



Effects of Using Online Approach on Speaking Skills Among Malaysian University Students

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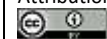
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Abstract

The role of the university has gone far from just producing students with excellent academic achievements to producing students with tremendous communication skills such as speaking in English to enable them to compete in the global market. However, many university students in Malaysia are still struggling to acquire the English language comprehensively that matches the employers' expectations. Hence, the importance of spoken English should be emphasized more by creating more interesting platforms and using online approaches such as vlogs to enable the students to use the language more profoundly. Thus, a pilot study was conducted to identify the effect of the vlog approach on the speaking skills of 50 students from a Malaysian Technical University. This study employed a quantitative method. A survey was conducted using a self-developed questionnaire which was distributed through Google Form. The questionnaire comprised 3 sections: student demography, speaking ability, and vlog effects. The data were analyzed using the mean score, standard deviation, Linear regression, and ANOVA. The results revealed that the use of online vlog activities had significantly helped the respondents to improve their speaking skills. Meanwhile, there was no significant difference in the use of vlog activities among the male and female respondents with regard to improving speaking skills in English. Therefore, it was concluded that using online vlog activities was a useful platform to practice and improve speaking skills in English among university students and more of these types of online approaches could be employed to help the university students to enhance confidence to speak in English.

Keywords: Speaking skills; University students; Online approach; Vlogs.

1. Introduction

In Malaysia, people are learning English as their second language since primary education. Learners' English proficiency level is determined by an examination administered by the Malaysian Education Council known as Malaysian University Entrance Test (MUET) as a medium to assess not only speaking but also listening, writing and reading skills. The role of the university is not only to produce students with excellent academic achievements but also students with tremendous soft skills especially speaking skills to enable them to compete in the market globally. However, it seems that many university students are still facing difficulties to acquire the language comprehensively despite the language learning throughout a number of years (Khalijahbinti *et al.*, 2019).

Incorrect spellings and ungrammatical sentence constructions are found to be common issues, even among university students. Besides, cultural factors, linguistic factors and psychological or affective factors are some of the reasons behind their reluctance to participate in classroom speaking activities (Kukulska-Hulme *et al.*, 2011). Cultural factors are related to their previous language learning experiences which affect their confidence in speaking and oral presentations meanwhile linguistic factors refer to the difficulties in understanding common grammatical patterns in English. On the other hand, affective factors were also found to cause students to have lack of motivation and interest in learning the language that could lead towards low proficiency in English (Thang *et al.*, 2012).

2. Literature Review

Today's world demands young and fresh graduates who acquire soft skills in addition to their academic excellence. In universities, listening and reading are considered two receptive skills that should be acquired to enable them to produce the expected learning outcomes. Meanwhile, writing and speaking are productive skills that are also crucial to be mastered in the development of effective communication. In fact, English language is highly beneficial in making public speeches, participating in debates and discussions, performing oral presentations and other academic interests. Apparently, language learners need to attain good speaking skills to achieve success in their respective fields. Excellent speaking skills help students in formal and non-formal conversations, job interviews,

academic presentations also, for business purposes (Osborn *et al.*, 2008). A study by Zaremba (2006) also reveals that competent speaking skills were highly demanded above work experience, motivation and academic achievements as part of the requirements for employment. Furthermore, being proficient in the language can help one portray a good first impression to the employer for higher chances of job employment. However, many graduates do not acquire the language and speaking skills needed in the workplace (Aruna, 2011). The skills shown by the graduates somehow do not match with the employers' expectations. Studies also prove that the high unemployment rate among graduates is often attributed to their lack of English proficiency and communication skills (Su-Hie *et al.*, 2017). Hence, the importance of spoken English should be emphasized by employing interesting methods such as online approaches activities. This move is important as many students know the subject well but fail to use the language effectively which affect their overall performance.

