THE USE OF MALAYSIAN PODCASTS: EXPOSING THE MALAYSIAN-ENGLISH ACCENT TO UUM INTERNATIONAL STUDENTS FOR MUET LISTENING PREPARATION

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ABSTRACT

In Malaysia, most of the universities are using Malaysian University English Test (MUET) as a standard benchmark to allow students to pursue their studies in Higher Education Institution (HEI). In Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM), there are MUET preparation classes to prepare the international students for MUET. To familiarise the international students with Malaysian-English (Manglish) accent, podcast is being used. A podcast is an episodic series of spoken word digital audio files that a user can download to a personal device for easy listening. Listening is one of the four skills tested in MUET and the listening audio text used is in Manglish accent. This has created problems to international students to familiarise themselves with the Manglish accent which inadvertently made them unable to answer the listening test. Consequently, it may affect their listening test result considering that they could not understand the content of the audio text. This study involves international students in Intensive English class at UUM. The study applied qualitative research method and used observation and interview as the instruments. The result of the study show that there is an improvement on the students' listening ability to summarise the content of the podcasts. Nevertheless, the findings suggest that podcasts can be an effective tool in improving students' English listening skill.

Keyword: Podcasts, listening skill, Manglish, MUET

Introduction

A podcast is a combination terms from pod and broadcast. It is a series of media files consisting of audio and video recordings uploaded on the web, which made it available for downloading onto one's computer with the aid of Rapid Simple Syndication (RSS) feeds. It is usually updated on a regular basis and covers countless types of authentic issues in the world. Podcast is one of the emergent technology media that commonly used specifically in education for many years. Language learning for instance, has utilized podcast as its platform in the Teaching and Learning (T&L) session in Higher Education Institutions (HEIs) as podcast has been recognized to assist rapid development for students. Numerous studies have also acknowledged its potential that could greatly develop learners' language skills especially in listening (Md. Masudul Hasan & Bee Hoon, 2013; Ashton-Hay & Brookes, 2011; Rosell-Aguilar, 2007; O'Bryan & Hegelheimer, 2007).

Listening is an essential part of the language learning process in normal daily life. Though listening skill is considered to be used about 45% in daily communication compared to the other skills such as speaking, reading and writing, (Feyten, 1991), unfortunately it is a skill that has been taken lightly. "Listening is arguably the most important skill required for obtaining comprehensible input in one's first and any subsequent languages. It is a pervasive communicative event we listen considerably more than we read" (Decker, 2004; Omaggio Hadley, 2001; Wilt, 1950, cited in Hysop & Tone, 1988). It is measured as the difficult process than reading because the contents of listening can never be reviewed once the speaker has said it, unless the conversation is recorded. There are a plethora of definition that can be found on the term "listening". Based on the study by Morley (2001) and Rost (2001), listening is the most important skill for language learning because it can be mostly used in normal daily life and develop faster than the other language skills. Thus, this show that it makes it easier for the development of other language skills namely speaking, reading and writing. Osada (2004) stated that listening skill did not receive sufficient acceptance in its own right neither has been considered as a passive skill that will develop without help. Next, according to Hamouda (2013) listening skill is very important in acquiring understandable input. Learning will not happen if there is no input. Thus, listening is a skill needed to be pointed out especially in language learning.

Listening has still been appeared as a difficult skill for students in learning a language especially in one of the HEI in Malaysia, Universiti Utara Malaysia (UUM). It is seen as a challenge for international students in UUM as they were not familiar with the Malaysian-English (Manglish) accent. The reason to that was due to requirement for the international students to sit for Malaysian University English Test (MUET) that is using Manglish accent in its audio text. Hence, this paper is aimed to report on the results of class observations and interviews from three international students undertaking Intensive English course in UUM. It will also present and discuss the results from the interview analysis in order to determine the students' improvement in listening with the use of Malaysian podcasts. It will then discuss how the insights achieved by this study into students' perceptions and attitudes that will give the impact to the implementation of future language learning podcasts.

Language Learning using Podcasts

There are various studies showing the positive impact of the use of podcasts in learning a language. Based on a study by Tryanti, Nonny & Moh. Rizky (2018) have shown that "students perceived that podcasts provided authentic materials, interesting activities including listening exercises and meaningful tasks for them, so they felt more motivated to learn English". The result from the study has proven the effectiveness of podcast as media to improve students' listening achievement. Another study by Sanjana (2014) showed that the participants would like to listen and practice podcast. They appreciate that podcasts can be used anytime and anywhere, thus inadvertently making them motivated and become autonomous learners. According to Chan et al, 2011 and Kaplan-Leirserson, 2005, Podcast can accelerate language learners' learning not just in listening but also in other language areas such as pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, speaking and related learning activities.

From the studies discussed earlier, it can be clearly seen that most of them are closely related to learning motivation. According to Zhang (2015), "motivation can sustain students' desire to accomplish learning tasks and generate new desire to start further learning". In short, the latter state will affect the first in an ongoing virtuous circle. Above all, listening is perceived as one of the most difficult skill to learn and improve especially when it comes to learning a new language. Therefore, it is crucial for the learners to feel motivated to keep learning and improving their skills.

