Literature Review

Audio Aids for the Classroom

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**Introduction**

Teaching in the 21st century seems to be getting harder and harder but yet at the same time potentially easier and easier. By conducting research-based studies one can assert that there are many different types of learners in the classroom today and it is the job of teachers to reach out to those students. One such way to reach the masses of students is with technology; for technology today is changing rapidly and in doing so it is opening up many doors for communication and learning that otherwise might not be there. When referring to this new technology and the impact it has on students and society in general one can specifically reference audio aids and audiobooks for helping students. These audio aids are very beneficial for learners from all walks of life like students with: learning disabilities, disadvantaged backgrounds, lack of motivation, and many more hardships.

**Background**

Auditory learning is not a new concept by any means. Howard Gardner believes that there are eight different intelligences including one dedicated to auditory learners. He describes these learners as Verbal / Linguistic: Involves reading, writing, speaking, and conversing in one’s own or foreign languages (Gardner). Gardner goes on to identify seven different types of learners suggesting that everyone learns different and the eight that he outlined are guidelines of where people fit in. Therefore teachers need to recognize the differences in their students when it comes to their abilities and strengths and teach accordingly. With the technology we have today we are more able to meet the needs of Verbal / Linguistic learners then we were ever able to before. With the use of providing audiobooks and audio notes for students, teachers will be able to reach more students who might have an unwillingness to engage in reading or taking notes otherwise. This is so beneficial today because for many students reading does not come naturally and it is more of a chore than a love or passion. Technology is helping to bridge this gap for many young learners out there who might only need a push to open up to the idea of reading and books (Baskin, 1995). Beyond simple engagement of readers one can encourage readers to take on higher end material for with auditory learning many barriers to higher end reading material start to crumble. This is especially beneficial because so often students can understand higher end concepts that books can offer but lack the general reading ability to access the content from the books. With an audio aid the student can be exposed to this higher end content even without having the ability to read it themselves (Bomar, 2006)

**Research Findings**

In her research on audiobooks and audio notes as aids for students Shu-Hsien L. Chen points out that many readers today suffer from such difficulties as: insufficient reading, complexity issues, lack of prior knowledge or background information, lack of personal interest, and much more. These issues based on research seem to be becoming more and more common place. This can be because of better diagnosis or increased learning difficulties in the youth. She then goes on to explain audio aids can help readers with increased access to repetition, motivation, active listening, and many more advantages (Chen, 2004). These benefits help to formulate good reading skills along with good speech / English skills which are something that all students can benefit heavily from in our society today.

Other research has suggested that modern day reading and technology seem to promote fast passed learning and reading and do not emphasize more long-form listening / reading. An example of this would be news articles which are often short and fairly straight to the point. One could also argue that text messages and tweets promote short and fast passed reading as well. Mary Burkey examines the use of audiobooks and audio notes as a way that can help to encourage long-form listening / reading which is a very valuable and seemingly lost skill in today’s society (Burkey, 2009).

Through several different resources it can be concluded that audiobooks and audio notes have an overall positive effect on their audiences. This can be seen by the research from Rebecca Kellock who sites that audiobooks help improve reading, fluency, and comprehension. This was found to be especially true for students with ADD and ADHD who showed an improvement in concentration (Kellock, 2008). Building off of Mary Burkey’s research about long-form listening / reading one can assert that audiobooks and audio notes help to give students with ADD and ADHD something to focus on for an extended amount of time which helps them to learn coping skills for their disabilities. This in turn can help them to better function in society today.