2.1. The Use of Online Platform

Nowadays, online platforms are becoming very popular as a tool of interaction. Many people around the world are increasingly using this platform for various purposes including the academia. Teachers and students also use this as a mode of social interaction. Apparently, many university students face difficulties regarding language skills improvement issues by practising the traditional classrooms (Nor *et al.*, 2019). Thus, the use online platforms such as Vlog activity could be studied for its effects towards the university students. Vlog is an example of online approach that is gaining popularity among students. Vlog is a video that contains opinion, story or daily activity that are usually written on a blog (David *et al.*, 2017). The video blogs which contain record of thoughts and experiences can be filmed and published on the internet. David *et al.* (2017) also argued that vlog could be used for self-expressing or providing opinion to the public but too much freedom in using it could also lead to negative impacts. In these modern times, there are abundance of platforms for people to post and share their vlog including YouTube, Instagram, Flickr and many more. According to Codreanu and Combe (2018), vlog shows high capability in encouraging formal and informal language learning, speaking and inter-cultural interaction between the vloggers and other people.

Vlog is a platform where everyone can showcase their talents in their own way without the comments of others. Although one does not have a vlog account, watching vlog videos from others is also an insight and an inspiration to speak English. This is because most people who use this vlog are people from all over the world where they create vlogs in a relaxed and fun mood to inspire their audience. Thus, the viewers can learn from this vlog especially matters related to English language. In Malaysian universities, the application of online activities such as videos in language lessons is not a new practice as there are a high number of language instructors who have been using videos as one of the tools in teaching. However, using specifically vlog as part of the speaking activities or assessments may not be vastly applied yet compared to the use of other common videos as visual aids in language learning.

The use of vlog in improving speaking skills is feasible as most university students are fairly technologically savvy and it is believed that they prefer to bring more technologies into the classroom (Anggraeni *et al.*, 2020). Apparently, they have the perception that the more technology integrated, the more interesting the lesson will be. Thus, vlog may highly uncover students' potentials and creativity in transferring ideas and producing interactive videos. Vlog has more advantages than the common text blogging as it is a combination of video, sound, pictures and also text to emphasize more on the content, context, information hence, able to express and display emotions more distinctly which can also be shared with others.

Apart from that, vlog may also enhance students' interactions in a more authentic environment which expose them to more speaking experiences (Maulidah, 2018). Therefore, the application of vlog may be considered by language instructors as an approach to attract students to be actively involved in the speaking tasks as vlog provides fun and accessible learning which is in line with the advancement of technology-integrated learning in especially, in the current situation. Obviously, lack of knowledge is not the main problem when it comes to communicating and speaking in English among Malaysian students as they have learned and equipped themselves with adequate fundamental English knowledge since the age of five at pre-school level. However, many of them grapple with the issue of not having the confidence to talk in English. Thus, the main aim of this study was to identify the effects of practising online approach by using vlog activities on university students' speaking skills.

2.2. Research Objectives

This study was conducted to achieve the following research objectives.

1. To investigate the perceptions of Malaysian university students towards practising online activities
2. To investigate the perceptions of Malaysian university students towards practising vlog activities in speaking skills.

3. Method

This study employed a quantitative method. A survey was conducted using a self-developed questionnaire. The questionnaire was designed based on a comprehensive review of relevant and updated literature. The items were generated and reviewed by three experts in the area of speaking skills. A total of 50 students from a Malaysian Technical University provided data for the survey. The questionnaire was distributed via Google Form (online) among the third-year university students from the Faculty of Technology Management & Business (FTMB). The questionnaire comprised 3 sections: Section A (referring to student demography), Section B (referring to speaking

ability) and Section C (referring to vlog activity). A four-point Likert scale was used in Section B and C (1- Strongly Disagree, 2 - Disagree, 3 - Agree and 4 - Strongly Agree).

The data obtained from the survey were analysed descriptively using the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program version 25. Mean, standard deviation, linear regressions and ANOVA were used to analysis the data. The alpha value for all the variables of this study was 0.765 where it was acceptable and reliable as the reliability test value was > 0.7 (Sekaran, 2009).

