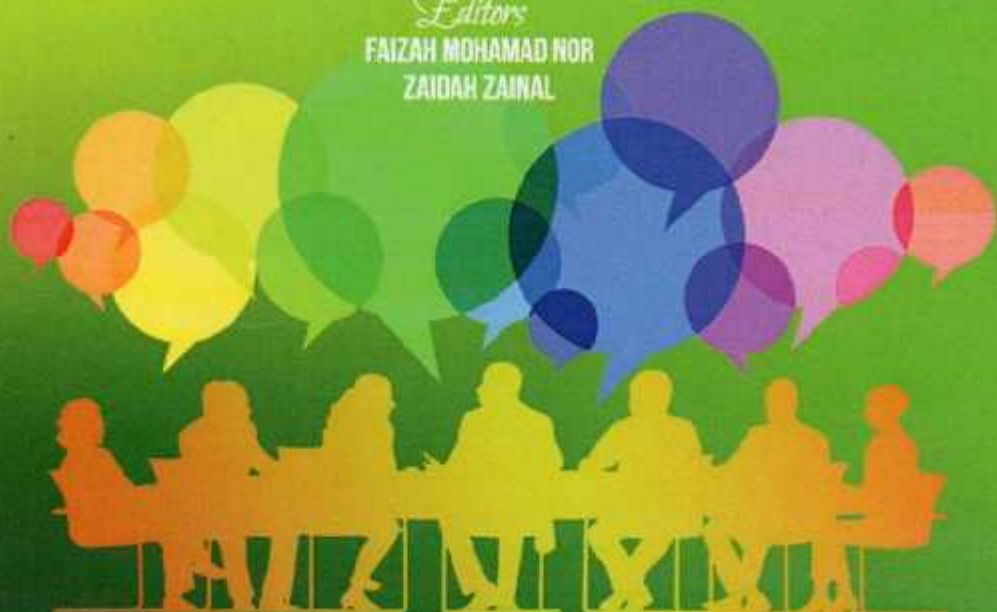# LANGUAGE LEARNING
Approaches That Work

Editors
FAIZAH MOHAMAD NOR
ZAIDAH ZAINAL

UTM
UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MALAYSIA

LANGUAGE LEARNING

Approaches That Work

Editors
FAIZAH MOHAMAD NOR
ZAIDAH ZAINAL

First Edition 2015
©FAIZAH MOHAMAD NOR & ZAIDAH ZAINAL 2015

Editors: FAIZAH MOHAMAD NOR & ZAIDAH ZAINAL
Pereka Kulit / Cover Designer: MOHAMAD HAIRY ZOLKEFLE

Diatur huruf oleh / *Typeset by*
FAIZAH MOHAMAD NOR & ZAIDAH ZAINAL
Language Academy
UTM Johor Bahru

Contents

List of Contributors

Abdul Rahim Hj. Salam
Andi Muhammad Yauri
Azizah Rajab
Faizah Mohamad Nor
Hema Rosheny Mustafa
Kumaraguru Ramayah
Loh Khai Xian
Muhamad Arshad Mohamad Amir
Samira Nikian
Language Academy
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia

Masahiro Teshima
Faculty of Education
Bunkyo University
Japan

Megan Short
Faculty of Education
Universiti of Tasmania
Australia

Preface

This book "Language Teaching and Learning in Asian Contexts" is a book that is written for teachers and those who aspire to become one. The chapters in this book describe the theories underpinning language teaching and learning as well as traditional and current language teaching practices that are used in Asian countries. The book was prepared with in-service and pre-service teachers of language, in mind.

The book comprises 5 chapters. The first chapter, "Developing Critical Literacy through the Use of Literary Work among Teacher Trainees", written by Hema Rosheny Mustafa and Megan Short, is on literary works that are used extensively in tertiary education. This chapter reports how literary work in a teacher education program can benefit teacher trainees and teacher education curriculum. The second chapter is entitled "Promoting e-Learning of Listening Skills among EFL Students of an Islamic College". The writers, Andi Muhammad Yauri and Abdul Rahim Hj Salam, described how the use of podcast links on the internet had enhanced the listening skills and increased the motivation to learn the English Language among pre-service teachers of the state College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) Watampone, Indonesia.

