

UTILIZING ELT PODCASTS TO DEVELOP LISTENING COMPREHENSION

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Abstract: The development of listening comprehension tends to be ignored in the process of teaching and learning English as a foreign language. English language teachers often use the same listening materials for much of the time of their teaching. A new trend for teaching listening comprehension known as 'ELT podcast' is thus recommended and explained in this article. Educators saw the beneficial backwash of ELT podcasts for English teaching and learning especially in the teaching of listening comprehension. It offers students extra listening practice both inside and outside of English classes. The aim of this study was to help both teachers and students in overcoming the ignorance of listening comprehension development and in providing interesting, fun, and accessible teaching materials for listening comprehension.

Keywords: listening comprehension, podcast

INTRODUCTION

Communication involves at least two persons, one presents the information or idea and another one receives the information or idea by means of listening. "Many learners need good listening skills to support the demands made on them in school, work, travel or other settings" (Richard, 2005, p. 85). If the listener does not have an opportunity to provide the speaker such feedback, then the exchange is not really communicative. In other words, a

good listening skill is very needed to comprehend the oral message.

Field (1998) states, "Teaching of listening has become more sensitive to learner needs, but our listening lessons remain predictable in form and content, and the presuppositions which underlie them are left unquestioned" (p. 111). It infers that the form and content of listening materials used by the language teachers tend to be the same or similar for much of the time of their teaching. It makes learners not creative since they

can easily guess the answers to every listening task given to them without making them think hard. This situation is not good for the improvement of their listening comprehension achievement.

According to Richard (2005, p.85), “The status of listening in language program has changed from being a neglected skill relegated to passing treatment as a minor strand within a speaking course it now appears as a core course in many language programs”. This changing is valuable to develop good listening skill and also to support the growth of other aspects of language. Because listening is so challenging, teachers need to think carefully about making activities successful and content interesting for learners. Therefore, it is necessary for English language teachers to pay more attention to how this skill can be fostered by the learners in or outside classroom activities.

Furthermore, Richard (2008, p. 3) examines that there are two different perspectives of listening as follow; listening as comprehension and listening as an acquisition. The first, listening as comprehension is emphasized on how to access meaning through listening which focuses on the message rather than on form. The second, listening to acquisition is emphasized on how to promote language acquisition through listening, and how it facilitates language development. Both perspectives make the teacher aware of the values of teaching listening in the language program.

There are many possible ways provided outside the listening EFL classroom in order to develop students' listening skill. The amount of classroom time spent on listening need to be considered. Listening courses must make use of students' prior knowledge

in order to improve listening comprehension. As classroom time is limited, students should be encouraged to practice listening outside of the class as often as possible. One of the possible ways discussed here is the use of ELT Podcasts which are available on the Internet. As Warlick (2005) and Adams (2006) state that podcasting was originally for conveying information and entertainment. But soon educators saw the huge potential it has for teaching and learning. It can be said that teaching English can be done in advanced ways by the use of online media delivery, in this case, ELT Podcasts. The podcast is recorded audio available on the internet which functions as authentic material for teaching listening. Podcasts can be freely downloaded by everyone at any time. The podcast is completed with its transcript. The podcast includes various topics for listening activities. According

to Selingo (2006), "Podcast is a new technology for broadcasting audio programs on the Internet". Podcast derives its name from the words iPod and broadcasting. It means the publishing of audio or video via the internet. Podcast provides a means for students to get access to authentic listening sources about almost any subject that may interest them. The utility of authentic materials for teaching the English language has been suggested for many years in English language teaching. McCullough (2007) explains that the use of authentic materials gives teachers the opportunity to discuss register, form, and other cultural and rhetorical elements that might be eliminated if the material were edited to increase its simplicity(p. 30). The authentic materials provide examples of false starts, hesitations, filled and empty pauses, etc. that

indicate natural speech. Such examples can be found in terms of Podcasts.

Podcasts are designed to be downloaded and listened to on MP3 player of any type, personal computer, etc. Podcasts are usually updated at the regular time period. Li (2009) claims that the podcasts offer all kinds of interesting topics which students can browse through (p. 87). A large number of podcasts containing various and different topics for listening materials are displayed and even downloadable from the internet. The various sources of podcast that can be browsed and downloaded are as follow: Fun English Lessons, ESLpod.com, Business English Pod, BetterAtEnglish.com, IELTS Podcast, ESL podcasts from Shambles.net, Audio and Video podcasts from CNN, Languagecaster.com: English through Football, National Public Radio

podcasts, ELT Podcast, Odeo.com, Podfeed.net, and so on.

