

USING PODCAST TO IMPROVE STUDENTS' LISTENING COMPREHENSION ON DESCRIPTIVE TEXT

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Abstract: The objective of the study was to find out whether or not the use of Podcast significantly improved students' listening comprehension on descriptive text. The population of the study was the eighth grade students of SMP Negeri 10 Palembang in the academic year 2013/2014. The sample was 40 students that were taken by using a population single technique. This study applied pre-experimental research method, which was, one group pre-test post-test design. The data were collected by means of a listening test. The result of the paired sample t-test showed that the mean difference between students' pre-test and post-test was 22.57, with significance value was .000. This result showed that teaching listening comprehension through Podcast had a significant effect on students' listening comprehension. In other words, it can be concluded that teaching listening comprehension through Podcast significantly increased students' listening comprehension.

Key words: *listening comprehension, Podcast, descriptive text*

The undeniable role of English as a global means of communication can be the reason that English is accommodated as one of the subjects taught at school. The important role of English is pointed out by Diem (2011) who states, "to fulfill the needs in globalization era, English will take the strategic place in the world" (p.160). Therefore, having English skill can be considered as beneficial. For example, people who want to have better job opportunities as well as better chances in keeping up with what is new in their field of specialty can earn more credit if they can speak English.

In Indonesia, English has a vital role in many aspects of life, particularly in science and technology, English has been taught as obligatory subject from junior high school up to the senior high school level. The importance of English, as Ihsan (2011) claims, includes the ability to communicate both orally and in writing. Therefore, Ihsan (2011) argues, "people need to master all skills of English namely listening, speaking, reading, and writing" (p.12).

Listening as one of the English language skills is the receptive skill which is the most common

communication activity in daily life. It is an active activity that involves receiving, understanding, and perceiving a message from a conversation. Morley (1991) points out that listening as one of the language skills is a crucial element that needs to be mastered by adult foreign language learners because, people can expect to listen twice as much as they speak, four times more than they read, and five times more than they write. In other words, listening has important roles in human life as people listen more than they speak, read, and write.

The importance of listening in English language learning is also highlighted by Richards (1990, 2008) who states that language learning depends on listening, which provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables learners to interact in spoken communication. Listening can also provide much of the input and data that learners receive in language learning, because when people start to learn a foreign language, their earliest learning comes mainly through their ears (Scott & Ytterberg, 1990)

However, listening does not seem to receive as much attention as the other language skills. According to Tompkins and Hoskisson (1995, p. 81), "Among four language skills –listening, speaking, reading, and writing- listening has been called the neglected skill for some decades". In addition, Persulesy (1988, as cited in Wicaksana, 2009) states, "one of the reasons for the opinion that listening tends to be neglected is the feeling among language teachers that this skill is automatically acquired by the learners as they learn to speak language". In other words, Most English teachers take it for granted and believe that listening skill will develop naturally within the process of English language learning.

In Indonesia, English is a required subject for secondary level students.

The teaching of English in Indonesia has objectives. For example, the teaching of English for junior high school level which is based on the 2006 Curriculum aims to enable students to respond the meaning of simple short monologue accurately, fluently and appropriately to interact with surrounding environment in form of descriptive and recount text (Indonesian Ministry of Education, 2006). For example, to respond to the monologue accurately, students have to be able to listen to the monologue and comprehend it. Therefore, it means that students are expected to not only listen to the monologue but also be able to understand the meaning behind the monologue.

In Indonesia, Listening skill is rarely taught in the classroom. As Suparmin (1999, as cited in Ma'arif, 2011) argues, "listening has not been given proper attention by the teachers in teaching and learning English as a foreign language in secondary school in Indonesia"(p.4). Therefore, it is worth saying that although listening skill is important, it seems to be neglected by the teacher of English. In addition, according to Novalia (2011), "There are only few schools that give some practices in Listening skill. Moreover, there are so many schools that do not have language laboratory and some of the schools that have had a language laboratory still let it unused"(p.2).

In addition to what Suparmin (1999) and Novalia (2011) state, the writer's experience during his teaching practice at SMP Negeri 10 Palembang, also showed that listening skill was almost never be taught to the students, although there is a multimedia classroom which provide facilities (tape recorder, speaker, and headset) for teaching listening skill. An informal interview between the writer and the two English teachers at SMP Negeri 10 Palembang (personal communication, August 15, 2013), made the writer came

to a conclusion that listening skill seemed being ignored by the teacher in teaching and learning English. Some factors that may contribute to this are, the time allocation for teaching listening skill is not adequate, and lack of teaching materials.

