



Students' attitude and difficulties in practicing speaking through autonomous learning on podcast

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ABSTRACT

This research aims to examine the students' attitude on producing podcasts as a media to practice speaking for autonomous learning and the difficulties faced by students in producing podcast of speaking. This research was descriptive qualitative research and the data is collected using questionnaire and semi-structured interview. As many 28 students of English Education Department of one of public Islamic institution in Central Java in various semesters participated in the questionnaire and 4 students were chosen to be interviewed to validate the information from the questionnaire. The research found that the majority of the students have positive attitude towards producing podcasts activity as their media to practice their speaking. In the affective aspect, students are excited with the process and behaviorally they are encouraged to prepare the material well. In the cognitive aspect, students consider the activity of producing podcast is a great activity for beginner students. They are assisted to autonomously practice speaking without partner which allows them to evaluate their own quality of speaking particularly in pronunciation. Students faced many difficulties such as speaking anxiety, complex preparation, and the inconvenience of doing repeated recording.

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Introduction

In language learning, technology offers ease of access to learning which promotes learners to have self-regulated learning. With many mediums, technology encourages more active learning since students are more in control of their processes and outcomes. It encourages learner autonomy to give learners choices over what they learn and how they learn it (Richards, 2015). Autonomous learning lets students prepare their material, choose their topic, and how to convey it, in their styles. In language learning, it would be beneficial that learner autonomy relates significantly to learners' English proficiency. It encourages learners to be aware of their strategies on language learning (Khotimah, Widiati, Mustofa, &

Ubaidillah, 2019). Since the language learner interacts with language by themselves without being told about what to do, it will raise their motivation and inner initiative to use the language.

The urge for independent learning in the middle of the hybrid learning era where students have a lot of time on their own instead of in school is in demand. That is the need to explore the technology that may help students develop their English skills autonomously as part of English language learning and teaching innovation. There are many mediums of learning using technology that support and provide ease of self-access to autonomous learning. Digital media reviewed includes podcasts, blogs, wikis, online writing sites, text-scaffolding software, multi-user virtual environments, multiplayer games, and chatbots (Warschauer & Liaw, 2011).

Podcast itself is quite popular in the research of language learning as one of the media to learn language skills. It is an uploaded audio or video file to the internet which has emerged as a source in the academic field and provides many kinds of material for learning. The podcast is a recorded audio file uploaded to the internet (Alfa, 2020). As a start of podcasting activity research for language learning, it is essential to study the attitude toward it and the suitable approach is the attitude study. Attitude can be defined as human behaviour that stated his or her "identity through their feelings and belief which, affect how they think, act, and behave towards their environment" (Zulfikar, Dahliana, & Sari, 2019, p. 2).

There are many studies about attitude and perception toward podcast for language learning. Previous studies are mostly about its authentic material and how it assists students in improving listening skills. Listening and reading skill is considered receptive (but not passive); on the other, speaking and writing are productive skills (Broughton, Brumfit, Flavell, Hill, & Pincas, 2003). Both are important where to communicate someone should be able to understand what other speakers utter and be able to speak ideas and thoughts (Richards, 2015).

Speaking is an interactive process of "constructing meaning that involves producing and receiving and processing information" (Brown, 2004, p. 140). It does not only mean delivering meanings orally. It also encompasses several aspects, such as pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary, and accuracy (Lutfi, 2020). The aspects of speaking contain grammar, vocabulary, comprehension, fluency, and pronunciation. Teaching speaking skills is difficult to be handled fully in school by the teacher, and each student has different difficulties faced with speaking and has limited opportunity to practice in intense time. It includes awareness of their own voice, pronunciation, anxiety, and lack of speaking practice partner and this had become topics that studied over years in language learning and teaching.

In the listening skill, podcast is a useful media where previous studies found how students satisfied and showed positive attitude toward the use of podcast. Further, students are motivated with the various topics provided and mentioned how their listening skills got better (Kohar, Salam, & Sumarni, 2014; Suparjan, Regina, & Sudarsono, 2016). Apart from being fruitful for learning of listening skill, as a matter-of-fact podcast not only provides audio material but also gives access for users to produce and distribute their own-making audio through podcast media. It seems that this feature has not been widely used in language learning.

