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## **DEVELOPING WRITTEN LANGUAGE SKILL AND CULTURAL UNDERSTANDING AT THE ENGLISH LESSON**

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The ability to write is essential if individuals are to live, work, and function effectively in our current and changing society. So that is why, to develop written skill is very difficult for many English teachers, because students lack the opportunities to live in an English speaking environment. Podcast is not a new concept or practice. This paper reviews the literature of the using podcast and examines the strength of podcast and identify do podcast really help to develop writing skill and cultural understanding of the learners.

Writing is not a separate skill or ability, it is an innate continuation of listening and speaking. Even, this is actual for any languages, but not less veritable for learners of different languages and those who are in the process of learning English.

We can describe writing as an essential skill that need in our developing world. However, none of learners attempt to enhance their skill, because of written-speaking communication world, writing demands from students sincerely to be motivated. Under being an unmotivated circumstances, students will not write effectively and the exercises that have been given, it will not be an efficient learning experience.

Podcast online programs that accessible these days are more authentic and realistic with different topics for huge inherence input. By using different strategies of listening for instance, the re-

constructing of the podcasts might improve accuracy and fluency of speakers. In addition, Podcasts are more effective than Moodle system in vocabulary, writing and listening development.

McLoughlin pointed out that the term podcast was described as a combination of the words iPod and broadcast. Podcasts are audio podcasts, video podcasts or pictures, slideshows.

However, Sze stated that podcasts are recorded programs on the Web which are usually updated at regular intervals. New episodes can be listened to on the computer, or downloaded to an MP3 player or iPod for later listening.

Based on the definition above, we can conclude that podcast is a blending of the words iPod and broadcast and it produces audio or video files which is released episodically, then it automatically can be downloaded from either computer or another audio or video device, and then can be listened by our these devices, that learners can listen over and over to any material that is of interest to them.

#### *Importance of using podcast at English Lesson*

It is important to state that podcast are not simply audio files put on the web. A key feature of podcast is the opportunity to subscribe to future episodes through the podcast.

Using podcasts as a medium for learning opens up new opportunities in the language-learning context: research shows that audio content facilitates memory retention three times as effectively as a text. The auditory dimension of podcasting, e.g., intonation or vocal expression, conveys a message directly to the listener's heart and brain.

Sze hypothesizes that podcasts benefit learners with both their spontaneity and their applicability to intensive and extensive speaking tasks.

Celce-Marcia, Brinton, and Goodwin have demonstrated that listening before writing would be helpful for talking fluently and accurately.

Therefore, we can say that using podcast in the development of writing skill is unusual and unconventional. However, a number of studies show that the use of podcasts just in the developing of writing skill significantly increases the motivation of students and brings diversity in the process of language teaching at schools and universities.

#### *Implementing podcast at the English class*

In practical part, we used a podcast at class for developing their writing skill and cultural understanding. There were six students, who are from 20 to 24 years old and study in Eurasian National University.

#### *Materials*

The materials that we used in my work were downloaded from the Internet, especially from online programs like learn.english.podcast., from British Council to be used offline. According to the interests, aims and level of students, eight podcast were downloaded from this site and copied to the flash drive. Every podcasts include different topics, which were more relevant to the culture of British and American people.

#### *Procedure*

The observation took place in a pre-intermediate class. We met with the class two days a week for an hour and a half. There were six students in the class.

In the first stage, before beginning the listening podcast, students were given the test, which could help us identify their writing and listening levels. It took above 24 minutes. This test consists an questions and listening test. Firstly, we asked some questions, which were relevant to the theme of the podcasts, and let them to become familiar with the content before listening to it. Secondly, we listened the podcast and then they rewrite what they were hearing about 3 minutes.

After that, they were introduced to the podcast, which were made by Jeff McQuillan, who is a famous podcaster and broadcasts his podcasts through eslpod.com. Additionally, students were provided the corresponding audio-script. In the first podcasts to this group, he started to act out a scenario with a slow rate of speech. Then he describes in detail each component, which includes keyword vocabulary and another meaning of words or expressions in the podcast. After that, when a complex description is given, he speaks the podcast again with natural rate of speech. The sped-up,

natural version is understandable and enjoyable for English language learners, after having heard the slow rate of speech version.

In the third day of class, we introduced the podcast by telling students they were going to listen to a podcast and practice taking notes. Note taking was a skill the students had been working on. We asked students to write questions that came up as they listened, like unknown words. In addition, we asked them to make prediction about what the author will focus on after the conversation; the students listened to the podcast once. Then we required words and expressions from the students that they heard in the podcast. We went over the meaning of the vocabulary. After the listening again, we reviewed more vocabulary and expressions and talked about their meaning. Further, we had written task about the topic. All students participated in the activity.

In the fourth day, after listening to the podcast students formed small groups of three or four, answered the questions and write their own story. Additionally, the students were given key phrases in order to help them start to interact with their classmates. Given that this was the third day of class and the students still did not know each other, the topic was suitable for the session: how to start a conversation writing email or letters with someone the first time you meet. The third lesson was focused on promoting narration development. The students completed the exercise twice, once with the questions, which were given according to the topic and the second time the students were able to choose their own topic of writing.

In the fifth day of the class, the students listened to the podcast, which was based on the interviews. In this activity, a journalist interviewed someone to find out which famous person the interviewee would like to meet. Previously, the participants chose the person they wanted to talk about. In class, the students worked in pairs to develop the conversation by listening and asking questions. Every time an interview was completed, the students rotated partners and changed roles interviewer – interviewee. In the interviews, the students asked as many questions as possible; because the idea was not to use the name of the person and the interviewer had to guess the name at the end of the interview.

In the sixth day, we talked about things that British people love, but most people hate. I really stressed the importance of culture. Before playing the podcasts, we asked them to listen for the main ideas. After playing each podcast, we led a quick discussion to make sure that the students understood the main ideas. Then we write about their culture difference and they included both comprehension questions and cultural questions.

In the next lesson, the students did not listen to a podcast, like in the previous lesson, but rather used the technology associated with podcasts. One of the groups, which were consisted three students, took the pro side, one the con side and two students took the role of the judger, summarizing the arguments of the pro and con sides. The students got into their debate groups and recorded themselves practicing the debate. After they each had a chance to record themselves, they listened to the recording and wrote down what they said word for word. Then I asked the students to look at what they had written and mark the stressed words based on the rules they have learned and their own intuition.

In addition, at the last lesson, the test was given to them for evaluating their speaking level. It included two or three minutes' interview. Then, we discussed about their achievement in speaking level, did it help them to improve their proficiency in it.

#### *Result and discussion*

The evidence in the data collectively pointed to the fact that podcasting as a medium of digital recording technology facilitated the improvement of the writing skill. It eased student anxiety about writing in the target language. In each of the data sources, the theme of greater confidence in students' writing ability was repeated.

Based on the interview, we can say that students were pleased of using these activities and actually, it really helped them to improve writing skill. Moreover, test scores of students who used podcast during the month showed 12 percent increase, and it proves that podcast activity cannot inly use for developing listening or speaking skill but also can use for writing skill.

#### *Conclusion*

The research aimed at the effectiveness and importance of using podcast activities in the English Language teaching classrooms. We have learned about podcasts and its activities and using it. We hope to include this knowledge into my practice of teaching in the future. We hope to continue to grow in our knowledge of these activities and to continue to learn how to better guide them. We also plan to share what we have learned with future students. We hope that it will help them to be successful through working together. We wish these activities would be helpful to our students in developing their speaking skill.

### **Literature**

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