Among other sources, ELT podcasts are examples of educational podcasts that teachers can use to develop listening comprehension. ELT Podcasts become alternative solution not only for teachers as authentic teaching materials but also for learners as authentic learning materials. As teaching materials, ELT Podcasts provides teachers a plenty of listening topics or contents to be discussed during listening class. Furthermore, as learning materials, ELT Podcasts can be a source of fun, interesting, and accessible materials for learners to foster their listening skill development. Learners could review, analyze, and discuss the listening topics or contents not only inside but also outside of English classes. This will create a good habit for them and hone their listening skills if they are accustomed to doing it.

At a beginning, teachers can start searching the general podcast directories. A podcast directory contains a searchable database that is linked to sites that provide podcast. Furthermore, teachers may go directly to educational podcasts directories in the form of ELT podcasts. Size (2006, p. 118-119) did a brief survey about the content types of ELT podcasts which are available on the Internet. Those content types of ELT Podcasts are listed below.

- Comprehensive, for example, www.englishteacherjohn.com/podcast/
- Whole lessons, for example, <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com/>
- Vocabulary, idioms, etc., for example, <http://neyorkenglish.net/>
- Conversations with the script, for example, <http://www.e-poeche.net/vconversations/>

- Jokes, for example, <http://www.manything.org/joke/>
- Songs, for example., <http://englishpodsong.blogspot.com/>
- Phonetics, pronunciation, for example, <http://phoneticpodcast.com/>
- Stories, for example, <http://www.englishthroughstories.com/>
- Listening comprehension, for example, <http://mylcpodcasts.blogspot.com/>

In the later stage of utilizing ELT Podcasts as the authentic audio materials for listening, students can also create and publish their own podcasts instead of downloading the audio or video from the internet. Santosa (2008) describes “five steps of podcasting such as (1) record the material, (2) edit the podcast, (3) compress the file, (4) tag and package the file, and (5) publish and syndicate the podcast” (p.40).

Those steps can be done after the equipment such as laptop and microphone are prepared. It is assumed that students have been familiar enough with the use of podcasts from the internet. In other words, the students who are accustomed to experiencing or downloading podcasts will be much easier and trained to create and publish their own work in the further stages of using podcasts. They become creative and innovative in the process of listening activities.

Furthermore, the use of ELT podcasts bring beneficial backwash for both teachers and students such as; first, it can reduce the time-consuming in teaching and learning listening in the classroom. McCarty (2005) points out, "Podcasting opens up the new educational potential of using the unproductive time for learning". Time, here, which is one of the problems in English language classroom can be

minimalized. Second, ELT Podcasts can give students a potential audience of thousands for their work. Since Podcasts can be interactive, students not only can utilize ELT Podcasts published by other people on the internet, but students also can publish their own works in terms of ELT podcast which can also be downloaded by other users.

Third, it is great for developing literacy skills of the students. ELT podcasts involve students' activeness in treating and honing their abilities in using many aspects of language skills. If this positive habit is gradually done by the learners, they will develop their listening comprehension and acquisition subconsciously. Eventually, making a podcast is also great for developing teamwork skills. Learners can create and publish such kind of ELT Podcasts hand in hand with their friends. ELT Podcast can enhance collaboration and cooperation among learners during the

listening activities in or outside the classroom.

The aim of this study was to help both teachers and students in overcoming the ignorance of listening comprehension development and in providing interesting, fun, and accessible teaching materials for listening comprehension

METHODOLOGY

The research method applied in this study was a quasi-experimental research which concerned on two variables namely independent variable (utilizing ELT Podcasts) and the dependent variable (listening comprehension).

The population of this study was all the eighth graders of SMPN 2 Teluk Gelam in the academic year of 2014/2015. There were four classes which consisted of 149 students. Then, by using purposive sampling technique,

class VIII A was taken as the experimental group and class VIII B was taken as the control group. Each class consisted of 34 students.

A written test in the form of cloze procedure test was distributed to both groups in order to collect the data. The test had been validated in terms of its content validity. It also had been reliable before it was used.