There have been limited studies focused on podcast where they examine it as a medium to improve listening skills by contents provided within. Therefore, this research intends to examine how it works in speaking practice. Furthermore, it has not been conducted in Indonesia. There were some researches on this topic in different countries but only a few. This research aims to describe students' attitude in producing podcast as a medium to practice speaking for autonomous learning and find out the difficulties faced by students.

It is expected that this research would help teachers consider the alternative activity by producing podcast as speaking practice media to be applied structurally in the classroom or in teaching and learning process. While for students it would encourage them to maximize the potential of media learning by producing podcast specially to practice their speaking so that they can improve their English skills better and be beneficial for the future researcher as research experience and reflection in the next studies especially in language learning.

Method

Research design

The research design of this study is descriptive qualitative research that aims to describe phenomenon by the quality of information and facts to gain an understanding of the underlying reasons and motivations for the actions through text, data, and analysis. Descriptive research is in sentences and descriptive qualitative study refers to the presentation of facts in a daily language. It reports phenomena, describes data, and presents facts in critical analysis (Kothari, 2004).

Research setting and participants

The data used by the researcher is primary data only which is obtained directly from the respondent through data collection techniques. The main data are from students. Due to the pandemic of COVID-19 and following the social distancing protocol, the research then was conducted online with the subjects of English Education Department students in one of public Islamic higher education institutions in Central Java, Indonesia. The respondent of this research was English Education Department students of one of public Islamic institutions in Central Java in all semester who produce podcast to practice speaking. The numbers of participants in this research were 28 students. While for the interview, four students from respondents were chosen to be interviewed to validate their answers in the questionnaire.

Data collection

To collect data in this research, the researcher used questionnaire and interview techniques. Statements in the questionnaire were adopted (Chan, Mary, & Gilliah, 2015; Mandasari & Aminatun, 2019; Yandi, 2015), where some statements were adjusted to the target variable to make it more relevant. The questionnaire consists of three parts. The first part was demographic questions to collect respondents' basic information that might be needed by the researcher for further steps like an interview. The questions include name, semester, student number, phone number, and email.

The second part was a questionnaire in close-ended type and measured in 5-points Likert scale consisting of Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Neutral (N), Disagree (D), and Strongly Disagree (SD). Ten statements refer to a condition of how respondents perceive, act and think about producing podcast to practice speaking. The last part was the difficulties questionnaire which collects respondents' challenges during the making of podcast with 10 statements as well.

The questionnaire was distributed and displayed in *Bahasa Indonesia* to make sure all respondents confident about the content of the statements, so that they do not hesitate to choose their condition. The researcher used a semi-structured interview considering its flexible to probe further information based on respondent's responses and answers. In this case, the researcher used WhatsApp chat interview due to the social distancing of the pandemic outbreak.

Data analysis

This research used qualitative data analysis with three main components (Miles & Huberman, 1994). They are data reduction, data display, and drawing and verifying conclusions. To meet the validity of this research, triangulation was applied with four types of triangulations (Denzin, 1978 in Flick, 2004). They are (1) triangulation of data that combines data drawn from different sources, times, and people; (2) investigator triangulation is the use of different observers or interviewers; (3) triangulation of theories which approach data with multiple perspectives; and (4) methodological triangulation is the use of different subscales within a questionnaire.

Findings and discussion

Students' attitude on producing podcast as a media to practice speaking for autonomous learning

To find out the tendency of students' attitude, the positive and negative responses are summarized. The scale of 'agree' and 'strongly agree' are categorized as positive attitude, but that of 'disagree' and 'strongly disagree' belong to negative attitude. While 'neutral' stands alone as the indicator of being undecided instead the abstain opinion. In brief, the result is illustrated in Table 1.

Table 1. Students' result on affective attitude

Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	1 I enjoy practicing speaking by making podcast.	19	67.8	8	28.6	1
2 It does not burden me to produce podcast.	7	25	19	67.9	2	7.1
3 I feel okay to do mistake while practicing speaking.	24	85	2	7.1	2	7.1
4 I am comfortable to try to speak in correct pronunciation.	22	78.6	5	17.9	1	3.6

Table 1 shows that the highest score belongs to three out of four statements. It showed how students give positive attitude which they have good feelings and thoughts about

producing podcast and its process. These emotions engage learner to what they create in the learning process (Brown, 2014), especially in an independent activity, the learners' autonomy will push them to do what they want to learn and enjoy it in their own way.