The subsequent chapter, "Communicative Language Teaching Approach and Its Characteristics" by Samira Nikian and Faizah Mohamad Nor, puts forth the benefits of the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) approach, in comparison to traditional language teaching methods, in developing learners' communicative competence. This conceptual paper outlines the characteristics and principles of CLT in arguing how the CLT facilitates English Language acquisition in ESL settings. The next chapter is entitled "A Look at Teacher Training in Japan" by Kumaraguru Ramayah, Masahiro Teshima and Loh Khai Xian. In this chapter, these Japanese Language experts based in Malaysia and Japan, will take

readers through the history of the Japanese teacher training program, and at the same time, attempt to clarify the issues revolving teacher training certification in Japan. The final chapter, "Awareness of Skimming and Scanning Strategies among ESL Learners in Malaysia', authored by Muhamad Arshad bin Mohamad Amir and Faizah Mohamad Nor, reports the research findings conducted on ESL readers. This paper would be useful in aiding language educators gauge their learners' level of awareness of the skimming and scanning strategies when they read academic texts in the language classroom.

It is our great hope that teachers and would-be teachers would take away from this book, some knowledge on how language learners acquire a second or foreign language and some insights on what transpires in language learning classrooms and educational settings in Asian countries. It is important that teachers have a better understanding of the issues pertaining language teaching and learning so that they may approach their teaching responsibilities with more vigour and passion. I specifically wish to thank all contributors in this book, entitled Language Teaching and Learning in Asian Contexts.

Faizah Mohamad Nor
Zaidah Zainal
Language Academy
Universiti Teknologi Malaysia
2015

2
Promoting e-Learning of Listening Skills among EFL Students of an Islamic College

Andi Muhammad Yauri and Abdul Rahim Hj. Salam

2.1 INTRODUCTION

The growth of technology in the field of education opens up the possibility to engage Islamic learning and to use information and communication technology (ICT) to support learning processes in Islamic higher learning institutions or colleges. Innovations in teaching have been introduced in order to upgrade the quality of learning processes in the class, and one example is by incorporating internet technology. Nevertheless, not all lecturers could use it to support the learning process in the class. The reason could be due to the assumption that they are not familiar with the technology or they have a very limited idea in developing their course materials by using technology. This paper explains the initiative and efforts that were taken to encourage a class to use electronic learning or e-Learning. The study was done on an English class, in particular on Listening in English.

English listening is one of the important elements which could enhance verbal communication skills. However, there is very little communication using this skill even among pre-service teacher training students of English Educational Departments themselves. On the other hand, students must be exposed to authentic listening skill practices. In this project, it was decided that the podcast links would be utilized to enhance listening skills.

Podcast is derived from the words *iPod* and *broadcasting* which refer to recorded audio files in MP3 format that are available in the internet (Smaldino *et al.*, 2012). It is a device which enables learners to listen or to watch video broadcasts in the internet. It could also be easily downloaded to computers and mobile phones.

Studies have been conducted to investigate the use of podcast links in the teaching and learning process. One such example is an investigation on the use of podcasts in a class, particularly with regard to the most suitable duration for an effective podcast class, which was found to be about five minutes (Evans, 2008). Another study by Besser *et al.* (2010) indicates that students are motivated to use podcast links. They are motivated to use podcast links not only because it is convenient and has become a common habit, but also for several purposes such as for social interaction, entertainment, learning and just to fill in their free time (Chung, 2008). Among college students, the main motivation to use podcast is for their school work. Bergström and Lindwall (2008) explored the possibility of learning by using podcasts and blogs in the internet. Students use podcasts to relive the lecture experiences as well as to improve their learning (Scutter *et al.*, 2010). Sutton-Brady *et al.* (2009) investigated the use of the podcast among undergraduates and post graduate students. Another study by King (2010) describes professors using podcast in class as instructional tools to promote critical and responsive perspectives of teaching. The study suggests a dynamic model of podcast that is responsive to learner needs, faculty needs, and changing situations. Although many studies have supported the use of podcasts in the teaching and learning process, its effectiveness however partly depends on its accessibility for potential learners and users.

2.2   ENGLISH SETTING OF ISLAMIC COLLEGE

All students enrolled in this college are required to take English courses. One of these courses is the Listening Comprehension Course which is 1440 minutes long and is delivered within 16

weekly meetings. The weekly class is 90 minutes long. At the end of each semester, the learners will be assessed based on attendance (25%), assignments (10%), mid-term test (30%), and final examination (35%). Basically, the goal of the Listening Comprehension Course is to improve students' listening skills by focusing on the main ideas, details and making inferences from taped audio recordings in the language lab. The course syllabus is based on a textbook *Active Learning Second Edition* by Steven Brown and Dorolyn Smith. Each unit in this textbook provides a topic, function and grammar theme.

