Listening to the library: Preadolescent student perceptions of the impact of downloadable audiobooks on their literacy development

A dissertation submitted for the degree of
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by

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"It was a book indeed; but a strange and wonderful book, that had neither leaves nor letters: In fine, it was a book made wholly for the ears, and not the eyes ... When I since reflected on this miraculous invention, I no longer wondred (sic) that the young-men of that country were more knowing at sixteen or eighteen years old, than the gray-beards of our climate ..."

Cyrano de Bergerac, *A Voyage to the Moon* (1650)

(p. 196 English translation copyright 1899 by Doubleday & McClure Co.)

ABSTRACT

The purpose of this narrative inquiry was for me to learn from students about their perceptions of changes in their literacy practices from listening to downloaded audiobooks in their free time. Participants were preadolescent students from one international school in South Korea. Data were collected from regular recorded interviews over a period of two school years. Much has been written about audiobooks in popular media, and especially in educational publications, but there is a surprising lack of significant research about using audiobooks in education, particularly for fluent readers and writers with no learning difficulties. This research aims to fill a gap in the educational research and recent technological advancements in downloadable audiobook technology make this a timely topic. Narrative inquiry is shown to be an ideal methodology to present student 'voice' research.

Results are presented as fourteen themes with sub-themes in four thematic categories, namely, what students gain (or not) from listening to audiobooks, characteristics of listeners, agency and organisational structures. This research found that participants were self-motivated to listen to audiobooks in their leisure time and that they did perceive a change in their literacy practices, particularly in generating story ideas, providing a model of verbal fluency and learning vocabulary in context. However, the research also revealed that there are significant organisational structures, such as technical challenges and the influence of adults, which either enable or constrain a student's agency to listen to audiobooks. Additionally, it became apparent that these preadolescent audiobook listeners display notable characteristics such as the proclivity to multitask while listening, a preference for story regardless of mode and the ability to critically analyse both the story and narration. This dissertation concludes with a discussion of the implications of this research for educational knowledge and practice.

CANDIDATE'S CERTIFICATION

I certify that the substance of this thesis has not already been submitted for any degree and is not currently being submitted for any degree or qualification.

I certify that any help received in preparing this thesis and all sources used have been acknowledged in this thesis.

Signature:

Susan J. Toms

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PRESENTATIONS DURING CANDIDATURE

October 2014

Library 2.014: Online worldwide conference founded by San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. Digital, Emerging and User strands. Listening to the Library: What should be our role in providing and promoting audiobooks to patrons? Recording: https://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/recording/playback/link/table/dropin?sid=2008350&suid=D.26264C9D1C7BEE8D8EDBD31CC66EE3

April 2014

Learning Revolution Conference Online, international conference supported by the Learning Revolution Project. Learning Spaces, and Technology & Learning strands: Mobile Literacy: Learning outside the classroom through audiobooks on personal devices. Recording: https://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/recording/playback/link/table/dropin?sid=2008350&suid=D.E56E9FCDB6D296843B1AA238AF0019

February 2014

OZeLIVE! Ed Tech Downunder, online worldwide conference supported by Australia e-Series in collaboration with The Learning Revolution. Media, Learning and Technology strand: Mobile Learning: Using downloadable audiobooks to improve student literacy outside the classroom. Recording: https://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/recording/playback/link/table/dropin?sid=2008350&suid=D.2E5AA788BD85CEA5923B11749D747E

November 2013

Global Education Conference, online worldwide conference founded by iEARN (International Education and Resource Network). Curricular strand: Global voices: International school students developing verbal fluency with audiobooks. Recording: https://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/recording/playback/link/table/dropin?sid=2008350&suid=D.F199E5B03957BF85B726437D1534AC

October 2013

Library 2.013, online worldwide conference founded by San Jose State University School of Library and Information Science. Doctoral strand: Using downloadable audiobooks to

improve student literacy outside the classroom. Recording: https://sas.elluminate.com/site/external/recording/playback/link/table/dropin?sid=2008350&suid=D.A15DF2FE932F2BC3A198627854E1B3

March 2013

East Asia Regional Council of Schools (EARCOS) Teacher Workshop Presentation, Shanghai, China. Literacy on the go: Using downloadable audiobooks to improve student literacy outside the classroom.

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