Muslim English Literacy (MEL): an Application for Extensive Listening Material

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ABSTRAK

Tranformasi bahan ajar merupakan kebutuhan di era digital saat ini, termasuk dalam pembelajaran Bahasa Inggris. Makalah ini membahas bagaimana sebuah aplikasi bernama Muslim English Literacy (MEL) dikembangkan sebagai alternatif bahan ajar Extensive Listening (EL) dalam belajar Bahasa Inggris. Menggunakan desain Penelitian dan Pengembangan (R n D) yang meliputi 7 tahap: (1) analisa kebutuhan, (2) desain dan pengembangan bahan ajar, (3) validasi ahli, (4) revisi bahan ajar, (5) uji coba, (6) revisi kedua, dan (7) diseminasi produk akhir, penelitian ini melibatkan 50 guru Bahasa Inggris MTs, 143 siswa-siswi MTs dan SMP Islam, 86 walimurid MTs dan SMP Islam, dan 5 validator. Produk penelitian ini, MEL, berpotensi dapat diterima dan diterapkan untuk membantu siswa-siswi memperoleh lebih banyak input komprehensif, sehingga mereka dapat meningkatkan kemampuan berbahasa Inggris sekaligus identitas mereka sebagai muslim dengan mengimplementasikan nilai-nilai karakter yang diintegrasikan di dalamnya. Ke depan, penelitian dan pengembangan serupa dengan topik beragam akan sangat berguna dilakukan.

Kata kunci: Literasi, Extensive Listening, Bahan Ajar

ABSTRACT

Transforming a learning resource is needed in this digital era, including in English teaching and Learning. This study outlines how Muslim English Literacy (MEL) application was developed to support the digital transformation as an alternative for Extensive Listening (EL) material. Research and Development (R n D) design executed using 7 phases: (1) needs analysis, (2) material design and development, (3) expert validation, (4) materials revision, (5) pilot study, (6) second round of materials revision, and (7) final product dissemination was employed in this study involving 50 EFL teachers, 143 EFL learners, 86 parents, and 5 validators. The developed product, MEL, is potentially acceptable and applicable helping EFL learners receive more comprehensible input so that they can improve their English as well as raise their identity of being Muslim by implementing character values introduced inside. Further studies on developing similar materials with more various topics will be worth conducting.

Keywords: Literacy, Extensive Listening, Material

A. INTRODUCTION

It is indisputable that people cannot speak without listening and proven that people listen more than speak, read, and write in a communication. (Brown & Abeywickrama, 2019) confirms that listening skill is used more at school, home, and work. Lake (2015) also reports that people communicate around 80%. Interestingly, listening activities take 55% of the communication time. The facts obviously show how essential listening to learn and support other English skills. However, In EFL (English as a Foreign Language) context, like in Indonesia, it is hard to have an experience to have natural listening activities from English native speakers. Students have often been taught explicit grammar rules such as noun phrase, relative clauses, and gerund, they are able to explain it and give the reason why the sentence is grammatical or not, but they may not be able to use the same grammatical sentence for meaningful and authentic communication (Chomsky & Krashen, 2020).

In fact, summarized by Ducker (2013), some difficulties appear from the listening input hampering students in understanding the meaning such as uncontrolled native speaker's speed in the audio/video, more time for repetition due to confusing reduced sounds, insufficient knowledge about informal and colloquial English expressions, modified meaning of stress and intonation potentially resulting misunderstanding, interfering volume, clarity, and background noise (Anderson & Lynch, 1988) and unfamiliar accents. In addition, Renandya and Farrel (2010) expose another difficulty to capture the speaker's attitude while listening to an audio. This kind of condition results on EFL students' missing in identifying the utterances as well as failing to guess the non-verbal cues' meaning. Furthermore, Hamouda (2013) confirms that complexities in pronunciation, speed, less vocabulary, speakers accent, less concentration, anxiety, and unqualified recording encountered by EFL learners in listening have produced challenges for EFL teachers to help their students coping with such kinds of problems.