The fact that listening skill does not receive as much attention as the other skills cannot be neglected. Some efforts should be done to solve this problem. Using podcast is one of the ways to solve the problem. Podcast is almost similar as regular audio/ video; the difference is that a subscription from certain websites that offer podcast is necessary so that the new available podcasts can be downloaded.

According to Constantine (2007), podcast is the name of digital recording of a radio broadcast or similar program. Podcasts are published on the internet as mp3 files. The advent of podcast on the internet has given the language teacher a goldmine of materials for teaching listening skills. Podcasts can be short as two to three minutes and as long as an hour. English teachers can subscribe to a podcast through RSS subscription (Really Simple Subscription). By subscribing through RSS, when there is a new episode available, it is downloaded to the computer automatically. In addition, it comes at no cost to the subscriber. Because podcast content is free, teachers now have a way to build up a big listening library for their students on contemporary and relevant topics. English teachers can also encourage students to download podcast on their own so that they have more listening input.

In this study the writer used Podcast in the form of descriptive text. Descriptive text is a text which presents information about something specifically. Descriptive text describes a particular person or thing or place. The reason the writer choose descriptive text is based on the curriculum of the eight

grade students, descriptive text become one of their focused materials. Another reason is because the students are rarely taught the listening skill so the writer choose the first material in the curriculum which is descriptive text.

There are previous studies that applied Podcast. A study done by McKinney, Dyck and Luber (2008) for example, investigated whether or not podcast could replace a lecture. The finding showed that the students who were exposed to podcast did significantly better in their studying than students who attended the in-class lecture (McKinney et al, 2008). This result was unexpected and somewhat novel in the body of literature on the use of technology to aid learning.

Moreover, a study done by Kavaliauskiene (2008) found that podcasting could be used as a tool for improving listening skill. Kavaliauskiene (2008) claims that there is an opportunity for raising language awareness by employing podcasting which allows learners to carry out homework, and assignments, at their own pace and under non-threatening condition. Another study done by Puspitasari (2011) revealed that implementing STAD with podcast materials could also improve the students' listening ability. In addition, the results of Puspitasari's study (2011) also showed that the students were enthusiastic and active in the teaching and learning process which used podcast materials presented through STAD.

This study also applied Podcast in order to improve students' listening comprehension.

RESEARCH METHOD

A pre-experimental research method that focused on one group pretest-posttest design was applied in this study. Creswell (2005, p. 160) states, "This design includes a pre-test measure followed by a treatment and a

post test for a single group”. From that statement, there was no control group in this study. It could be argued that the exposure of the treatment to the students could be maximized since there was only one group. In addition, having only one group of participant was supported by the school because according to the English teacher for the eighth grade in SMP Negeri 10 Palembang, giving a full attention through the exposure of the Podcast to one group of students is more effective. The only group of students who got involved as the sample of the study was exposed to the Podcasts through 21 meetings, including pre-test and post-test. Each meeting covered a 45-minute teaching learning activity.

In this study, the writer used population-single technique. The writer was allowed to have only one class, that is, VIII. 4. Therefore, the population in this study was also be the sample. Based on the suggestion from the English teacher, Class VIII.4 was chosen because most of the students (N=40) have low English achievement. The listening test used in this study was checked its validity and reliability quantitatively. Based on the statistical analysis, the reliability coefficient was 0.795 and the test was considered reliable. Paired Samples t-test was applied to analyze the data.

FINDINGS

Pre Test and Post Test Results

Before the writer analyzed the result of the pre-test and the post-test scores, the writer checked the normality of both the pre-test and the post-test by using Kolmogorov-Smirnov method. Based on Kolmogorov-Smirnov method, a test can be considered a normal test if the p-value score is >0.05 . The writer found out that the p-value of the pre-test was 0.882 and 0.820 for the post test. Therefore, it can be concluded that both of pre-test and post test data were normal.

After getting the normality test, the writer analyzed the score distribution of pre-test and post-test based on the Kriteria Ketuntasan Minimal (KKM) that is applied for English subject at SMP Negeri 10 Palembang. The result of the distribution of the pre-test and post-test scores for the experimental group is presented in Table 3.

Table 1
The Score Distribution of
Pre-test and Post-test

KKM	Pre-test		Post-test	
	N	%	N	%
≥ 75	0	0	23	57.5
≤ 75	40	100	17	42.5
Total	40	100	40	100

As shown in Table 1, based on the result of the pre-test, all of the students did not pass the KKM. However, the result of the Post-test showed that 23 students (57,5%) could reach the KKM.

