English Podcast as Media for English Language Learning: A Case of Higher Education in the Pandemic Situation

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Abstract

The aim of the study was the implementation of English Podcast as the media for English language learning in higher education in the pandemic situation. The study used Research and Development Approach with the students of English department of UNNES as the subject of the study in three courses – Statistics, Intensive Listening and Functional Syntax. The procedure of doing the study consisted of introduction covering literature study and need survey; and development phases. The results produced a concept and a product of podcast based on literature study of books and national as well as international journal articles. Also, it shows that Podcast is very possible to be applied in higher education for its affordable infrastructures. The podcast is an Education Podcast using free-software application – Audacity with some supports such as Television, Portable Podcast Console, *Desktop Podcasting Microphone Kit, Studio Headphone, dan Portable Computer [laptop]*. The audio products were uploaded in the Podcast Website - https://anchor.fm/arif-suryo-priyatmojo/episodes/. Suggestions for the study are the need of support from all stakeholders for podcast development that can reach broader community and 2) active participation of lecturers to integrate technology in the learning process.

Keywords: podcast, English language learning, higher education

INTRODUCTION

Currently, the learning process in higher educations is in the period of the COVID-19 pandemic situation which requires all activities to change from face-to-face learning process to online (virtual) learning. Face-to-face learning process focuses on the lecturer as the main source of information and students as the subject of the learning process. One of the benefits of face-to-face learning process is the direct interaction between lecturers and students so that interactions can run well. However, the learning process has been changing due to the COVID-19 pandemic situation which requires the learning process to be carried out online (virtual). This has resulted the changes

of the learning process using alternative media - technology. With the use of appropriate technology, it is hoped that the learning outcomes can be achieved. Technology with all its products has mushroomed and is widely used by lecturers and students through their mobile devices (smartphones, tablets, laptops, etc.).

With the proliferation of technology, lecturers and students need to synergize in adapting to the use of technology in learning activities. During the pandemic situation, the online learning process is very influential on students' language learning, especially when there is less direct interaction between lecturers and students as well as between students. Hence, we need media that can bridge the learning process. With the development of technology with all its products, it must be responded positively because technology cannot possibly be kept away from students' daily lives. It has become the responsibility of the lecturers in utilizing technology to improve students' language skills. One of the technology products that can be utilized is Podcast which is available on the Play Store (Android) and App Store (IOS).

Learning by utilizing Podcast also supports the vision and mission of Universitas Negeri Semarang, which is to support conservation programs, in this case learning conservation using technology.

METHODOLOGY

Research design

This research used a Research and Development (R & D) approach using three courses as the research subjects - Intensive Listening, English Functional Syntax, and Statistics.

Research procedure

1. Introduction Phase: Literature Study and Needs Survey

a. Literature Study Stage

This stage was carried out to obtain an initial description of concepts and theories about podcasts. The subjects observed were books related to Podcasts, articles published in journals, especially regarding previous studies and research that had relevance to Podcasts and articles in the mass media which usually conveyed the conditions for Podcast development in learning activities. However, articles about podcasts used in other course of studies awere also possible to be references.

b. Need Survey

The followings are the steps for data collection:

1. The first step was to observe the condition of language communication in three courses (Intensive Listening, Statistics, Functional Syntax) so that factual condition or data could be accurately documented including language communication in the learning context.

2. The second step was to conduct an interview. The first activity carried out was direct interviews with students (users) and lecturers. The purpose of interview was to find out the form and program of Podcast they need. The second activity was to explore questions purposively and openly to students, lecturers and Podcast management. This process was intended to excavate data that were not previously expected, but were actually important and useful. In addition, interviews with a wider range of stakeholders were also conducted. The third activity was to ask as passive parties to state factual conditions, students, lecturers and campus Podcast management was also intensively involved to participate as shadow designers to participate in analyzing the strengths and weaknesses of existing podcasts.

3. The third step, was the form of a questionnaire (questionnaire) carried out to reach students and lecturers more broadly so that the quantitative data obtained could support the validity of the qualitative data in step one to three. The technique used to collect this data

was providing Student Response Questionnaire Sheets and Lecturer Response Questionnaire Sheets.

4. The fourth step was to conduct a Focus Group Discussion (FGD). The aim was to conduct joint discussions among the members of the research team to identify the various wishes of students and lecturers.

