

**THE EFFECT OF USING PODCAST TOWARDS THE LISTENING
COMPREHENSION OF THE SECOND SEMESTER STUDENTS OF ENGLISH
STUDY PROGRAM OF ISLAMIC UNIVERSITY OF RIAU**

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Abstract

Podcasting is a multimedia that provides a lot of authentic listening materials and it can be downloaded on the internet freely. Podcasting nowadays become an alternative way of learning listening which can give positive effects towards students' listening comprehension. Using podcast as a medium for learning opens a new opportunity in the language learning context. This research was carried out at English the Study program of the Islamic University of Riau Pekanbaru. The objective of this research is to find out the impact of using podcast in English listening process on the students' listening comprehension ability. The sample of this research consisted of 31 students drawn by purposive random sampling from the students of the second semester. The instrument of this research was listening test by using TOEFL IBT. In this research, the test consist of six topics with 30 items questions. The effectiveness of podcast can be seen in improving students' listening comprehension by comparing average scores of pre-test and post-test. After analyzing the test, the writers found that the mean score of post-test is greater than pre-test (36.38 for post-test and 27.80 for pre-test) significantly at 1% level. Therefore, the null hypothesis is rejected and the alternative hypothesis is accepted. It means, podcast can give the positive effect on the students' listening comprehension.

Key words: Podcast, Students' Listening Comprehension

A. Introduction

In learning a language, listening is one skill that should be acquired at early stage before other skills such as speaking, reading and writing. After listening someone will learn to speak a word or sentence that he or she heard. In learning a foreign language, learning listening does not only study the utterances or word that we heard but learners should learn the utterances that happened in real context or situational. To overcome the problem and difficulties that are faced by mostly students in learning listening, many English teachers and experts in language teaching attempt to find the best approaches, methods and strategies to assist their students in learning listening.

A lot of ways in teaching listening emerge due to the demand of the development of English as a foreign language. One of them is applying the technology in teaching listening. As we are living in the culture of digital media, many young people are now permanently connecting to technologies by constantly involved in on-line chatting, blogging, computer gaming, MP3 players, text messaging, mobile phones, and internet surfing for many of their information and social needs. During this time teachers have been finding that students use computer and the internet as well as their MP3 players and other digital media and devices mainly for the entertainment. This phenomenon has attracted young and creative teachers to utilize the development of technology in teaching listening.

The objective of this research is to find out the impact of using podcast in English listening process on the students' listening comprehension ability of English study program of Islamic University of Riau.

Literature Review

Listening-related theories

Many researchers have given their definitions of listening comprehension. For example, Brown and Yule (1983) explained listening comprehension as a process of understanding, repeating what was heard, figuring out the meaning of an exact word, and then knowing what an expression refers to. Or Bartos (2008) who explained that listening comprehension is a process of trying to understand what spoken language refers to in one's experience or in the real world.

According to Wang Shouyan (2003), the most important component in the five aspects of overall English competence are listening, speaking, reading, writing and translation, each deserves particular attention. Language learning depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening is the first language mode that children acquire. It provides the foundation for all aspects of language and cognitive development, and it

plays a life-long role in the processes of communication. A study by Wilt (1950), found that people listen 45% of the time they spend in communicating.

Language learning depends on listening since it provides the aural input that serve as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening is the fundamental language ability. People gain a large portion of their education, their information, their understanding of the world and of human affairs, their ideals, sense of values, and their appreciation through the medium. Communication, much of it oral, is one of a vital importance that students have to listen to effectively and critically. Therefore; teachers must actively explore the nature and process of listening comprehension and study the theory and methodology of listening comprehension in order to improve listening teaching outcomes and makes students recognize that listening comprehension is the crucial aspect of English learning. Listening comprehension is a primary process in understanding the words of the speaker. A complex communication process requires instant thought and individual ability to construct the meaning.

The development of listening comprehension varies depending on the personal, social, and cultural experiences of the student. Effective listeners are able to recognize the speaker's main points or ideas and identify supporting details and examples. Comprehensive listening is the ability to identify and understand what others are saying. The aspect of listening comprehension involved understanding text, understanding conversation, statement, and vocabulary (Nunan, 1991). According to Nation and Newton (2009), listening comprehension is an interactive process that requires the listener to use top down and bottom up process simultaneously. While he or she is listening to a passage, aspects in listening comprehension are the learner needs to apply knowledge of sounds, grammar, conversation mechanism, cohesion, discourse structure, discourse type, and social relationship, all at the same time. Previous writer has identified a number of factor as determinants of proficiency in a foreign language. With a greater understanding of language quality and the development of teaching theory, there has been recognition of the process of listening comprehension as needing greater emphasis. Listening is an invisible mental process, making it difficult to describe.