The ARCS Model

John M. Keller (1979) suggested that external conditions could be built to promote learners' learning motivation. He believed that stimulating and sustaining learner motivation and finding reliable and valid methods for motivating learners are very challenging that every educator knows about. Hence, an approach to meet this challenge is provided by the ARCS Model of motivation. (Keller, 1999). Following to this concept, he came up with the ARCS learning-motivational model.

This model is a result from referring to Tolman and Lewin's expectancy-value theory, which suggested that learners are willing to learn while there is value or needs in the knowledge presented. In addition to that, there is also the amount of expectation of success. Keller divided the concepts into four categories and renamed them as *Attention* (A), *Relevance* (R), *Confidence* (C), *and Satisfaction* (S), which is called ARCS Model and is shown in Figure 1. Additionally, each category includes another three subcategories, which is defined in Table 1.
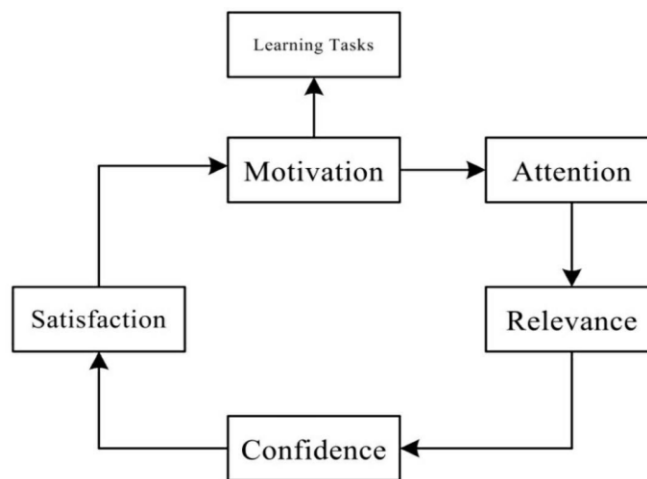

Figure 1: The ARCS Learning-motivational Model

Table 1
Keller's (2010) Motivational Strategies of ARCS

Categories	Subcategories
Attention (A)	• Perceptual
	• Inquiry arousal
	• Variability
Relevance (R)	• Goal orientation
	• Motive matching

Confidence (C)	• Familiarity • Learning requirements • Success opportunities • Personal control
Satisfaction (S)	• Intrinsic reinforcement • Extrinsic rewards • Equity

Intensive English Course

The Intensive English (IE) course is designed for international students in UUM to develop their confidence and competence in using English in social and academic environments. This course is especially tailored to fulfil the needs of students who have not demonstrated an acceptable level of English proficiency upon entrance into the University. The IE students spend one semester, approximately four months with one and half hour for each class session in learning English. These students were taught according to MUET format and they were required to pass the test before they can pursue to the programme in UUM. MUET is a test of English language proficiency in Malaysia which is run by the Malaysian Examinations Council. It is compulsory test for learners to take as an entrance to Malaysian public university. To be accepted to the programme in UUM, the IE students need to obtain at least band 3 in the MUET. There are four skills involved in the T&L sessions of IE course mainly speaking, listening, reading and writing as well as additional of grammar component. One of the skills required for the students to pass is the listening skill.

Methodology

The primary purpose of the study was to explore the students' perceptions and attitudes towards the use of Malaysian podcast. The study tried to expose the insights of the Malaysian-English accent to UUM international students in MUET listening preparation. One class consist of 20 students from the intensive English course in UUM (batch A192) were chosen to be the participants in this experimental study. This sample were undergraduate students coming from different countries namely Indonesia, Yemen, Thailand, and Somalia. Meanwhile, three students from the total number of students were chosen to be the informants in the interview sessions. Further information about these informants are reported in Table 2.1.

Table 2.1
Demographic profile of the informants

Category	Informant 1	Informant 2	Informant 3
Age	18	18	18
Gender	Male	Male	Male
Country of origin	Uzbekistan	Yemen	Indonesia
Experience in using English language	yes	yes	yes

Based on Table 2.1 above, the informants are in the age of 18, male and from Uzbekistan, Yemen and Indonesia respectively. Looking at their background, these students have the knowledge of English language from school but do not use English language even as second language. Thus,

learning and practicing the language in full can be a challenging thing for them to do. This study involved qualitative method using observation and interview session as follows:

Observation

The observation is used to focus on the students' ability to articulate their summary, body language and confidence level during the sharing session. During the listening class, the IE students were required to find and listen to podcast as one of their listening activities. They were first briefed on how to use the podcast in all of their listening class. The electronic searches on podcast listening were performed using the Spotify application and internet databases in search engines which includes keywords such as "podcast", "podcast and listening" and "podcast and language learning" and "top podcast in Malaysia". Then, they were told to change the podcast if they feel no interest in listening to it. They have to keep changing the podcast until they find the one that they like. The students were allowed to use any podcast relevant during class time and at the end of listening, there were asked randomly to summarize the contents of the podcast in the sharing session. This is the part where the students' listening and speaking skill development can be seen.