On the other hand, Krashen, Lee, and Lao, (2017) said that fostering language learning can be done by exposing to a large amount of highly comprehensible and compelling input. When students repeatedly focus on the meaning of many interesting messages, they incidentally and gradually acquire the language. That is the way the learning happens unconsciously (p. 129).

However, there have been insufficient or limited resources and materials concerning Islamic values provided in *madrasah*. Hence, it is a must for the teacher to be more creative to advance and improvise the existing resources (Adiantika, 2019). This is in line with a recommendation proposed by Rakhmawati and Rachmajanti (2018) after developing a supplementary multimedia-based listening material for seventh graders employing Macromedia Flash CS6 software for the visualization, Text to Speech software for the audio, and Audacity software for combining the audio files. Thus, they frank to acknowledge the weaknesses of their product like limited topics presented, limited access provided, and unnatural voice over used, so that they recommended other researchers to develop such a listening material covering more topics, developed in a website so that it can be accessed easily, and using real person's voice, English native speakers preferable, for the audio. That is why this study develops a website and a mobile application using a native speaker as the voice over or narrator.

Thus far, based on the previous studies and the needs analysis conducted, this study plans to develop an EL material in the form of a website and a mobile application called MEL introducing the life chapters of Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. The product is targeted to be used by MTs and SMPI students especially the ones joining English Clubs.

B.   LITERATURE REVIEW

One of the greatest challenges faced by English teachers dealing with English acquisition and use is that most students lack tacit knowledge that cannot be explained, resulting in less comprehensible input (from listening and reading) so that they produce less comprehensible output (of speaking and writing). For example, when students have often been taught explicit grammar rules such as noun phrase, relative clauses, and gerund, they are able to explain it and give the reason why the sentence is grammatical or not, but they may not be able to use the same grammatical sentence for meaningful and authentic communication (Chomsky & Krashen, 2020). Whereas a theory of Second Language Acquisition (SLA), among five Krashen's Hypotheses, input hypothesis relates to language acquisition, not language learning. So, students need natural environment to acquire language. Consequently, language learners need more compelling comprehensible input which is acquired naturally from listening and reading resources. Such input can be acquired by implementing a literacy program.

The literacy program issued by Indonesian government in 2016 was called School Literacy Movement or *Gerakan Literasi Sekolah* (GLS). It strengthens the growth movement of character as stated in the Minister of Education and Culture Regulation No. 23 of 2015 (Sari, 2018). The regulation has mentioned that a literacy refers to an ability to use language and images in rich and diverse forms to read, write, listen, speak, see, present, and think critically about ideas. The components of the literacy consist of early literacy, basic literacy, library literacy, media literacy, technology literacy, and visual literacy. The activity has been believed to enhance students' interest in reading and improve reading skills so that knowledge can be mastered better. Thus, GLS promotes comprehensible input.

Furthermore, the SLA theory also examines the kind of input facilitating acquisition (Krashen, Lee, and Lao, 2017). It is said that exposure to a large amount of highly comprehensible and compelling input fosters language learning. When students repeatedly focus on the meaning of

many interesting messages, they incidentally and gradually acquire the language. That is the way the learning happens unconsciously (p. 129). Renandya (2012, p. 201) and Renandya and Farrell (2010) define EL as "all types of listening activities facilitating learners with a lot of comprehensible and enjoyable listening input". Ivone and Renandya, (2019) have mentioned five principles of EL: "quantity, comprehensibility, learner-centeredness, meaning-orientation, and accountability". In addition, Ivone and Renandya also mentioned that there are five listening activities performing EL: listening only, shadowing/overlapping while listening (active listening), reading while listening, listening and viewing, and combined listening, viewing and reading activities. The activities can be in the form of teacher-directed dictations or reading aloud or self-directed listening for pleasure that can be done outside the classroom. The essential consideration is that learners get to do a lot of meaningful listening practice. Just like reading, listening is best learnt through listening (p. 56).