The design of listening exercises in the high and low grades should have obviously different requirements. Multiple-choice is one of the common patterns of listening exercises at present. The comprehension point in multiple-choice listening test materials is usually partial or local because many answers are certain digit, word, phrase, or sentence of listening materials to lead to partial limit of listening comprehension.

An overview of Podcast

The unrelenting development of the Internet has brought new opportunities for educators to communicate with learners. Many educational institutions took advantage of the great potential of the virtual learning and incorporated e-learning into their traditional teaching methods as a part of the blended-learning approaches. In comparison with traditional lectures, e-learning has the advantage of flexibilities by allowing learners to choose when, where and how they study.

M-learning or mobile learning is the best aspects of e-learning and extend its usage by employing portable wireless technologies such as personal digital assistants (PDAs), MP3 Players, mobile phones and smart phone. These devices, the ever-increasing accessibility of technology, and the fast pace at which technology is changing today, have had an immense impact on development and expansion of students' learning styles and strategies (Flowerdew and Miller, 2005: 165). The massive advancement of the Internet and portable wireless technologies enabled the gradual development of inherent part of e-learning and m-learning: *Podcasting*.

The technology of podcasting is relatively new and yet seems to be becoming a very popular method in education, giving the learners the opportunity to study anytime and anywhere. "Like other digital technology innovation podcasting is flexible, dynamic and powerful means and has something to offer all teachers no matter what the subject of grade level" (Gura & King, 2007: 148).

In language learning podcasting help popularize the area that is often not very popular among students, and that is often not given much attention—listening. The New Oxford American Dictionary (Oxford University Press, 2005) defines podcast as a multimedia digital file made available on the internet for downloading to a portable media player, computer, and designated it the word of the year in 2005, owing to the rapid growth in the popularity of this broadcast medium over the course of that year (BBC, 2005).

"Podcasting", created by MTV VJ Adam Curry, is a term that was devised as a way to describe the technology used to push audio content from websites down to consumers of that content, who typically listen to it on their ipod or other audio player that supports mp3 at their convenience. According to P. Constantine, a podcast is the name of a digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program. Podcast published on the internet as MP3 files. Interested listeners are able to download these MP3 files onto their personal computer or personal MP3 player of any type. The files can be listened to at the convenience of the listener. Learners can listen over and over to any material that is of interest to them. Podcast can be a short as two to three

minutes and as long as an hour. Learners can subscribe to a podcast through an RSS subscription (Really Simple Syndication).

English Language Teaching Podcast

English language teaching (ELT) podcast can be used for both intensive and extensive listening activities. However, ELT podcast are particularly suitable for extensive learning, for the purpose of motivating students' interest in listening to English, and providing them with exposure to native speakers' speech (Rost, in Petr Bartos, 1991:119).

According to Guru and King (2007: 147), "ELS students have a natural need to consume content that is rich in listening to spoken language and instructional programs designed for them require constant acquisition of new content to satisfy that need." Stanley (2006) states that "podcast offer language teachers and students a wide range of possibilities for extra listening both inside and outside of the classroom. Supplementing the (often) scripted and stilted textbook listening with the real life authentic conversations, you can find on many podcasts is an attractive option for language teachers (not to mention their students)." If chosen carefully, extracts from podcasts can provoke stimulating discussion, and bring different variations of voices and varieties of English into the classroom, and podcasts can be selected because their theme ties into the curriculum (Stanley, 2006). Stanley (2006) further claims that at more advanced levels, students can be encouraged to download and listen to entire episodes of podcasts that we choose for them for homework. If we add listening activities, which can be as simple as a note-taking or/and summary writing task (both of which require minimal teacher preparation), then this becomes more focused and rewarding for the students. As podcasting matures, the popularity of this technology grows as well as the number of educators adopting it. This large number, however, tends to sort itself out into an ample, but finite number of approaches and practices. (King & Gura, 2007: 181).

There are various types of podcast teachers and educators might use with their students. Stanley (2005) divides them into 3 sections: Authentic podcast, Teacher created podcast, Students created podcast.