DISCUSSSION

Literature Study

In this study, a literature study was needed as a reference as a source of information about research that has been carried out. The researches were used as a knowledge gap related to the use of podcasts in learning English. Of the many literatures, nine studies were used in this study. The research results were published in indexed international journals.

The first research was conducted by Phillips (2017) which examined student perceptions toward learning using Podcasts. This research was conducted using a survey approach (Survey Design) of two learning classes for two years. Perceptions studied related to the use of Student-produced Podcasts designed and used by students related to group and individual assignments. In this study, it was found that Podcasts gave a positive perception of learning English and it made a pedagogical contribution to classroom learning.

Next was the research conducted by Nwosu et al. (2017). The aim of this study was to evaluate the use of podcasts that facilitated the transfer of knowledge about material related to palliative symptoms. The method used was Podcasts designed in accordance with international quality indicators for medical education podcasts. Podcasts were published on SoundCloud and promoted through social media. The data was taken from January 2015 and February 2016. From the results of the study, it was found that 20 podcasts created were listened to 3036 times (an average of 217 for a month). This means, Podcasts provided the potential to develop educational content.

Another study by Ho et al. (2016) that reported the application of podcasting in language learning. The purpose of this study was to determine the factors that affected the acceptance of the application of podcasting in language learning. To achieve a better understanding of the acceptance of mobile technology, researchers conducted a survey in Taiwan and China. The target sample was limited to people who had experience using Podcasts in general or Podcast for language learning in more specific. Data was collected from 398 people who used the Podcast app voluntarily in Taiwan and from 533 people who used the Podcast app voluntarily in China. The theoretical framework for this research was based on the revised Unified Theory of Acceptance and Use of Technology (UTAUT) model. The results show that performance expectations, effort expectations, social influences, and facilitating conditions influenced behavioral intentions. The results of the Taiwan data show very clear performance expectations, and the results of the Chinese data show very clear facilitation conditions. In addition, with the moderating variables, gender, age and experimentation, the results of the Chinese data show that performance expectations, business expectations, social influences and facilitating conditions have significant significance. However, Taiwan data shows that business expectations are not significant with the moderating variable, gender. And the findings can provide high reference value and feasible theory for Podcast mobile learning and Podcast relative industry.

Another study was conducted by Fadilah et al., (2017). The emergence of the internet made conventional radio broadcasts feel the threat of being abandoned by their listeners. Various ways were used by broadcast radio managers to adapt with the changes in listener behavior, especially in consuming audio content. One strategy was to develop audio podcasts. This form is quite popular in the United States and various countries in Europe, even profitable business, but not yet popular enough in Indonesia. In fact, the potential audience is quite large, because in addition to being able to be heard on the street by commuters, about 30% of the population are auditory learners. For

this reason, a literature study was conducted which aims to explore opportunities for audio podcasts to develop in Indonesia, as well as content analysis of several podcast content provider sites that are quite successful in Indonesia. The results of the study indicated that the audio podcast optimization strategy included the development of podcast materials; approach and distribution of content that was in accordance with the needs, desires, and ways of audiences consuming audio content; and the suitability of the content with the character and orientation of the media. In addition, this effort must also be accompanied by an intensive campaign through various means.

In addition, research related to podcasts was also conducted by Darwis (2016). The development of ICT has brought innovation in second language learning, especially English. Podcasts are considered as a part of ICT which has been widely used and proven to be an effective tool in teaching English. However, many educators are still not aware of Podcast technology and its benefits. Therefore, this study investigated the students' perceptions of the use of podcasts in learning English. In addition, problems faced by students were also investigated. This study involved thirty-three second-grade students in a high school in Bandung as participants. Questionnaires and interviews were used in this study to collect data. After getting the findings, the research shows that students have positive attitudes towards podcasts. Most of the participants agreed that they liked podcasts because it helped them learn English. The clear original content and pronunciation from podcasts also grabbed their interest and made learning more interesting. However, there were also some problems that students faced in using podcasts. The main problem was the length of podcasts. Another problem was caused by the lack of infrastructure such as smartphones, laptops, and internet access which made it difficult for the students to get access to podcasts. Nevertheless, the findings show that podcasts could be a good tool in improving students' English skills.