4. Results

4.1. Students' Perceptions of Online Platforms and Vlog Activities

A four-point Likert scale was used as the instrument to examine the perceptions of the respondents on their participation in online platforms using vlog activities and its effectiveness in improving their speaking skills. Vlog is an online public interaction platform that facilitates interaction. As part of this research, the students were provided with the opportunity to use the online platform to communicate in English. Table 1 provides the perceptions of respondents about the effectiveness of vlog in improving their English-speaking skills.

Table-1. Students Perceptions of Using Vlog Activity

Statements	SDA	DA	A	SA
I participate in vlogging activity on YouTube	20%	20%	10%	50%
I think that vlog is a useful tool for improving speaking skills	10%	5%	30%	55%
I think students get new knowledge in English by vlogging	8%	0%	42%	50%
Vlog enhances student's confidence level to speak English	15%	5%	12%	68%
Vlog motivates students to participate in speaking activities	0%	6%	42%	52%
Vlog is an easy approach for students to practice speaking in English	0%	10%	20%	70%
Vlog is good platform to be used for learning English	00%	10%	00%	90%

SDA= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, A= agree, SA= strongly agree

Table 1 showed that 50 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that they often participated in vlog activities on YouTube. Meanwhile, 20 percent simply disagreed participating in vlog activities. The results also showed that a large number of respondents (55 percent) strongly agreed that vlog was a useful tool for improving speaking skills. Based on the survey results, majority of the respondents (50 percent) strongly agreed that vlog helped to learn new knowledge related to English. The analysis also showed that 68 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that YouTube vlog enhanced their confidence in speaking English. Besides, many respondents (52 percent) strongly agreed that vlog activities motivated them to participate in the language activities. Majority of the respondents (70 percent) strongly agreed that vlog was an easy approach for students to practice speaking in English. The last item showed that 90 percent of the respondents strongly agreed that YouTube vlog was a good platform to be used for learning English. The descriptive analysis is provided in Table 2 below.

Table-2. Descriptive Statistics of Students Responses of use of Vlog

Statements	N	M	SD
I participate in vlog activity on YouTube.	50	2.90	1.22
I think that vlog is a useful tool for improving speaking skills.	50	3.30	0.95
I think students get new knowledge in English by vlogging.	50	3.34	0.84
Vlog enhances students' confidence level to speak English.	50	3.33	1.11
Vlog motivates students to participate in speaking activities.	50	3.46	0.61
Vlog is an easy approach for students to practice speaking.	50	3.60	0.66
Vlog is an easy approach to be used for learning English.	50	3.80	0.60

Table 2 shows the values for mean scores and standard deviation for the use of vlog approach by the respondents. The mean scores ranged from M=3.80 to 2.90 and SD 1.11 to 0.60. The results showed that the respondents had strongly agreed with almost all the statements in the scale. The findings highlighted that vlog was a useful approach and had contributed towards the speaking skills of the university students.

4.2. Students' Perceptions of Speaking Skills

Second objective assessed the students' perceptions towards using English as means of communication in daily life. Table 3 shows the responses and analysis of the university students.

Table-3. Students' Perceptions of using English as Means of Communication

Statements	SDA	DA	A	SA
I use English as a mode of communication to discuss assignments	50%	20%	10%	20%
I can speak English with my friends with confidence.	70%	0%	00%	30%
I can speak English in front of others without feeling nervous	15%	05%	12%	68%
I am scared of making mistakes when talking in English	0%	6%	42%	52%
My classmates help me to develop my English-speaking skills.	00%	10%	20%	70%
I would love to speak in English in more occasions.	00%	10%	00%	90%

SDA= strongly disagree, DA= disagree, A= agree, SA= strongly agree

Table 3 shows that 50 percent of the respondents do not use English Language as mode of speaking to discuss assignments. The results also showed that only 30% of the respondents attempted to speak in English with their friends and seventy percent of them did not have the confidence to use the language even with their friends. Majority, 68 percent of the respondents admitted that they were nervous to speak in English in front of others. Around 52 % of the respondents said that they felt scared of making mistakes when talking in English. Most of the students, 70 % stated that they received help from their friends or course mates who provided help in using English language during the academic sessions. The final item revealed that 90% of them would love to communicate in English and only 10 % rejected this idea. The analysis clearly showed that the majority of the respondents were interested in speaking in English but unable to speak due to several constraints. Thus, the students' perceptions of using vlog strategy were studied towards their speaking skills.