 In the Indonesian context, however, the implementation of EFL teaching remains some problems, shown by assumptions and beliefs underpinning EFL teaching figured out by Renandya and Day (2020) that teachers simply follow the contents of the textbook and present the language items using their own efficient way, language is presented in a step-by-step and orderly manner, language rules are taught systematically and explicitly, the PPP (Presentation, Practice and Production) approach is believed as a perfect strategy to teach grammar rules explicitly, learning is often assessed on the test not on the use of the target language, and accuracy is over-emphasized but spoken and written fluency is often ignored.

Having a listening immersion will increase their exposure to rich and meaningful language input (Dressman, Lee, and Sabaouni, 2016). Recent evidence exposed in the preliminary study elaborated that 83.3% of the students and 98.8 % of the parents need listening to resources outside the class. This implied that EL material is needed by the students as well as the parents. It is in line with the principle that students learn to listen by

listening, and not by thinking about it or doing activities that do not contribute much to the development of their listening abilities (Chang et al., 2019; Renandya, 2012; Renandya & Farrell, 2010).

That is why this study tries to provide evidence infusing EL material into existing courses, for example infused to English Clubs. Developing EL material in the form of a website and a mobile application called Muslim English Literacy (MEL) providing two modes of Listening Only and Listening & Viewing, the EL material facilitates EFL learners to implement GLS as well as acquire more comprehensible input. Then, EFL teachers may take benefits from MEL by making use of the EL material, because teachers need to examine critically their own teaching approaches by keeping those that seem to work well and replacing the rest with ones promoting implicit language learning (Renandya & Day, 2020). Hopefully, MEL can contribute to promote the implicit language learning.

Besides, a similar policy called *Penguatan Pendidikan Karakter* (PPK) was also launched by the government through President Regulation (*Perpres*) number 87 in 2017 (*Perpres_Nomor_87_Tahun_2017.Pdf*, n.d.) saying that it is needed to instill and strengthen 18 character values derived from *Pancasila* such as religiosity, honesty, tolerance, self-discipline, hard work, creativity, independence, democracy, curiosity, patriotism, nationalism, respect for others, friendliness, peace-loving, love to read, environmental sensitivity, social awareness, and responsibility among students. It should be done either formally at school, or informally at home and in society. Therefore, integrating those policies of GLS focusing on improving comprehensible input and PPK instilling character values into EL material is something important to do.

One of existing materials incorporating Islamic values   is English Language Teaching for Islamic Schools (ELTIS) Resource Packs consisting of Listening Resource Pack (LRP), Islamic Life Resource Pack (ILRP), Game and Picture Resource Pack, and Assessment Resource Pack (Milal, Rohmah, Kusumajanti, Basthomi, Sholihah, and Susilowati, 2020). What makes this study different from ELTIS Resource Pack

especially the listening one, LRP, are the format and topics. The format used in the LRP is a website only while MEL developed in this study comes into two versions of a website and a mobile application facilitating an ease to access and practicality. The chapters of LRP are presented in a worksheet, Teachers' Note and Audio (mp3), while MEL is presented in two modes of Listening & Viewing and Listening Only each with pre-chapter introduction of vocabularies and character values embedded, audio or audio-visual chapters, and post-chapter exercises. The topics presented in LRP are graded from 7, 8, to 9 graders of MTs students, while MEL's topics are sequenced stories from Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h.'s birth to death exemplifying good characters as Muslims such as honest, responsible, respectful, etc. as recommended by the PPK policy.