Furthermore Asoodar et al. (2016) conducted a study on the effect of podcasting on student motivation in an online course English for Academic Purposes (EAP) at the university level (N = 179). Using a mixed-method approach, the researcher analyzed the data collected about students' impressions of using podcasts as a learning tool. The specific aim of this research was to help students conduct research in English in their particular academic field. In their EAP courses, the students were expected to study various types of English texts, listen to media and give lectures on their academic findings. The findings of this study revealed that male students rated podcasting as significantly more relevant and interesting than female students. But they, on the other hand, were significantly more satisfied with using podcasts in their EAP classes. Furthermore, the results show that students who had no previous podcast experiences for academic purposes outperformed students with moderate experience. For further qualitative investigation, several sources were used for data collection including interviews with students, course forums, email, class group blogs, podcasts and open-ended questions. Podcasting as a whole has proven to be very effective in motivating students to study in an online environment.

Then, Barnes et al. (2020) analyzed Podcasts. According to researchers, Podcasts are online digital audio programs that are disseminated through online subscriptions that are easily accessible via computers or smartphones. Medical students prioritized podcasts for asynchronous medical education because of their ease of use, convenience (for example, use during exercise or travel), and repetition. Some trainees found podcasts more useful than traditional didactic lectures. Given the increasing requirements of social distancing and the need for a distance medical education platform, podcast production can serve as a useful tool to complement the education of residents and medical students and is a resource that will remain accessible in perpetuity. The otolaryngology-only podcast, "In short, ENT Headmirror," was created to enhance asynchronous learning and address the acute need for distance learning opportunities. During the first 7 weeks of production, 50 episodes were created. Episodes were posted on www.headmirror.com

with subscription services available through Apple Podcasts, Spotify, and other platforms.

Then a research about benefits of podcasts in pronunciation learning was carried out by Fouz-González (2019). This study investigated the potential of a podcast-based approach aimed at helping foreign language learners improve their pronunciation of features tended to be helpful in their interlanguage. The training lasted for three weeks during which podcasts were used for perceptual and productive practice as well as for peer evaluation. Participants in the study (N = 47) were randomly assigned to two groups acting as control and experimental at the same time. One group received training on English /s – z/ contrast and the other received training on English pronunciation of /b d g/ as a stop in the inter-vowel position. Pre and post tests were used to measure participants' perception and production of target features. The results showed that the training had a positive impact on participants' perception and target sound production. Although the between-group differences did not reach statistical significance for each sound across each task, the data revealed that the approach adopted could induce a substantial increase in participants' pronunciation of features that tend to fossilize, even after a short training period.

The next research was conducted by Chin et al. (2017). Podcasts are becoming increasingly popular as a free, open-access medical education (FOAM) medium. However, little research has examined the use of these extracurricular audio podcasts as a tool in undergraduate medical education. It was aimed to examine the knowledge retention, conditions of use, and preferences of undergraduate medical students at Canadian universities who interacted with extracurricular podcasts. Students enrolled in the undergraduate medical program at McMaster University voluntarily participated in this study. Two podcasts were created specifically for the purposes of this study, and online tests and surveys were sent to participants to collect data regarding podcast user preferences. In addition, the researchers recorded changes in topic test scores before and after podcast exposure. Forty-two students were recruited for this study. Participants who completed the assessment demonstrated a learning effect. Podcasts of 30 minutes or less were preferred for most participants who had a duration preference. The top three activities participants did while listening to podcasts were driving (46%), completing tasks (26%), and exercising (23%). A large number of participants who did not complete the study in its entirety cited lack of time and podcast length as the top two barriers to completion.

Need Survey

To get a Podacast model that can be used in learning English, there were several activities carried out - observations, interviews, questionnaires and FGD (Focus Group Discussion).

