

Optimizing Educational Technology To Improve Students' Listening Comprehension Through Podcast

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Abstract: Learning foreign languages in online classes which is currently applicable raises several challenges that must be faced by teachers and students in the teaching and learning process. Listening comprehension in a foreign language invites perceptions that is considered difficult for some students even though it is known that listening comprehension is the most needed skill in learning a language to understand each other. Having good listening comprehension encourages students to be able to participate in listening activities and at the same time, students can receive information, increase new insight, and respond to statements or questions from the other person. Various learning media are used for learning activities because most daily activities nowadays optimize the use of technology to support learning activities, especially in the implementation of online classes. Technology offers many teaching materials in various forms to support the learning process and also indirectly introduces students to be able to dig deeper into the information that can be obtained through the technology introduced by the teacher. A podcast is the use of technology in a form of audio or video that can improve students' listening comprehension through interesting and informative content. The application of podcasts as a medium to improve students' listening comprehension needs to be investigated. This paper describes some of the findings of researchers who initiated the use of podcasts to improve students' listening comprehension.

Keywords: *Listening Comprehension, Technology, and Podcast.*

INTRODUCTION

Mid-March 2020, Indonesia conducted distance learning or online learning as an effect of the health crisis, COVID-19 that was currently wrestling the world. Learning that is carried out remotely or online has changed many learning activities that were never prepared to be done before. In fact, the United Nations Educational, Scientific and Cultural Organization (UNESCO) in 2020 stated that the COVID-19 outbreak disrupted more than one billion students in the learning process in 129 countries around the world. In the field of education, teaching and learning have not been prepared to face the health crisis; accordingly, makes all activities that involve socialization or meetings must be conditioned. Current pandemic situations get us to realize that scenario planning is an urgent need for academic institutions (Rieley, 2020). During such tough times, when Covid-19 has forced schools and colleges to remain completely lockdown for few weeks due to the seriousness of the situation, educational technology can prove to be a great help for students (Brianna et al., 2019).

Rapid developments in technology have made distance education convenient (McBrien et al., 2009). Since schooling is conducted online, time and experience are needed to achieve learning objectives. However, the online learning process determined by technology capability. Technology is the forerunner of being able to conduct online learning as is happening in most countries around the world nowadays. "Most of the terms (online learning, open learning, web-based learning, computer-mediated learning, blended learning, m-learning, for ex.) have in common the ability to use a computer connected to a network, that offers the possibility to learn from anywhere, anytime, in any rhythm, with any means" (Cojocariu et al., 2014). Therefore, by mastering the use technology, it increases the opportunity to gain insight or idea so that it can be a useful resources for online learning activities. Moreover, mastering technology will also make it easier to connect with new developments that arise so that they are not left behind by the times. Thus, to ensure students are on the right track, teachers are expected to create innovations related to increasing student interest in online learning today.

According to Merriam-Webster, 2017, the notion of innovation is divided into two, namely (1) introducing new things, or (2) introducing new ideas, methods, or devices. The thing that distinguishes the two notions is that it can be seen from introducing new things that innovation tends to show results. While the notion of innovation in introducing new ideas, methods or devices tends to lead to processes in achieving certain goals. Educational innovation is a need that needs to be criticized. The quality of

education of citizens in a country greatly determines the social and economic welfare of the country; furthermore, the term "knowledge society", the transformation of information and media, and increased specialization on the part of the organization requires special skills and a high level of knowledge. Therefore, the current education system is expected to be efficient and effective so that it can achieve the goals that have been set by utilizing the available resources (Cornali, 2012, p. 255).

According to Selingo in 2006, podcasting as a new technology for broadcasting audio (sometimes video) programs on the Internet has developed rapidly since 2005. Podcasts are audio played to everyone who has their various discussion; podcasting was originally for conveying information and entertaining the listener at the same time. Soon, however, educators saw the huge potential it has for teaching and learning (Adams, 2006; Warlick, 2005). Podcasts are a great way to improve so many different language skills required to become fluent and confident in language learning, in this case learning English. In fact, many writers have pointed out that podcasts can provide the benefits of language education, especially in cultivating learners' listening skills (Pun, 2006; Stanley, 2006).

In addition, the production of podcasts provides students with plenty of meaningful language use, which is highly desirable for second language acquisition (Nunan, 1995 as cited Jain and Hashmi, 2013, p. 159). One of the benefit of using podcasts for students' listening comprehension learning activity is that students listen to conversations in a natural context; therefore, students understand the use of words or sentences they listen to through podcasts according to context. Another benefit is that podcasts can improve students' vocabulary mastery. When students listen to podcasts, at the same time, they will learn many new words; furthermore, students will also find words that they do not understand, and they can understand further through context to expand students' vocabulary. Moreover, to listening skills and vocabulary mastery, learning through podcasts can also improve students' sentence structure, since everything students learn in listening a podcast is based on the context, so students don't just learn one word. Students learn that words in whole sentences and whole sentences use a different structure.