C. METHOD

This study employs research and development (R&D) design adopted from Gall, Borg, and Gall (2003). The plot of the stages was described in the following flowchart.
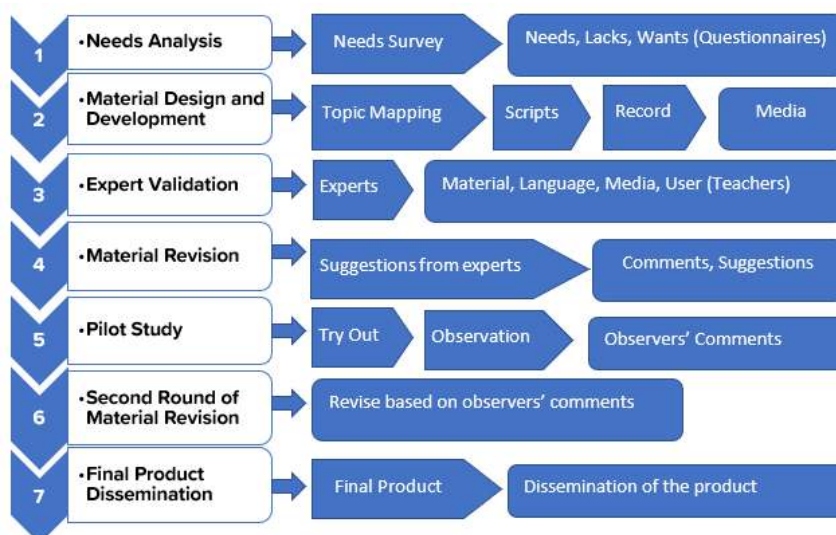

Figure 1. Flowchart of the Method

The study involved 50 English teachers of MTs and SMP Islam, 143 students of MTs and SMP Islam, and 86 parents whose children study in MTs or SMP Islam in Indonesia given instruments in the form of questionnaires related to their perceptions about the significance of EL

material incorporating Islamic values. Data received from the pilot study and final product dissemination were then analyzed using percentage scale.

D. DISCUSSION

The study shows the following data figured out in the table 1 below.

Table 1. Data Analysis

No	Aspect/Criteria	Percentage Score	Category
1	Meaningfulness: The learners might find that the material is personally meaningful (in promoting autonomous learning).	94.8	Very Good. No revision needed
2	Attractiveness: The learners might find that the material contains interesting information that attracts the learners' attention.	89.5	Very Good. No revision needed
3	Comprehension: The learners might find that the students can comprehend over 95-98% of the language in the material.	84.2	Very Good. No revision needed
4	Fluency: The learners might find that the students can listen and/or view the material without having to stop and replay the audio or video material.	89.5	Very Good. No revision needed
5	Content: The learners might find that the students can understand 90% or more of the content (the story or information).	84.2	Very Good. No revision needed
6	Language Features: The learners might find that the material contains language features (words, phrases, collocations) that can engage the students' attention.	89.5	Very Good. No revision needed

The product of this study, the website and mobile application named MEL, can contribute to giving more comprehensible input. This is in line with a research on developing a Mobile-Assisted Language Learning Application (MALL) for English Intensive Course developed by (Rohandi et al., 2017) and also a research and development on Multimedia-based listening material for seventh graders of lower secondary schools developed by (Rakhmawati et al., 2016) using CD/DVD/flash disk format employing Text-to-Speech and Audacity software and a computer installed an additional software named macromedia flash CS6. In addition, MEL can be used by any level of students, can be accessed from Android-based

mobile phones by installing from *Play Store* although the website version is also provided when there is only a computer available. Thus, MEL is so applicable that there is no single hard effort to access it.

The last but not the least, character values introduced in the pre-sections of each part in the chapters of MEL can contribute to instilling character values exemplified by Prophet Muhammad p.b.u.h. like what ELTIS team developed, especially the Listening Resource Pack (Milal et al., 2020).

E.   RECOMMENDATION

For next researchers who will conduct similar studies, it is recommended to develop more topics of other public figures inspiring people to learn and enlarge their knowledge. This study is designed as a pilot project which may be updated introducing more Muslim figures such as Caliph Abu Bakr, Caliph Umar Ibn Khattab, Caliph Usman Ibn "Affan, Caliph Ali Ibn Thalib, and many more. That is the way to promote Muslim identity among others.

F.   REFERENCES

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