Generally, the English courses are delivered by using both English and Bahasa Indonesia. It depends on the content of subject study such as English skills, English knowledge, theory and practical English teaching subjects, and Islamic value subjects. With regard to English skills particularly the Listening skill, traditionally, the students come to the language lab to have their listening practice. Listening cassettes or CDs are provided and the students use headsets to listen to the listening materials. Unfortunately, the language lab in this college cannot be used effectively as most of the headsets are broken.

2.3   THE LACK OF INFRASTRUCTURE

The study was conducted at STAIN (Sekolah Tinggi Agama Islam Negeri) Watampone College, South Sulawesi Province, Indonesia. It is a state-owned Islamic college managed by the Ministry of Religious Affairs. The college has two faculties, namely Syariah or Law and Tarbiyah or Education Faculties. The college provides *Wireless Fidelity* or Wi-Fi which enables both lecturers and students to the same limited access of the internet in the classrooms.

Unfortunately, it could not be used effectively because of the bandwidth problem and a service that is often interrupted. To add to this problem the computer lab has only eight computers for the students. In short, accessibility to the internet in the college is very limited. As a result, lecturers seldom make use of the internet in

their teaching and learning activities. Some of the students, (very few of them actually), who do have laptops use the internet after lecture hours in the internet cafés for fun or social networking as well as to search for supporting resources for their class assignments. Both lecturers and students, however, are familiar with Powerpoint and word processor which are tools for the delivery of lectures.

There are very few computers for the students to use. However, almost all of the students do have mobile phones. Most of the students in STAIN College use their mobile phones for fun without realizing that they can get many benefits by using them for academic purposes. They also do not seem to have the motivation for self-study to improve their English language competencies. Due to the limited accessibility to the internet in the College itself, the students have not been exposed to e-learning as much as they should be. This project was conducted mainly to overcome the lack of infra-structure facilities in the college, to familiarize the students with e-learning and to explore to what extent e-learning by means of podcast could motivate students to improve their listening skills competencies.

2.4   METHODS

The study is exploratory in nature and aimed at initiating ways to improve English listening skills by introducing e-learning among pre-service teacher training students of the state College for Islamic Studies (STAIN) Watampone. Exploratory research allows the researchers to investigate an issue that had not been clearly defined yet and aimed to open up directions for future research (Prapinwong, 2008). Both lecturers and students have a little knowledge or probably none at all about using web 2.0 tools such as WebQuest, Nicenet, Podcast, and web blog to support e-learning in terms of English learning at an Islamic college. Therefore, exploratory research seemed appropriate as a research method for the study. In other words, the exploratory research was to explore the lecturers'

and students' class interactions in e-learning. In this case, the researcher analyzed the students' reflections that they wrote in web class blogs after experiencing e-learning activities.

For the purpose of this project, the researcher decided to amend the course goal so as to align it with the e-learning activities. The original Listening Comprehension Course goal was to enhance students' listening skill by using taped audio recording. As such the new goals for the Listening Comprehension Course are to enhance students' motivation to learn English through the use of podcast or any related listening material files in the internet, to familiarize students with Information and Communication Technology (ICT) in the process of teaching and learning by experiencing authentic listening exercises through web links or mobile phones, to follow the course instructions in WebQuest, to have self-assessment in online Rubric, to discuss their experiences on Nicenet as well as to write and post their reflections in English on a class blog.

A semester earlier the researcher tried to create an on-line class by yahoogroups but later discovered that it was too time-consuming. As Nicenet provides more options to create classes as compared to yahoogroups, the researcher decided to try Nicenet. It was then decided to create a Nicenet class as a medium of on-line discussion and to provide them with instructions and learning tasks. The students were instructed to get connected to the internet in free public Wi-Fi areas outside the college, or in internet cafés or they could use modems in their own laptops. Fortunately, 10 of the students had their own laptops and were willing to share their laptops with their friends. Procedures of joining Nicenet were sent through their e-mails. The researcher was rather apprehensive at first about the students joining the Nicenet and the ensuing discussion. However, the worries were unfounded. All students had joined Nicenet without any assistance from the researcher and willingly took part in the class discussion. They introduced themselves and discussed the tasks given in Nicenet.