Based on the researchers' observation, students have difficulty in articulating all the ideas that they have listened to at the beginning of the semester. However, nearing to the end of the semester, a change in their speed of recalling the stories heard from the podcast are becoming better and better for every classes. They have become more fluent by the end of the semester.

Interview

A semi-structured interview was drawn up after a few observations. The informants involved in the interview were assured of anonymity and informed that their participation was entirely voluntary. They were asked to sign a consent form before the interview sessions and were informed of the purpose of the study. All the interviews sessions were recorded and transcribed verbatim for data analysis. The transcripts were then coded and themed according to the literature review.

Based on the interview sessions, the researchers have identified that the learners' perception and attitudes in using podcast for language learning are mostly positive. The summary of the responses by the three informants is presented in Table 2.2.

Table 2.2
Interview data analysis

Question		Answer	Category
3) Do you like using Podcast? Why or why not?	**Informant 1**	*I like using it. While you get information from it, outside inside class also get.*	Flexibility of podcast
	Informant 2	*Yes, actually of course I like it. Because yeah, like from podcasts we can learn many things. We can learn new vocabs, even languages, any other languages. It lets us to improve our language and our vocabs and even there's people they get develop from podcasts. That's why I like. Even I use it in my daily routine.*	

	Informant 3	*Yes, I like it, because I'm feel like podcast can deliver the message to the student easily, therefore students who practice listening more understand about the listening material.*	
11 & 12) does the teacher do when only one student does not understand how to listen to Podcasts properly? What do you think about that?	**Informant 1**	*It was a lecture I think I didn't see it, but that time, I didn't see it. I would say, when I forget, teacher would give us the subtitle (transcription) maybe, she can explain to us*	Positive perception when given guidance on using podcast in class
	Informant 2	*The teacher advises us to practice more, and the everyday at least 3-4 times a day, like as much as you can. So we can get much better than before and get higher score.*	
	Informant 3	*The lecturer always gives that student extra attention to him, for example when the podcast is over and he didn't understand, the lecturer gives the tricks and retry the part of podcast that he/she didn't understand. I think that method is great for me because every student have their own capacity when it comes to listening skills.*	
16) Why do you think the teacher is making you use Podcasts? What do you think about that?	**Informant 1**	*From the listening (podcasts) you can learn new vocabulary, new words, you can learn new things from them. I mean some spelling mistakes (from transcription that they get they now know the correct spelling)*	Positive attitudes found when learners know the multiple benefits of using podcast in language learning.
	Informant 2	*Using podcast in class will be helpful to the students if we listen more to it. However, when the students listen on their own, using their headphones, they might get distracted and not listen to the podcast but doing other things.*	
	Informant 3	*Because the lecturer know that the podcast method is current best method to improve their students listening proficiency. I think this method is work effectively. the teacher knows more about what students want and can make the podcast is easy and funny to hear so that we don't feel boring during use the podcast's method*	

Discussion

To learn a language in a more meaningful and without pressure is for the learners to have positive attitude to learning it. Once the learners feel comfortable, they can absorb the learning much easier. Through observations in class, at the beginning the students were struggling to try and get used to the new activity being introduced to them. They feel quite uncomfortable as they had to download an application in their mobile phone, searching only Malaysian podcasts, trying to enjoy their listening even if it was very new to them. It was also a struggle when the students were asked at random to summarize verbally about what they have heard. The articulation of the information that they have heard was not easily said especially when they do not write down the keyword while listening to podcasts. There were a lot of pauses and fillers while summarizing the podcasts verbally. However, when the students do not know how to start the verbal summary, the instructor will prompt using questions such as; i) What was the topic that you have heard? ii) What it was all about? iii) What is your opinion on the topic discussed? Later throughout the semester, the students know their routine, they will immediately sit at their places and start to search for the podcasts available for them to enjoy for 15 minutes. During the verbal summary, less prompts were given as the students already know what to say. Their body language showing that they enjoy the podcasts by nodding their heads, writing something in their notebook and very concentrated on the listening at hand.

The results from the analysis of the observation and interviews sessions has revealed that students had more positive perceptions of the usefulness of their IE course podcast and show a more positive attitude towards podcast-based learning. The results from their listening practices in class also supported their improvement in listening. There is evidence from the interview data that suggest to this improvement; 1) students' motivation; 2) podcasts flexibility; 3) instructor's guidance; 4) students' experience in using podcast for listening; 5) vocabulary.

Conclusion

This paper has raised a number of issues regarding the use of podcast in Malaysian context. It has argued that gaining insights into the beliefs about using podcasts held by the students is an important first step for teachers who wish to help their students address the problems they experience. Further research is needed to discover the extent of learning and the English language listening skill develop over the use of podcasts in class. The findings of this study will be helpful for students, instructors, stakeholders and researchers to adopt this innovative technology for language learning and teaching.

Acknowledgement
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