Most students reveal that they enjoy the process of making podcast and feel excited about it. It shows through these interview data, that she said, "I am enthusiastic at the first time to prepare the script or the material to be delivered in the podcast as well as the recording, editing until the last process uploading to podcast platform" (Student A, WhatsApp interview).

Excitement was also revealed by student D. She said:

Because in speaking there would be the text, so that my speaking will run quite fluently. In the recording, I feel I am being a person who will deliver knowledge to many people. So, the enthusiasm emerges. How to say it... like an artist filmed and speak in English, cool right? I think it is (WhatsApp interview).

On the other hand, in the third statement, students are in neutral position about whether the making of a podcast is burdening or not. They perceived that this activity is sometimes easy however there are also difficulties but it is fun to do anyway. That is why it is not burdening to do and not super easy either. This is a common issue for students in learning to use second language and put them into a content that they made themselves as part of autonomous learning. Little (1995) believes the same because students in autonomous learning will have accepted the responsibility of their own language learning product which makes them question whether they are a good learner or not.

Although the majority of the students give positive attitude in affective aspect, many students mentioned how they do not have any interest in producing podcast to practice speaking and feel uncomfortable with it as student D argued "When getting started, I feel overwhelmed because usually in speaking, I prepared the material text first. Next on the recording step I started to be enthusiastic and in the editing step I feel overwhelmed again because of the complexity" (WhatsApp interview).

It is in line with Phillips' (2017) findings about how students feel overwhelmed at first then begin to be accustomed to it and find their comfort way.

Table 2. Students' result on behavioral attitude

Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
5 I organize the material and prepare it well.	22	78.6	6	21.4	0	0
6 I easily do the recording.	6	21.4	17	60.7	5	17.5
7 I do a few improvisations and add my own words outside the material.	20	71.4	6	21.4	2	7.1

Table 2 depicts that the students positively arrange their own material in their own words. The process that students have gone through from gaining material, choosing topics, and composing ideas is autonomous activities where students take part in the learning management. The autonomy lives in students in the form of independent action. It includes decision-making and self-control (Little, 1995). It is supported as well by Myartawan (2012) in Khotimah et al. (2019) where the learner autonomy helps students to recognize both their language capacity and weakness then build their own strategy while

facing difficulties as what student B said "Started from the theme or material preparation, usually I write down some points on a piece of paper. I only write down the points and explain them in my own words fully in the process of making" (WhatsApp interview). Meanwhile, student C agreed "That is why it is important to surely understand the material and do improvisation in the making process" (WhatsApp interview).

In statement number 6 where students express how they do the recording, 60.7 % of them are in neutral position. Based on the interview, students indicated that the result somehow is true. As in the first affective aspect theme, students enjoy the process and also fell worry.

They said that the recording is actually easy, students speak and tap the record button but apart from that, there is material preparation and editing to make it perfect. That is why supremely the recording is easy but there are parts to put more effort, like giving back sound which matches the topic delivered or deleting unnecessary noises. Students A, B, C, and D are all in the same agreement that the recording gets hard when they need to re-record many times. However, this repeated rehearsal process during the recording increases students' language performance better (Hamzaoglu & Kocoglu, 2016).

Table 3. Students' result on behavioral attitude

	Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree	
		N	%	N	%	N	%
8	I think making podcast helps to practice speaking when we have no partner to practice speaking	26	92.9	2	7.1	0	0
9	In my opinion, making podcast should be a project in English subject	24	85.7	3	10.7	1	3.6
10	It makes students feel comfortable to speak without showing their face to the camera	25	89.1	3	10.7	0	0

Table 3 demonstrates positive attitude of being agree dominates on all statements. Students indicate optimistic thoughts even though they do it autonomously and create the podcast on their own. Student A mentioned how it helped her. She stated, "I feel helped in the practicing pronunciation aspect even though no one told me whether my pronunciation is correct or not but at least it is quite good for practicing pronunciation" (WhatsApp Interview).