The researcher suggested some podcast links for authentic listening practices and asked the students to write their reflections on web blog. Before doing that the researcher had to demonstrate to

them how to use their mobile phones to download and listen to podcast or any other MP3 files format. After that, the researcher sent the task message in the Nicenet and WebQuest, instructing them to visit   podcast   web   at http://www.eslpod.com/website/index_new.html.

This web was chosen for the following reasons. Firstly, it provides authentic listening practice. Native speakers of the English language would sound different from non-native speakers. The researcher also wanted the students to listen to proper pronunciations and intonations of the words and phrases used in the language. Secondly, because it was quite slow paced, the researcher thought it was suitable for the students who were mostly high beginning to low intermediate in listening skills. The researcher decided to choose the slow paced podcast not only because the students would need more time to access the link without the researcher's direct instruction, but also they need time to listen and get the main ideas of what is being said by the speaker in the podcast. The researcher had also instructed the students to reflect and write a report of their reflections on a class blog. After much deliberation, the students finally listened to nine different authentic topics or episodes which were Supra Natural Power, English Café, First Day Intend to Office, Home Architecture Styles, Taking the Driving License, The Scribing One's Skill Level, American President, Kumbaya Song, and The Childhood Illness and Disease. Lastly, perhaps the most important reason is that the podcast web provides various themes which are easily accessible and can be downloaded for free.

The researcher had initially wanted each student to create one blog each, but later realized that they would have to spend more time to read and make corrections for 24 different students' blogs and that it would be time-consuming. An effective solution for the problem was to have a class blog which would enable all students to participate in it, but the researcher had to find a way of letting the students upload their writings on the blog. This led to another problem which had to do with the possibility of students using different identifications to sign in and the effect of this on the blog.

Eventually the solution was the creation of a single e-mail for the students to enable all of them to upload their tasks on the blog.

The researcher created a weekly blog for reflection. The researcher was quite convinced that their new learning experience using ICT will motivate them more to learn English. Since the researcher is more interested in exploring their attitude towards the use of ICT and considering the fact that they are still beginners in their English writing skills the researcher decided to be more accommodative and allowed them to write their reports in Bahasa Indonesia. However, all students preferred to write in English.

The students and the researcher went to a free hotspot area located in a town park near the college to post the reflections. The researcher monitored the students and provided assistance when necessary. To help them write their reports, the researcher sent several structured tasks and questions. The students could ask the researcher questions and the researcher would respond to their queries. They could also find some instructions on Webquest.

The first task of reflection was done. They posted the first draft on Nicenet and continued to write the second draft. This time, before they could post their reflection to the class blog, the researcher instructed them to work in pairs for language correction which enabled them to check each other's work.

2.5   RESULTS

This section is divided into two parts namely reflection of the students and reflection by the researcher. The students' reflections were taken from their pieces of writing on a class blog. The researcher's reflection is in accordance with the observations done after a four-week project concerning the important changes before and after the project.

2.5.1   Students' Reflections

Before this project, the students did not have any formal experience in using the ICT to learn English. After listening to various podcast files, they were very enthusiastic and surprised that those files could be easily accessed and downloaded into both computers and their mobile phones.

Some students reported that they could understand only a little of what the speakers had said. This could be due to the duration of the podcast files which varied between 10 to 20 minutes. For example, student 1 said:

> *"After listening the speaker in the file, I could understand it, even though little by little, because the speaker in the podcast spent more than 20 minutes to explain ... ",* Student 1.

Moreover, they had to listen to the podcast file several times in order to follow what the speakers had said.

> *"At first, I felt confused because I was afraid if the meaning of the podcast was wrong, so I listened it again ... ",* Student 2.

Some students revealed that they could guess the meaning of the speech if the speaker had slowed down his pace.

> *"Fortunately, the speaker talked in slow paced so I could guess some of his words ... ",* Student 3.

What the following student had to say is also interesting as again it relates with the speaker's pace of speech:

> *"Before I listen to podcasts, I could not catch the meaning in a quick conversation, but after I listening to*

podcast I could follow the meaning of conversation a little bit", Student 4.

In terms of the content of the audio text, the students also managed to grasp the general idea of the conversation.

"Although I just listen little by little but I could make a short conclusion of the content of the conversation...", Student 5.

With regard to the students' feeling, after experiencing a new way to listen to authentic listening files they felt positive after doing the listening task:

"Even though, I did not understand all the meaning of the conversation in the files, I was so proud because this could increase my listening skills in English", Student 6.

