STUDENTS' ATTITUDES TO PODCAST AS A SUPPORTING MEDIA FOR ENHANCING LISTENING SKILL: A STUDY OF TANJUNGPURA UNIVERSITY STUDENTS

Suparjan

Abstract: In improving listening skill, one of the instructors applied podcast as a way to enhance the students’ capability in listening as well as to attract the students in learning the skill. Podcasts are the name of a digital recording of a radio broadcast (Constantine, 2007). It is the consequence of the rapid growth of the advance of information and communication technology worldwide. The development of ESL/EFL podcasts has given huge materials for the enhancement of language skills. The availability of the internet has given many opportunities for the students to easily access the learning materials in podcasts. It is then an inquiry whether the students really feel that podcast is helpful in improving their listening skill. This study aimed at investigating the students’ attitudes to the use of podcasts as a media for developing listening skill at Language Centre of Tanjungpura University. The quantitative research design is employed in this study by administering questionnaires. The results of this study indicated that students held neutral attitudes toward podcast as a media for enhancing listening skill. Also, the results demonstrated that Tanjungpura University students agreed that podcasts were useful to sharpen listening skill.

Keywords: ESL/EFL podcast, students’ attitude, listening skill

Introduction
Formerly, teaching English was traditionally a face-to-face process. Nowadays, as technology grows rapidly, although the process keeps in progress, electronic media seem to be a better additional choice in doing the teaching-learning process. Podcast is the recent technology product that supports this process of language education. It has been reported that there have been rapid advances in podcasting as a new technology for broadcasting audio programs on the internet since 2005 (SZE, 2007). At least there is one skill that podcasting may successfully cover in teaching English, listening (Stanley, 2005, O’Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2009, Weinberg, et al, 2011; SZE, 2007).

Listening is one of the four language skills in English language. It is often considered as one of problematic activities for a number of students for English is a foreign language for students in Indonesia. Some students, especially those studying in Tanjungpura University where the research was undertaken find listening quite complicated to listen and capture the information from the recording. Consequently, it is rather difficult for those students to achieve good marks in listening course. Fortunately, the advance of information and communication technology can facilitate them to overcome this difficulty. It provides students with sophisticated media which are very useful for learning activities, in which podcast is one of them.

Podcasts are the name of a digital recording of a radio broadcast (Constantine, 2007). Podcasts available on the internet are mostly divided into two types: radio podcasts and independent podcasts (SZE, 2007). Radio podcasts are the existing radio turned into podcasts, such as VOA (Voice of America) and BBC (British Broadcasting Corporation) and independent podcasts are the online podcast created by individuals or institutions. Firstly, podcasts are not utilized for education or learning, they are used to convey information and entertainment. Since the second half of 2005, however, the educators have employed podcasts as a media of English language teaching (SZE, 2007). It has a huge potential in enhancing second language learners’ listening and speaking skills (Stanley, 2005). Thus, it is clear that podcasts are potential to sharpen students’ listening skill.

In addition, in language learning process some aspects need to be considered, one of them is attitude. Attitude cannot be neglected to be an important factor in the process of instructional activities for it has a big impact to learners’ behavior. Fishbein and Ajzen (1975), Breckler (1984) and Jones and Clarke (1994) argued that attitude and behavior are distinguishable nevertheless behavior is part of attitude. Attitude is defined as one’s feeling to particular object of behavior. It can be positive or negative feelings (effect of evaluation) (Fishbein & Ajzen, 1975). Fishbein & Ajzen (1975) proposed that attitudes are considered to have control on behavior, particularly on one’s attitude toward an object which can influence the person’s intentions to behave relating to that purpose.

In accordance with these definitions of attitudes, it can be concluded that investigating attitudes toward podcasts can lead to a gain in the acceptance of podcast itself by its users in this case the students of the researched university on the one hand, and on the other the investigation may probably prove the usefulness of podcast on the eyes of the users. In addition, positive or negative feelings of students toward the use of podcast

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as a media for developing listening skill will directly influence their behavior to use English podcast for learning. Positive learners’ attitude to study would improve learning outcome (Paris, 2004).

In relation to the empirical findings above, the issue of this project is to investigate the students’ attitudes toward the use of Podcasts as a media for developing listening skill. It covers whether the students perceive ESL/EFL podcasts positively or negatively. The quantitative study is conducted at Tanjungpura University, especially at Language Centre of Tanjungpura University with 23 participants.

Results and Discussion

There were ten positive statements in relation to podcast to measure students’ attitudes toward using podcast for developing listening skill. All the statements in the questionnaire support podcast as a media for enhancing listening skill in learning English. The statements demanded a ‘tick’ ranging from strongly disagree, disagree, fair, agree, and strongly agree respectively. The response for each statement was coded 1 for “strongly disagree” to 5 for “strongly agree”. Thus, the score for each student ranges from 10 to 50. The classification of scores ranged from 9.5-25, 25-37.5, and 37.5-50. Score from 9.5-25 was considered as “negative”, 25-37.5 was “neutral” and 37.5-50 was “positive” toward employing podcast for enhancing listening skill. The distribution of the students’ overall scores and attitude was shown in table 1.