The Results of Paired-Sample T-test

Table 2
Result of Paired Sample t-test (N=40)

	Mean	Mean Difference	Sig. (2-tailed)
Pretest	54.14	22.57	.000
Posttest	76.71		

The result of the Paired-Sample t-test analysis conducted for the pre-test and the post-test is shown in Table 2. As shown in Table 2, the mean score of the students' pre-test was 54.14, while the mean score of the post-test is 76.71. The mean difference was 22.57 with the p-value was 0.000.

Interpretations

Based on the analysis of the result of the pre-test, all of the students did not pass the standard score or the KKM set by school for English subject. This

suggested that the students' listening ability was poor. This fact was also suggested by the result of the informal interview that the writer did after giving the students the pre-test. The interview revealed that, most of the student found the listening test difficult because they rarely did listening activities. The students admitted that, the listening activities were conducted orally by the teacher. This kind of activity is not effective for the students because to improve their listening skill, the students need to get involved in listening activities that can provide them with the opportunities to listen to native speaker of English. After the writer taught the students by using Podcast, the score of the students' post-test increased although there were still 17 students (42.5%) of the students did not pass KKM. The result of paired sample T-test also showed that there was significant difference between the result of pre-test and Post-test. This suggests that teaching listening comprehension through Podcast is effective for increasing students' comprehension of the listening materials. This is in line with what is stated by Constantine (2007) that Podcast helps students in learning English especially for listening activities.

In addition to the interpretation that the writer made based on the result of the pre-test and post-test, the writer also made some interpretations based on what the writer encountered during the study. First, the writer found that the students were very interested to learn because of the use of Podcasts. As explained previously, the students were rarely exposed to listening activities that allowed them to listen to the real native speakers of English through listening to audio, but before the writer had taught them by using podcast, the writer had experience in teaching them listening before this research was conducted. The students' scores did not

pass the KKM standard although the writer gave them listening materials in every meeting. It is happened because the listening materials were not effective as much as Podcast. The use of Podcast enabled the students to listen to native speakers of English. This was likely the reason why the students were enthusiastic in learning.

Next, getting involved in something new also made the students became more active in asking questions about the listening materials that they never encountered before. They also focused on their attention to the listening materials presented through Podcast and listened to them attentively. They asked the writer about many things related to what they heard. Their discipline and enthusiasm during the teaching and learning activities made it easier for the writer to manage the class. These facts suggest that teaching listening comprehension through Podcast not only can help increase the students' listening comprehension, but also their interest in doing listening tasks. As Rotgans (2012) claims, to achieve good result in learning English, students should be interested to the teaching and learning activities, thus it will keep their attention longer and make them easier to comprehend the materials.

Finally, based on the results of the interpretations, the writer claims that the use of Podcast can help the students comprehend the listening comprehension better. In addition, the use of Podcast can help the students experience more interesting listening materials and activities.

CONCLUSION AND SUGGESTIONS

The result of the study that the writer did at SMPN 10 Palembang shows that Podcast is one of the media which can help the students comprehend the listening materials better. By using Podcast, the students could improve their ability in

understanding the uncommon English words and they were able to practice their pronunciation skill after listening to the Podcast. Based on the findings of the study, it can also be concluded that Podcast significantly increase students' listening achievement. The paired sample t-test result of the pre-test and the post-test showed that there was a significant difference in students' listening achievement after they were exposed by using Podcast.

Based on the teaching and learning activities, the writer also concluded that Podcast can raise students' interest to learn more about English words and pronunciation. The students got involved in this study were confident to express their English skill after being taught by using Podcast. They also became more active in discussing the material, because the materials in Podcasts are varied and educative. It is also easier for the students to get the materials from Podcast, because Podcast is available on internet and they can download it whenever they wanted.

Finally the writer concluded that Podcast is a good media to teach English especially listening skill because this media provides many contributions in helping the students to get the comprehension of the listening materials.

Based on the results of this study, it was also suggested that teachers of English can apply Podcast as one of the media in teaching listening. Podcast can help the students understand the materials better and increase their confidence while doing the listening activity. The English teachers do not need to be worried about the source of the Podcast because it is largely available on the internet. Second, for the students, especially the students of SMP N 10 Palembang, they can access Podcast everywhere and they can learn English by themselves by using Podcast.

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