Furthermore, the data obtained from the test were scored, tabulated and analyzed statistically in terms of its normality and homogeneity by using SPSS 16. Then, t-test analysis was used to identify whether or not there was a significant difference in listening comprehension achievement between the students in the experimental class which were taught using ELT Podcasts and that of those who were not.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Statistical analysis in the experimental group showed that the students' listening comprehension achievement had increased after having the treatment using ELT Podcasts. Based on paired statistics on the experimental group, the mean score of the pretest was 67.27, and the standard deviation was 1.0022 while the mean of the posttest was 76.60 and the standard deviation was 1.0868. Moreover, the result of paired samples t-test showed that the mean difference between the pretest and posttest in the experimental group was 3.2647 with the standard deviation was 1.2982, standard error mean was 8.3485 and value of t-obtained was 14.663 at the significance level of $p < 0.05$ in two-tailed testing with df of 33, the critical value of t-table was 2.0345. Since the value of t-obtained was higher than the critical value t-table ($14.663 > 2.0345$)

and the mean of posttest scores was higher than the mean of pretest scores ($76.60 > 67.27$), it indicated that there was a progress in the students' listening comprehension achievement before and after the treatment in the experimental group. By using ELT podcast, students were highly motivated to follow the listening activities in order to understand the words easily that they heard from the audio. ELT podcast could make the students focus on grasping the meaning of the listening materials and they became more active in listening audio. Then, students felt enjoy and comfortable to learn listening by using ELT podcast.

Meanwhile, based on paired statistics of the control group, the mean of the pretest was 65.09 and the standard deviation was 1.2094, while the mean of the posttest was 66.59 and the standard deviation was 1.17163.

Furthermore, based on the result of paired samples t-test, the mean difference between the pretest and posttest in the control group was 1.5000 with the standard deviation was 0.9614, standard mean error was 0.1649 and value of t-obtained was 9.098 at the significant level $p < 0.05$ in two-tailed testing with df of 33, the critical value of t-table was 2.0345. Since the value of t-obtained was higher than the critical value of t-table ($9.098 > 2.0345$) and the mean of posttest scores was higher than the mean of pretest scores ($66.59 > 65.09$), it meant that there was also a progress in the students' listening comprehension achievement in the control group. In control group, students did not use ELT podcast during listening comprehension activities. Eventhough the students in control group were taught without utilizing ELT podcast, they could also improve their listening skill. It

happened because they had comprehended the material by listening to the audio for many times. They were interested in listening the audio spoken by native speakers. This influenced the progress of their achievement. However, the progress was not really significant compared with the progress in the experimental group.

Furthermore, the independent samples t-test was used in order to find out whether or not there was any significant difference in students' listening comprehension achievement between the experimental and control groups. Therefore, the result of posttest in the experimental group was compared to those in the control group.

Based on the result of independent samples t-test, the value of t-obtained was 9.682 at the significant level $p < 0.05$ in two-tailed testing with df of 32, the critical value of t-table was 1.9966. Since the value of t-obtained

was higher than the critical value of t -table, the research hypothesis was confirmed. In other words, there was a significant difference in listening comprehension achievement between the students who were taught using ELT podcast and that of those who were not. The summary of the statistical results of independent sample t -test of the experimental and control groups can be seen in the following table.

Table 1
The Summary of the Statistical Results of Independent t -test

Posttest		Mean Difference of Post Test Between Exp. & Con.	t -Value of Post Test Between Exp. & Con.
Mean Exp	Mean Con		
76.60	66.59	10.01	9.682 Sig. 0.000

Having analyzed the findings above, ELT podcast was seemed to enable students to be involved in meaningful way in English class and allowed them to think critically. They also could express their ideas in

English. ELT podcast could help the students not only to learn new words but also to be more independent learners. Through ELT podcast, the teacher could monitor students at every step in order to get them to complete their work and it also increased teacher's confidence in their abilities to design meaningful activities that successfully engage students to understand new words in listening comprehension class. This way could increase the students' skill in listening. Hence, ELT podcast was believe to be one alternative way to motivate the students in experiencing the listening activities inside or outside classroom hours. Afterall, they could improve their listening comprehension skill.

CONCLUSION

The less attention to the development of students' listening comprehension and acquisition had

made language teachers think hard and carefully about finding what a great solution was for that problem. Here, the use of ELT Podcast may become an alternative solution for both teachers and students dealing with the common problems of listening comprehension development that they faced inside and outside the classroom. EFL teachers and learners can get various kinds of the podcast on the internet by downloading them in one click to support the process of teaching listening with authentic audio sources. Even, they can add podcast directories on the Internet by publishing their own created podcasts. ELT Podcasts are further considered as the chosen type of Podcast that can help teachers in providing new interesting authentic materials for teaching listening and can treat students' involvement with their listening activities in the purpose of increasing

their level of listening comprehension development.

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