**Benefits**

When conducting this literature review I found many different benefits that having an audio aid for classes can produce. Audiobooks and audio notes had such benefits as:

* **Introduction of higher end material**-Students can be introduced to higher end material earlier and earlier. This is made possible because with an audio aid the barrier to entry for this type of material is significantly lowered. This is because while reading the material can cause a great challenge for newer or younger readers because of word difficulty and complexity. On the other end when a student is listening to the same material the fluency of reading and overall comprehension has a greater chance of being understood by the student (Bomar, 2006).
* **Aid students with special needs**-In today’s society many students have many different needs. It is important as a teacher to differentiate the learning of the classroom. Having audio aids can greatly aid students who have such problems as Dyslexia. When a student suffers from Dyslexia or any other learning disability that hinders reading; having an audio alternative greatly increases their chances for success with the source material (Milani, 2010). Furthermore students who have; learning disabilities, English as a second language, and physically impaired learners have also seen many benefits from having audio aids made available to them for many of the same reasons that Dyslexic readers found help with audio versions of the material (Baskin, 1995).
* **Motivating unwilling readers**-Through the use of audio aids unwilling readers can be reached that may have not found enjoyment through reading otherwise. This enjoyment can come from the audio sources which often use humor, dramatic readings, change of voice, and much more. These seemingly small changes can greatly improve the barrier to entry for unwilling readers (Baskin, 1995).
* **Listening comprehension**-By listening to material it has been shown to help boost a student listening comprehension skills. Part of this listening comprehension can be made easier by audio sources for one can sometimes more easily tell sentence structure and context simply by the way the material is read to the listener. Often much care is given to the emphasis of words and the stressing of sentences. This can be a powerful tool in and outside of the classroom (ERIC, 1995).
* **Test scores go up**-Research suggests that students who listen to audio versions of text often achieve higher test scores (Kellock, 2008).
* **A bridge for students and parents**-Audio versions of text can help to bridge important topics of discussion between students and parents who are able to listen to audio sources together. By listening together it can give them something they can both participate in rather than a solo activity which reading often is (Johnson, 2003).

Other studies have identified many more benefits such as: modeling good interpretive reading, critical listening, introduction to new genres, introduction to new vocabulary, and so much more (Johnson, 2003).

**Challenges and Limitations**

With most positives in life there are usually some negatives. While there were not many negatives with using audio aids for the classroom some were uncovered through this literature reviews which were as follows:

* **Playback device issues**-In our society today most people have some sort of device that can play audio files but not everyone has access to them. 90% of American’s own a computerized gadget: cell phone, computer, MP3 player, game console, e-book reader or tablet. This is a high amount but still it leaves room for people being left out (Gahran, 2011).
* **Expenses**-Many audio versions of text can cost money. Some sites books can cost on average $30.00 for a new title (Broida, 2012).
* **Technical Issues**-Many people have trouble getting audiobooks or audio notes to work on various types of technology and advices. There are numerous pages that are dedicated to trouble shooting such problems (Recorded Books, 2014).
* **Time**-Recording and producing audio sources for students or any audience for that matter is very time consuming and has many challenges along the way. The best audio recorders average one mistake a page. Once a mistake is made the reader must go back and rerecord that sentence again to fix the mistake. These mistakes can quickly add up and the amount of time put into the creation of an audio source increases greatly (Hafner, 2013)
* **Voice Talent**-The reader of the audio source must have a certain level of talent, emphasis, and emotion when reading. This can prove to be a very challenging and an energy draining exercise for the reader (Hafner, 2013). This voice talent was alluded to earlier with the research that was conducted by Barbara H. Baskin and Karen Harris in 1995. If the reader doesn’t have this talent the audio source will not be as effective as Barbara Baskin and Karen Harris sited it could be.

**Conclusion**

Overall after conducting my literature review it is apparent that most everyone seems to advocate the use of audio aids for classrooms. The only cons were not directed directly at the use of audio aids but more with the use of technology that brings you the audio (Recorded Books, 2014).Much of the use of audio aids in our society is changing as the technology that surrounds it changes as well.In the past audio technology use to center around the use of cassette tapes then it moved to CDs, then MP3s, and then to Podcasts (Hampton Anderson, 2008). It has changed so much in such a short period of time, just think where it will be in the future. It seems that the classroom is slowly catching up to the 21st century and through this literature review it is apparent that the classroom and audio aids are catching up as well.

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