The reflections indicated that when students listen to authentic conversations or speeches by means of a podcast, they need to put in more effort such as having to listen to the text more than twice, in order to catch the meaning. They need to do this as they had to consider both duration of time and pace of conversation. However, their motivation had risen since they experienced positive feelings through this pleasurable way of listening to authentic listening texts.

2.5.1   The Researcher' Reflection

The researcher noticed some interesting alterations. Firstly, the students did not have any interesting options to practice authentic listening materials except listening to songs. However, after this project, they now have new and fascinating listening materials in the web. Secondly, the students did not know podcast or any other downloadable authentic listening files in the internet at all.

Nevertheless, they felt happy and excited as they realized that by listening to the podcast for self-study could improve their listening skills. Thirdly, the students were familiar with social networking such as Facebook or Twitter and wrote their ideas in it. Nonetheless, they started to use a blog to share their ideas with their friends as well as give motivation, even though they still need to improve their writing skills. This next final remark is the most important observation in this project. The students had been using their mobile phone for fun or communication purposes. After participating in this study, the students started to use their mobile to listen to the podcast for self-study purpose and discovered a new atmosphere for learning English. Moreover, the students from other groups also tried to use their mobile for listening to the podcast after being inspired by some students in this project.

Since the first task was listening to podcast, future plans may include the selection of other types of listening files, which include pre-task, on-task, and post-task listening activities. The on-task listening activity is focused on interactive questions that enable learners to answer the questions directly on the web link, for example, in the link (http://www.esl-lab.com).

Another option is by providing both sound file and text related to the sound, for example, (http://www.manythings.org/voa/animals/). For adding warmer or filler, the researcher would include this interactive song (http://www.eslvideo.com/esl_video_quiz_low_intermediate.php?i d=9572). The researcher feels that by giving these listening file web links, the learners will be more challenged and motivated in terms of self-study. In addition, the researcher's long-term plan is to design a syllabus that includes technology or web skills for teaching and learning processes.

2.6   CONCLUSION

There are many ways to help students improve their language competencies. This project chooses to make use of a simple but

effective tool as a first step to introduce e-leaning among a group of Islamic college students. With the revolution in ICT today, an organization does not need to spend a lot of money to set up infrastructure facilities to implement e-learning. Instead it has to learn to be resourceful and creative in making use of the many tools and facilities that are already easily available.

By experiencing the interactive web to the class project, it could inspire the researcher to bring a new atmosphere with regards the way the researcher teaches in the classes. Moreover, it seems that the students were motivated to perform the self-study since they had a chance to increase their listening skills with fun. The study suggests that e-learning could bring benefits to the students in order to familiarize themselves with authentic listening practice by means of the podcast.

REFERENCES

Bergström, P., and K. Lindwall. 2008. "Teaching and Learning Podcasting through Blogging." *Journal of Research in Teacher Education*, (3-4): 13–33.

Besser, J., M. Larson, and K. Hofmann. 2010. "Podcast Search: User Goals and Retrieval Technologies." *Online Information Review*, 34(3): 395–419.

Chung, M.-Y. 2008. "Podcast Use Motivations and Patterns Among College Students." *Chemistry & Biodiversity*, 1(11): 1829–1841.

Evans, C. 2008. "The Effectiveness of M-Learning in the Form of Podcast Revision Lectures in Higher Education." *Computers and Education*, 50(2): 491–498.

King, K. P. 2010. "Advancing Educational Podcasting and Faculty Inquiry with a Grounded Research Model: Building on Current Mixed-Methods Research across Contexts." *The Journal of Continuing Higher Education*, 58(3): 143–155.

Prapinwong, M. 2008. "Constructivist Language Learning Through WebQuests in the EFL Context: An Exploratory

Study."   (online).   Retrieved   from
https://vpn.utm.my/docview/304605958?accountid=41678.

Scutter, S., I. Stupans, T. Sawyer, and S. King. 2010. "How Do
    Students Use Podcasts to Support Learning? Podcasting in
    Teaching." *Australasian Journal of Educational Technology*,
    26(2): 180–191.

Smaldino, S. E., D. L. Lowther, and J. D. Russell. 2012.
    *Instructional   Technology   and   Media   for   Learning:
    International Edition (Tenth Edit.)*. Boston, MA: Pearson
    Education, Inc.

Sutton-Brady, C., K. M. Scott, L. Taylor, G. Carabetta, and S.
    Clark. 2009. "The Value of Using Short-Format Podcasts to
    Enhance Learning and Teaching." *Alt-J*, 17(3): 219–232.