4.3. Descriptive Statistics Analysis

Table 4 illustrates the mean scores and standard deviations of the responses provided by the respondents of the study with regard to their speaking skills.

Table-4. Respondents' Descriptive Statistics on Speaking Skills

Statements	N	M	SD
I use English as a mode of communication to discuss assignments	50	2.00	1.18
I can speak English with my friends with confidence	50	1.90	1.37
I can speak English in front of others without feeling nervous.	50	3.33	1.11
I am scared of making mistakes when talking in English	50	3.46	0.61
I would love to speak in English in more occasions.	50	3.60	0.66
My classmates help me to develop my English-speaking skills.	50	3.80	0.60

N= number, M= mean, SD= standard deviation

Table 4 shows that the mean and standard deviation of speaking skills of the students evidently indicates that the improvement remained at moderate level ranging from 3.80 to 1.90 and from 1.37 to 0.60 respectively. This result indicated that students primarily agreed with most of the statements in the scale that their English-speaking skills had improved.

Table-5. Linear Regression Analysis

Model R Square	R the Estimate	R Square	Adjusted	Srd. Error of
1	0.87	.700	.700	3.181

a. Predictor: (Constant), speaking skills

Table 5 showed that the predictor variable (vlog) had a significant contribution of .70 percent to the variance in the dependent variable (speaking skills). Hence, it could be concluded that vlog activity was a good predictor of students' speaking skills in English.

5. Discussion

The analyses revealed that majority of the respondents were keen on using vlog activities via online learning. As a matter of fact, nowadays, students are exposed to the sophisticated current technologies and platforms that could help them improve their proficiency and confidence in using English language (Jurkovič, 2019). Apparently, vlog was a familiar online learning approach that they often used as a platform to share their opinions and also prevent boredom as well as improve their communication skills in English. It was found that vlogs also benefitted users in terms of talent, public speaking skills and pronunciation. The results also showed that a large number of respondents strongly agreed that vlog improved their speaking skills. This was also because vlog was a platform created in early 2016 to highlight an individual's talent on the YouTube site. Apparently, speaking in front of a camera could reduce anxiety and fear. Thus, some students felt more comfortable to speak in English via vlog activities. The findings revealed that the majority of the respondents perceived that vlog activities could help them develop speaking skills in English as others could see their posts and become friends on social media. Thus, there were more opportunities for university students to share information with others using English language as a medium of communication.

6. Conclusion

This research was initiated to study the problems faced by the university students to speak in English proficiently. The main objective was to increase the opportunity of the university students to communicate in English using YouTube Vlogs by studying the perceptions of the respondents with regard to the benefits and advantages of participating in YouTube vlog activities and also to study its effects based on the gender differences. The study revealed that many students were not comfortable to speak in English in their daily lives which was one of the crucial issues for the lack of confidence level in speaking English. Most of the students feared of making mistakes when talking in English even though there was interest of communicating in English especially within academic domains. The findings revealed that most of the students perceived that YouTube vlogs could be a tool for students to build up their confidence level to speak English. Apparently, YouTube vlog provided a chance for students to explore their ability in using the language especially in speaking skill as they could talk on different topics based on their own knowledge capacity.

YouTube was free and easy to practice and YouTube vlogging was found to be one of the current trends to support students with confidence to talk and communicate in English. The examples of topics that could be discussed included current issues, interest and reflections on products or movies (review). In conclusion, this study found that most university students have positive regard for using vlogs as a mean to improve the speaking skills in English. Even though there was no significant difference in terms of gender in using vlog activities to communicate in English, the awareness of students towards the practical use of YouTube vlog activities in improving their confidence level to communicate in English seemed to be at the moderate level. Thus, this approach could be emphasized and encouraged to be practised by the university students for full utilization and reap the benefit of it. This study also recommends that the educational intuitions such as universities should provide more exposure to students to practice more online approaches such as vlogs to help them improve their communication skills especially in speaking English more effectively.

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