PROBLEM IDENTIFICATION

In the process of listening comprehension, for students in particular, various factors affect students' ability to understand spoken language. Boyle (1984) acknowledges that there are four factors that influence listening comprehension, especially for EFL students, including; listener, speaker, environment factors and medium. In term of listener, factors that often appear to be a challenge are unfamiliar words and background knowledge of the listener. Meanwhile, when viewed from the speaker factor, speaking speed, accent, and the content discussed by the speaker also greatly affects students' listening comprehension. Environment around the listener is also play an important role in students' listening comprehension as the more often students hear spoken language and listen to it carefully, the easier it will be for students to comprehend their listening into a certain topic. Medium is becoming a tool for teachers to implement the listening comprehension activity. In addition, learning is conducting online since the world has been hit by pandemic. This situation encourage the teacher to find a solution to optimize the learning activity although the learning is conducted online. Digital technology that has been intensively applied in recent years is a source of dynamic knowledge and learning. With the existence of today's technology, technology can be integrated with flexible learning. one of them is the use of podcasts to improve students' listening comprehension.

METHOD

To achieve the objective of the study, the research was conducted by defining few relevant research related to educational technology especially podcast in accordance to improve listening comprehension. Furthermore, the research was concerned on using library research method related to the explanation of Searcy and Mentzer (2003) named as archival research in which the research collected and reviewed several relevant research regarding related issue. In line with Searcy and Mentzer, Srivastava (2007) mentioned several steps to conduct the research method. Defining unit of the analysis became the first step in which previous research journal articles were used in the present research. The next step was classification context to classify and structure the material in which there were two

contexts classified, such as the problem context and focus skill. Furthermore, the material should be evaluated according to the classification context. Finally, collecting publication became the last step in which the literature review focused upon journal articles related to online speaking assessment. After those steps were finished, the articles were then reviewed and analyzed to arrange the review regarding online speaking assessment.

FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

Several journal articles concerned on assessing speaking online have been reviewed and analyzed in order to find out whether or not podcast can improve students' listening comprehension. According to research conducted by Ahmed in 2016 on the use of podcasts to improve listening comprehension in Arabic classes, this quantitative study showed the results in the experimental group were more significant than in the control group. In collecting data, the writer used pre-test and post-test from 38 students. In fact, the results of the experimental group showed that the post-test scores were higher than the pre-test scores. Meanwhile, in the control group, the post-test scores were also higher than the pre-test scores but not for the 2 students included. Thus, the authors state that the results of the research conducted to support the main idea raised that the use of podcasts in Arabic classes is an effective way to improve students' listening comprehension.

The same result was also obtained by Nisa and Hadi in 2020 in their research on *The Use of Podcast to Improve Students' Listening Comprehension*. The similarity between the studies mentioned above is about the post-test results which show a higher score than the pre-test conducted. The research, which was conducted at SMP Muhammadiyah 35 Jakarta, concluded by the author that the use of podcast gives a significant effect on students' listening comprehension especially in the seventh grade. Therefore, it can be concluded that podcasts are good for students' listening activities and learning to use podcasts.

Another study was conducted by Shahid and Ali in 2017 regarding the effects of video-podcasts on listening comprehension of Saudi EFL learners. It is stated that according to Ali, Mukundan, Baki, & Ayub in 2012, it is undeniable that positive learning motivation arises because of the use of computers or Computer Assisted Language Learning (CALL). In his research, Ali also mentioned that both teachers and students were more motivated in using technology because they found podcasts as a source that provided useful and interesting information. However, what is emphasized in this research is the role of the teacher who also supports the successful application of podcasts in learning. It was found in the research that students needed further explanation of the content contained in the podcast beyond their understanding. Thus, the most appropriate Video-Podcast content with teacher assistance can take podcast-assisted instruction to maximum effectiveness.

A study conducted by Rahman, Atmowardoyo, and Salija, (2018) supports the results of previous research that the use of podcasts in listening comprehension learning activities can improve students' listening skills. proven by the results of quantitative data research which states that the use of non-podcasts is no more effective than the use of podcasts in learning activities, especially listening comprehension. The data were taken using paired and independent sample t-test. On the other hand, qualitative data was analyzed through an open-ended question technique by identifying, naming, and describing phenomena from the collected data. The result of open-ended question states that the use of podcasts is very engaging and attractive so that the class becomes very active.

Based on recent research on the application of podcasts to improve students' listening comprehension skills, it is agreed that podcasts can improve students' listening comprehension skills. However, to create something new, this learning activity can also be combined with the latest technology-based activities such as personal blogs. Students can produce work that can also promote what is gained by listening to podcasts; moreover, students can express their creativity in designing their personal blog in such a way to make it look attractive. Through interesting learning activities, it can also indirectly raise students' interest in learning. In addition, students have the opportunity to communicate about their personal blogs with their classmates.

CONCLUSION

In this paper, the author can conclude that there is a great opportunity to improve students' listening comprehension, especially for EFL students. There are many things that teachers can do to improve students' ability to learn certain skills. In the current state of digitalization, demands for the use of technology have become a necessity even in all fields. Podcast, an audio/video that can be used by teachers as teaching materials, especially to improve students' listening comprehension, can be combined with various other technology-based activities such as personal blogs. The author is open for any further research in the same field reflected on the limitation towards the number of research conducted as well as the analysis of each research which did not involve more detailed and critical analysis. In addition, further research are expected to review and reveal other challenges found during assessing speaking online.

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