Authentic Podcast is podcasts that are found on the internet. There are so many podcast provided on the internet such as Six Minute English from BBC World Service, Listen to English – Learn English or Toefl IBT Podcast. Those are ideal for upper and lower level classes. Such podcast according to King & Gura (2007:201) "can be played easily to the class in a whole group instruction activity, substituting the digital audio items for textbooks or supplementary hard copy items.

Teachercreated Podcasts is teachers-created podcasts. As the heading suggests, these podcasts are created by teachers, and are usually aimed at helping students learn by producing listening content.

Lastly, students Created Podcast are podcasts produced by students, but often with teacher help. Students can listen to these and experience the culture and hear about the lives and interests of other students from around the world. For example *English Conversations* (<http://englishconversations.org/>) is a podcast largely made by students for students. King and Gura (2007: 201) believe that "creating podcast in a form of a project can be highly motivating opportunities to produce an authentic product/performance to be presented to real audience".

The range of ELT podcasts is growing, and many are supported by transcripts and various exercises. A brief survey of forms of ELT podcasts, adapted from Man-Man SZE (2007), reveals the following content types:

- Comprehensive (e.g., <http://www.thebobandrobshow.com>) - These are podcasts that cover a wide range of content types, such as traditional listening comprehension activities, interviews, and vocabulary. A well-known "comprehensive" podcast is the one quoted above, created by Bob and Rob, teachers of English at Japanese universities.
- Whole lessons (e.g., <http://www.breakingnewsenglish.com>) - These are whole lessons based on a podcast. The podcast quoted above, for example, makes use of a news story in each episode. The text of the news story is provided, and is accompanied by the audio file. There is then a lesson plan accompanied with worksheet materials. In effect, these are ready-made lessons based on podcasts which teachers can use in the classroom directly.
- Vocabulary, idioms, etc. (e.g., <http://premiumenglish.podbean.com>) - This is a popular type of podcast, probably because it is easy to produce. In this kind of podcast, the host chooses some vocabulary items and explains their usage.
- Conversations with a script (e.g., <http://englishconversations.org/>) - These podcasts contain conversations between native speakers. To help less proficient learners, each episode is accompanied by the script, for learners to refer to while listening to the conversation.
- Jokes (e.g., <http://www.manythings.org/jokes>) - These are podcasts containing jokes. Because they usually play on language, they encourage careful listening by the learner.

- f) Stories (e.g., <http://learnenglish.britishcouncil.org/en/stories>) - These are usually story read aloud. They may or may not be followed by listening comprehension questions.
- g) Poetry (e.g., <http://classicpoetryaloud.com>) - These are podcast containing the great poems of the past. One can listen to the declamation and read the poem. Many non-native students of English find that listening to poetry gives an added dimension to their understanding and appreciation of the language.

B. Data Analysis And Discussion

Research methods

This research was quasi experimental which involved second semester students of English study program at the Islamic University of Riau Pekanbaru. Out of this population we drew an experimental group consist of 31 students as samples by using purposive sampling method - a technique to select samples based on specific criteria. The criteria is the ownership of Android smart phones; therefore only students who have android smart phone are selected as samples in this resegrch.

There are three stages in conducting this research. The first one is doing pre-test in order to know the students' ability before they have treatments. In the second stage students are given treatment by using podcast in listening TOEFL conversation and lectures to help them in listening for basic comprehension, pragmatic understanding and connecting information question. The third stage is post test to evaluate the impact of podcast on the students' ability in listening comprehension. The materials for pre-test and post-test were the same and it was gained from Learn English Today TOEFL IBT Podcast. There were six topics with 30 questions for pre-test and post-test. The effectiveness of podcast can be seen in improving students' listening comprehension by comparing average scores of pre-test and post-test.

The pre test was used as an instrument to evaluate the students' listening ability for basic comprehension, pragmatic understanding and connecting information question improvement in listening. The second listening test was going to be acquired by the students after the experimental group have experienced a treatment in using podcast from listening TOEFL conversation and listening TOEFL lectures podcast. The results of the two tests are compared and calculating the result of the two tests to see the students' progress of each components in listening comprehension.