Table 1. The Distribution of the Students’ overall Scores and Attitude

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>10 – 25</td>
<td>Negative</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 – 37.5</td>
<td>Neutral</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.5 – 50</td>
<td>Positive</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Research question one asked about Tanjungpura University students’ attitudes toward English podcast as a media for developing listening skill. The questionnaire to investigate Tanjungpura University students’ attitudes toward English podcast was given to 23 students who participated in the TUTEP Training 27. The participants were asked about their degree of agreement with the statements in the attitude scale. The researcher collected 19 questionnaires from the students who completed the questionnaires. There were four questionnaires not returned to the researcher. Table 1 shows the allotment of the students’ overall scores which may represent their attitudes toward podcast. It can be seen that only one student showed negative attitude towards podcast shown from the score range of 10 to 25 marks accumulated from the 10 statements which maintain strongly disagree and disagree responds. On the contrary, the rest two ranges of score (25 - 37.5 and 37.5 - 50) which represent the attitudes of neutral and positive respectively show a balance number of participants; nine students showed neutral attitudes towards podcast, and the other nine showed positive position of their attitudes to podcast.

The following table 2 illustrates the attitudes of the participants in percentages. From the table, it is shown that six percents of the respondent had negative attitude toward English podcast as media for developing listening skill. Forty-seven percents of participants showed their neutral attitudes toward the benefit of podcast. Another forty-seven percents of students indicated their positive attitudes toward using podcast for developing listening skill.

Table 2

The Percentage of Students’ Attitudes toward Podcast

Students’ attitudes toward using podcast for developing listening skill

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Score</th>
<th>Attitudes</th>
<th>Frequency</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>9.5 - 25</td>
<td>NEGATIVE</td>
<td>6%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>25 - 37.5</td>
<td>NEUTRAL</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>37.5 - 50</td>
<td>POSITIVE</td>
<td>47%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The second question of the study asked about the degree of agreement of Tanjungpura University students to the benefit of ESL/EFL podcasts for sharpening listening skill. The finding showed that 6 percents of student had negative attitude towards podcast, 47 percents indicated neutral attitudes and 47% students also showed positive attitude (table 2). However, most of the students agree that ESL/EFL podcasts were useful for developing listening skill as shown in table 3. 58% students showed their degree of agreement toward the positive value of podcast for developing listening skill with 21% out of 58% showed their strong agreement. The distribution of the degree of students’ agreement was indicated in table 3.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Table 3</th>
<th>The Distribution of the Degree of Students’ Agreement</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Item</td>
<td>SD</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Listening to podcast will be beneficial to sharpen my listening skill.</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage</td>
<td>5%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The major implication and outcome of this study is to highlight new insight into empirical research on the benefits of information and communication technology in language teaching and learning by identifying the attitudes of Universitas Tanjungpura Students towards ESL/EFL listening podcasts. Positive attitudes towards the implication of ESL/EFL listening podcasts will be useful for the teachers in Universitas Tanjungpura to integrate World Wide Web technology into English language teaching and learning. The students’ negative feeling towards this situation, on the other hand, will be a kind of dilemma since today most students are familiar with Web technology and even Web 2 technology such as facebook, twitter and etc. Furthermore, the students’ attitudes toward ESL/EFL podcasts appear to be important in order to formulate suggestions or recommendations to improve English language teaching and learning system in Tanjungpura University since one of its language policy is English Proficiency Test, TUTEP. Students must achieve certain score on that kind of test and it is one of requirements for students’ graduation. However, the study indicated that neutral and positive feelings maintain a balance percentage of students’ attitudes (47% in table 2). It means that despite more students already realize the advantage of TUTEP, many students still have neutral position in their attitudes towards podcast. It may also mean that they don’t really get immersed in the idea of podcast supporting listening skill. Consequently, it will be Tanjungpura University’s instructors’ duties to introduce more about the usefulness of ESL/EFL podcast for language learning as fifty-eight percents of Tanjungpura university students agree that podcast was useful for enhancing one of skills in English language, namely listening. Besides, many research findings have showed the benefits of podcast for developing EFL/ESL competence.

Conclusion

The present study investigated Tanjungpura University students’ attitude toward the use of podcast for improving listening skill. The result indicated that neutral and positive feelings maintain a balance percentage of students’ attitudes (47%) toward the use of podcast. It means students still have neutral position in their attitudes towards podcast even though 58% students showed their degree of agreement toward the positive value of podcast for developing listening skill. Thus, the EFL instructors at Tanjungpura University should utilize more ESL/EFL podcasts in their language teaching activities as podcasts provided huge, interesting and various language learning materials.

Reference


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Biodata

Suparjan is a postgraduate student of English Language Education in Tanjungpura University. His interests are teaching media, EIL and technology-based language teaching and learning. He is also an EFL instructor for English Academic Test Preparatory Training in Tanjungpura University language Centre and his domain is Listening Comprehension.