for self-learning, students can realize similar sounding words using the application. The program can help them pay more attention while listening to the text (2.18). Next prospective answer, students state that reading fluency can be practiced using the software as they can use it every time (2.16). The last result, order, and sequence of spoken information can be easier to understand with the software (2.12) as the repetition and their sense of the language can be improved.

#### **CONCLUSION**

Based on the result of the research, and after doing data analysis gained through respondents, it could be concluded that: (1) The students' ability to mention the communicative purpose, ingredients and/or tools used in the oral Procedure text and the steps improved after using the application, (2) The application is effective to raise the students' listening skill to understand the procedure text. Based on the result mentioned above, it is suggested that the application can be applied in the language learning class activity. The method of using it needs to be improved. With the help of this application, the students can increase their capacity. Teachers are hoped to evaluate the progress. For other researchers, there is an opportunity to examine the usage of the software.

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