Similar to student A about the pronunciation assistance she got, student D said about what speaking aspect that she obtained:

Pronunciation, because in the recording, the purpose is to publish it to audiences, and that pronunciation has to be learned to minimize errors. So before doing the record, any difficult pronunciation should be learned how to pronounce it through other sources. So, we can get the pronunciations learning from the record process (WhatsApp interview).

According to the vignette above, students got the feeling that they will have audience to listen to them, thus they pay attention to their speaking includes the context, accuracy, and fluency just like having a real-time interaction with a person (Hamzaoglu & Kocoglu, 2016).

The students obtain such benefits, and it will motivate to create activities of podcast making in English subject both in school and university. On the other interview result, student D pointed out that, "I think that would be great. Even though it is complicated in the material and editing but still can be solved. Better than doing presentation in front of people directly" (WhatsApp interview).

The result points out how most English students in one of public Islamic institution have a positive attitude on producing podcast to practice speaking for autonomous learning. It is in line with a previous study by Suparjan et al. (2016) in which they discovered students consider podcast as an effective media to boost their creativity and autonomy learner side through its flexibility. It is supported as well by Phillips's (2017) study where the students gave a positive attitude on how producing podcast increases their confidence in speaking.

Students' difficulties in practicing speaking by producing podcast

The researcher found various outcomes for each statement. Many of the statements suit the condition that students deal with in their practice.

Table 4. Students' result on affective aspect difficulties

Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	
	8	I feel uncomfortable to listen to my own voice in recordings.	7	25	10	35.7	11
9	I feel like the podcast making is too complicated to be done.	6	21.4	12	42.9	10	35.7
10	It's hard for me to hear and identify grammar errors or mispronounced in my own speaking.	16	57.2	6	21.4	6	21.4

Table 4 reveals that many of the students perceive that they are familiar with their own voice and half others feel they are not confident with their voice. This also occurred in the study by Phillips (2017) that the students do not like the sound of their own voice in the recording. However, in autonomous language learning, listening to our own podcast will help evaluate the language performance to recognize any mistakes or missed parts. Student C agreed by saying, "Yes true, so we can find out and acknowledge our own speaking skill quality by listening to our podcast" (WhatsApp interview).

The empirical evidence shows he considers that the post record evaluation is necessary in order to upgrade the speaking aspects like vocabulary mastery, diction, pronunciation, and grammar. Speaking practice without identifying mistakes would make the skill keep stagnant because students may make the mistake more than once. Students can always repeat their speaking in the recording until they find their best in speaking and do a reflection of their own speaking for their speaking proficiency correction (Rahmasari, Ahmad, & Kamil, 2021).

As seen in the third statement about identifying their own speaking, the majority of students agreed that it is difficult to realize that they pronounce a word incorrectly or use the wrong grammar while speaking. Many of them stated that usually, they catch the mistakes after listening back to their recording. That is why even though sometimes they

feel uncomfortable listening to their voice yet still do it to take a look at how they speak. Student D mentioned, "I am aware of it but usually I realize it after the recording is done and finish edited (smile emoticon)" (WhatsApp interview). It is in line with Phillips's finding (2017) that students have weaknesses in hearing their own mistakes in pronunciation.

Statement number 2 validates the second statement in the previous attitude questionnaire. The result remains the same where students are agreeing with the activity of producing podcast even though they confront difficulties.

Table 5. Students' result on behavioral aspect difficulties

Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
4 I cannot arrange by myself the words I am going to deliver.	5	17.9	8	28.6	15	53.6
5 I am having problem to speak fully without reading the material little by little.	16	57.4	7	25	5	17.9
6 I worry if I cannot speak fluently and do grammar mistakes.	18	64.3	6	21.4	4	14.3
7 It is difficult to apply new vocabulary and use my own words.	11	39.3	10	35.7	7	25

Table 4 informs that the students revealed how they prefer to compose the material themselves for better mastery. Students admitted that apart from challenges in making the materials started from connecting ideas, browsing relevant references and the explanation they have made it.

On the other hand, there are also students who acknowledge the difficulties in delivering materials fully in their own words. This confirms the prior interview result exposing that the students need at least a piece of paper with highlighted points from their material. In this case, student C added, "Yes miss, so I need to open the material again to know what I have missed out" (WhatsApp interview).