1. Observation

Observations were made by looking at the Podcast model used in the world of education, in this case higher education. In addition, observations on the internet were also carried out to see various Podcast models used in several contexts. The followings are the results of the observable infrastructures for a standard podcast studio:

a. Podcast Studio

The following is a standard podcast studio built using Educational Podcast compliant tools.
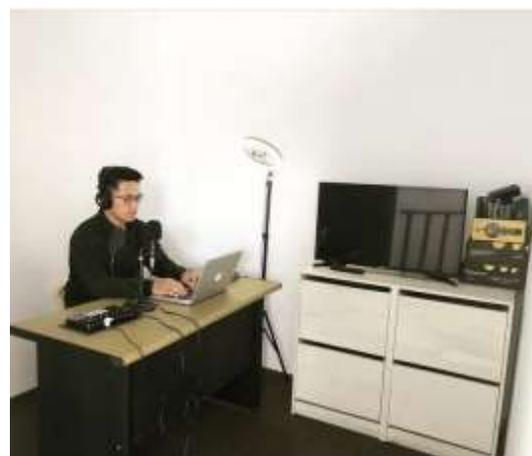

Figure 1. Podcast Studio

b.   Television

In this study, television is used as a visual medium that displays the recording process. The television used in this study is a 32' Samsung LED because the color displays and sound are representative for good results.

c.   MacBook Pro

MacBook Pro is used as a podcast studio master control. This type of MacBook is very suitable because of the superior quality that supports the operation of both audio, image and video. In this study, the MacBook pro used was the 2010 MacBook pro. Even though the product was in 2010, the specs support podcasts.

d.   Printer

The printer is used to print podcast scripts that are used in the recording process. In this study the Canon MP 287 brand printer. This type of printer produces good quality.

e.   Portable Podcast Console

This console is used as a Podcast work control with some strengths - built in battery, 2 people streaming, noise filtering, etc. In this research, the console product used is the AU-AM200 produced by Maono.

Figure 2. Portable Podcast Console AU-AM200

f.   Desktop Podcasting Microphone Kit

This Microphone Kit is a set of equipment that functions as a sound catcher (mix) which is designed professionally like in a radio studio. To produce good audio, the AU-AO3T type produced by Maono was used in this study.

Figure 3. Desktop Podcasting Microphone Kit AU-AO3T

g.   Studio Headphones

A podcaster needs headphones during the broadcasting process. For that we need a headphone that has good quality, so we use the AU-MH5O1 type from Maono.
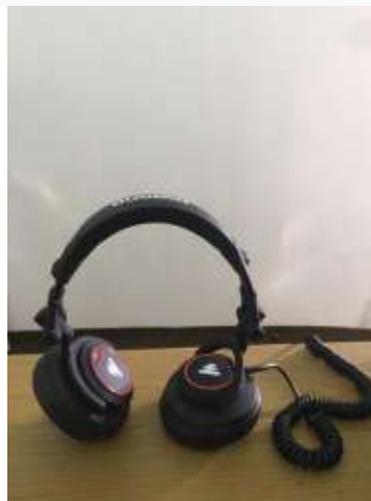

Figure 4. Headphone AU-MH5O1

h.   Screening Lamp

The lamp is used to imrpve the quality of the pictures in the video.

Figure 5. Screening Lamp

2.   Interview

Interviews were conducted online through zoom.com media which asked questions related to Podcasts. The interviews were given using open interviews so that respondents could provide comprehensive and detailed answers. The outline of the questions given in the interview process is as follows:

a.   Have students ever heard or enjoyed Podcasts;

b.   If so, what podcasts do they like and why;

c.   Do they agree with Podcasts made for learning activities;

d.   And Podcasts are what they expected.

3.   Questionnaire

Questionnaires were given to students who were taking courses in Intensive Listening, Statistics and English Functional Syntax. The questionnaire contains the expected opinions/ideas from students regarding Podcasts and is circulated to students through an online application. Related student ideas:

a.   Have students ever heard or enjoyed Podcasts;

b.   If so, what podcasts do they like and why;

c.   Do they agree with Podcasts made for learning activities;

d.   And Podcasts are what they expected.

4.   FGD (Focus Group Discussion)

The FGD in this study has been carried out since the beginning of the study until its completion. The FGD was planned and conducted with the research team, podcast managers and some other stakeholders.

CONCLUSIONS AND SUGGESTIONS

Conclusion

a.   Podcasts are an inexpensive product of today's technology;

b.   Podcasts can be used in English learning activities in higher educations;

c.   Lecturers can use Podcasts as a medium to improve English skills and other benefits

Suggestion

a.   It is necessary to socialize the use of podcasts in learning English;

b.   Lecturers are required to play an active role in the implementation of technology, in this case Podcasts as a medium for improving English skills;

c.   The participation of higher education is very much needed in efforts to increase student competence, especially in English with financial support.

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