Results and Discussion

The results of this experimental research are showed in Table 1. As the table indicates, the increase of students' ability for Listening for Basic Comprehension, Pragmatic Understanding and Connecting Information Questions are 11.4 %, 11.61 %, and 0.92 % consecutively. The overall listening comprehension components of the students were increase, especially for Listening for Pragmatic Understanding Questions. The percentages of students' listening comprehension components can also be seen in figure 1.

Table 1. The Mean of Listening Comprehension Components

	Listening Comprehension Components		
	Listening for		
	Basic Comprehension Questions	Pragmatic Understanding Questions	Connecting Information Questions
Pre-test Mean	20,60	33,22	31,33
Post-test Mean	32	44,83	32,25
Total Increase (%)	11.4 %	11.61 %	0.92 %

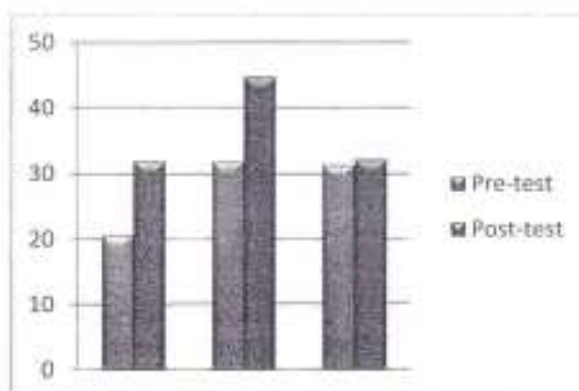


Figure 1. The Students Increase in Listening Comprehension Components

In sum, from the differences result of the pre-test and post-test, podcast the post-test was greater than pre-test. Therefore, English teachers can use podcast in order to increase students' listening comprehension components: Listening for Basic Comprehension Questions, Listening for Connecting Information Questions, and Listening for Pragmatic Understanding Questions.

It was found that the overall increase of the percentage mean score of post-test was higher than that of pre-test (36,38>27,8) with the increase of 8,58 %. The increase of students' ability for Listening for Basic Comprehension, Listening for Pragmatic Understanding and Listening for Connecting Information were 11,4 %, 11,61 %, and 0,92 % consecutively.

Finally, the hypothesis of the impact of podcast on listening comprehension was tested by using t-test. The t-test statistics is used to measure whether null or alternative hypothesis are accepted or rejected. It was found that t- calculated (3,37) was greater than t-table (2,750), on the level of significance 1%.

C. Conclusion And Suggestion

Based on the research explained above we can conclude that Podcast can improve students' ability on all components of Listening Comprehension. The means score of post test increase significantly after using podcast in listening learning process. In other words, the mean score of post test was higher than the mean score of pre-test. Based on the analysis of data, the research result can be concluded as follows:

Using podcast in teaching listening is much more helpful rather than using the traditional instruments such as tape as tape recorder, CD room and other conventional devices. When the students learn listening by using podcast they can give their full attention and more focus in listening. They also have more available times to practice listening. They can listen not only in the classroom but also outside the classroom. The students confess if they lack of listening practice and by having podcast they are able to practice more because there are so many authentic academic listening material in podcast.

There are some positive effects that the researcher found in using podcast. Firstly, podcast could attract more of students' attention. Secondly, when they are listening they are able to give their concentration more on what they listened to. Thirdly, the students confess if they have a little bit practice on listening especially listening for academic purpose and podcast can give the students many chances to practice their academic listening skill.

Suggestion For Students

Based on the result of the students' listening comprehension test, it can be seen that listening is not an easy subject to be learnt by the second semester English students at Islamic University of Riau. The students need to get more practice in listening. By knowing the application of podcast, the researcher hopes that the students are willing to listen more on their podcast because it provides a lot of academic listening materials and it can help the students to improve their academic listening comprehension subject. Having podcast gives the students more available times to do listening practice and it can be done not only in the classroom but also outside the room.

Suggestion For Lecturer

By knowing the students' weakness in listening comprehension, the lecturer should give more practices to the students in order to improve their listening comprehension. Using podcast can help the lecturer to provide hundreds of listening materials to the students. The lecturer also has to check every student's activity while they are listening because when they are listening they will be active in using their phone and to avoid the misuse of using the phone the lecturer has to make sure if they are exactly listening on their podcast.

For The Next Researcher

This researcher hope that if the next researchers want to continue this research, they can try to do the research which discuss about the students' responds who are highly motivated in learning listening by using podcast. It can be a descriptive research and elaborate more about the use of podcast in listening.

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