Students mentioned how they are anxious about making mistakes and actually, they did although they realize it after that. It is in line with the finding by Afisa (2015) asserting that students are afraid of making mistakes, which then leads them to be anxious about speaking activity. Prior studies also found that students face difficulties in performing speaking, such as unable to express thoughts, utter in correct pronunciation, speak in a fluent way with correct grammar, and lack of vocabulary mastery (Samad, Bustari, & Ahmad, 2017). Nevertheless, the students consider that more practice in producing podcast activities will progressively increase their speaking skill.

Student B is aware of this and said, "In the beginning it felt hard because we need to record many times since when we play the recording there are words that sounds not good, or mispronunciation, or too many speech filters like *ee, emm, hmm*". As we know it will make our speaking sounds no good" (WhatsApp interview). He also added, "With more practice, we can get used to it and the mistakes will also decrease gradually" (WhatsApp interview). It indicates that this kind of state of mind raises positivity on the activity of performing language which should be embraced for all language learners.

Table 6. Students' result on cognitive aspect difficulties

Statements	Total Agree		Total Neutral		Total Disagree	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
8 In my opinion, it takes much time to prepare and record.	14	50	9	32.1	5	17.9
9 It takes up much storage and internet data more than video project.	8	28.5	8	28.5	12	42.9
10 I think it makes students shy and unwilling to speak.	0	0	6	21.4	22	78.5

Table 6 elucidates that half of the students agreed that the preparation takes a lot of time. Based on the interview, the research found out that there are factors that make the preparation and recording take a lot of time. Student D admitted as follows, "I do face difficulty. Whatever the mistake it has to be re-recorded" (WhatsApp interview).

The interview excerpt presents that similar to student C. He becomes lazy when he has to repeat the recording many times for a good result. It is also admitted by student B that sometimes they need to re-record because they want to make sure the quality of the recording. However, at the same time, doing the repeated recording takes a lot of time.

Repeated recording will also take up storage usage in the smartphone, and the editing step needs a stable internet connection. In the previous study by Suparjan et al. (2016), the finding showed how students deal with internet signals but in this research, based on the interview conducted there are additional interesting results. Student D expressed her experience about that as follows, "In the past, the obstacle is in the storage considering limited storage of my old smartphone. Now that is not the issue. I have problems on the internet signal, but it can be resolved easier than the issue of storage" (WhatsApp interview).

Surprisingly, these difficulties are solved by students in their own way. Student A stated, "To anticipate such case of limited storage, I do the recording using my laptop instead of smartphone. Besides, using laptop made the recording sounds cleaner. While for internet signal and data, I have no issues" (WhatsApp interview). This reflected on how the learner autonomy grows with their ability to build strategy while facing obstacles in the learning process. It is emphasized by Brown (2014) that the values of learner autonomy support a style and strategy discovery.

Conclusion

The present study enforces that the majority of the students showed positive attitude towards producing podcast as media to practice speaking independently. It confirms the prior studies on related topics where students are optimistic in practicing speaking on their own by making podcast. From three different perspective of attitude aspect, the result of this research is described as in the following. From the affective aspect, the result depicted satisfaction from the students in making podcasts because the comfortable feeling in the process had driven them to be more confident to speak. From the behavioral aspect, most of the students tend to compose the material they need to deliver in their own preferred style. This autonomous activity helps them master the material, so they can convey it

smoothly and minimize mistakes. Most students in cognitive aspect showed positive attitude and agreed that they are assisted in their speaking includes pronunciation, speaking confidence, and fluency. Students also proposed that producing podcast will be a great activity for speaking class.

There are difficulties faced by students during the process of producing podcasts. They experienced language anxiety where students are nervous in performing speaking and feel anxious of making mistakes in the recording. It is hard to deliver material without any notes and that is why they at least bring a piece of paper with material points. Students acknowledged that making mistakes means repeating the recordings. It sometimes makes them overwhelmed and raises laziness. They, nevertheless, set it up well which makes the preparation takes a lot of time since they don't want anything missed. In terms of storage and internet data or connection, students do not encounter such issues.

This study upholds the important of media in language learning. In this case, the use of podcast brings positive ambience in learning during the implementation of distance learning which can be also applied in flipping and blending classes in the future practice. However, the strategies to overcome the difficulties in this research are in demand to be explored, so that later on the result would be fruitful for forthcoming research.

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