

WEBINARS FOR LANGUAGE TEACHING: EXPERIENCE THE ESSENCES OF THE INTERNATIONAL SEMINAR THROUGH INTERNET

Syafrizal Tabi'i Rahman & Rahman Hakim
Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University, Banten, Indonesia

Abstract

This article discusses about the result of the investigation on several webinars for English language teaching browsed from the internet as the teaching materials of Seminar on ELT subject in English department of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University. There are three websites of webinars which are chosen by the writers as the sample of webinars. They are 1). Cambridge English Teacher Webinar; 2) Pearson ELT Webinars; and 3) Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinar. This research is aimed to find out the way on how to register to the webinars, what kinds of software platform are used for launching the seminar? And How is the interaction between participants and speakers.

Keywords: webinars, international seminar, language teaching

INTRODUCTION

Seminar on ELT is one of the subjects studied by the students of the English Department of Sultan Ageng Tirtayasa University during their seventh semester. At the end of the semester, the students are expected to have competencies in presenting their papers in front of other people formally. They are also expected to be able to update their knowledge about the current practice of the English language teaching around the world. Several methods and techniques are implemented during the lectures. Using web-quest method, the students are encouraged to search many kinds of information related to certain topics in English language teaching from varieties of sources on the internet.

As the teacher candidates, students are expected to learn more about the teacher's professional development issues. Quoting from Bailey (2006: 318) Lange defined language teacher development as a process of continual intellectual, experiential, and attitude growth of teacher, some of which generated in pre-professional and professional in-service programs. They are expected not only depending on their conventional study in the university but also exploring more information about the current methodologies and issues of the English language teaching from conferences, seminars, workshops, etc. As Johnson (2009: 95) states that traditionally teacher professional development has been thought of something that is done by others for or to teachers, while post-secondary continue coursework, professional workshops, and educational seminars will most certainly to play an important role in the professional credentialing of L2 teachers.

Attending the seminars, workshop, conferences and many other kinds of teacher professional development program is becoming an exclusive task for teachers, especially for my students. It is usually held by a university that is located far away from their places. Besides the expensive cost they should pay to be able to participate in the seminars or workshops, the long distance of the conference or seminar sites usually become the problems for teachers. Not all teachers have opportunities to attend the event, and not every institution would sponsor the financial support for their participation. Only some who works in a good and established institution. Nevertheless, we should appreciate for teachers that have spent their time and money to participate in seminar or conference to improve their knowledge about English language teaching, either as participant or presenter.

There are many other ways, however, that can be applied by teachers to improve their knowledge especially that related to the English language teaching especially through the internet. Nowadays, language teachers are able to attend the seminar that is conducted abroad from their own laptop or PC through the internet. It is called as webinars. Webinar is a kind of online conference that each participant experiences remotely at his or her own computer, connected to other attendees and the event via internet. Webinar usually uses as a marketing media to promote and present certain product to the costumer. Webinar is a tool that is used as an effective to reach prospects and buyers according to Handley and Chapman (2011:279)

It is assumed that through webinars, teachers experience the essences of attending the international seminars. Many kinds of topics are discussed by professional presenters whose names have been popular in the field of English language teaching such as Jeremy Harmer, Jack C. Richard, Carrol Numrich, etc.

Accordingly, the writers tend to investigate three websites offering webinars that are specifically designed for the language teachers' professional development. The webinars that are investigated are: 1) Pearson ELT

Webinars, 2) Cambridge English Teachers Webinars, and 3) Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinars. Several questions arise to investigate the webinars such as how to subscribe and access the webinars?; What kind of software is used to launch the seminar?; Is there any recorded webinars?; How long it usually takes?; is there any problem with the zone of time differences between Indonesia and other countries? What kinds of topics mostly discussed?; How can the attendants interact with the presenters? etc.

DISCUSSION

Webinars for Language Teaching

Changes in the role and influence of ICT in teacher development occur very quickly.. Varieties of digital contents, video streaming etc are now able to be delivered and download through the internet. Online collaboration, video conferences and webinars are becoming a new way of professional development in education.(Elliott: 2009)

According to webopedia (Webopedia: 2012) webinar is short for web-based seminar, a presentation, lecture, workshop or seminar that is transmitted over the web. While, Handley and Chapman (2011: 278) state that webinar is a kind of online conference that each participant experiences remotely at his or her own computer, connected to other attendees and the event via internet. So, teachers do not have to go out to attend the seminar. What they need is laptop or computer with speakers or headset, and internet connection.

Webinar usually uses as a marketing media to promote and present certain product to the costumer. Webinar is a tool that is used as an effective to reach prospects and buyers according to Handley and Chapman (2011:279). Study shows that 67 percents of business leaders who rely on social media for business information seek out relevant podcast and webinars.

Webinar is typically a combination of audio and power point presentation which takes place on web conferencing platform for viewing and listening online. The attendees access the meeting by clicking a link or a meeting invitation sent by the webinar host through email (Handley and Chapman : 2011, 279).

Participants need some skills related on using computer and internet. They should familiar with email; at least have one email address. Their listening comprehension skills are needed, since they cannot see the presenter instead of slide and audio presentation. Chat box is usually provided on the left side of the power point slides, so that the participants are able to interact with the other participants as well as moderator and presenters. Registering to webinars courses is not the same and depends on the institution or website that provides the webinar, but most of them will invite you to join the webinar a week of several days before the schedule. Here are some steps you can follow to register with the website before join into the webinars.

Based on the writer experience in surfing to the internet, there are several webinars that are specifically designed to invite language teachers around the world to improve their knowledge in teaching English as a foreign or second language. Most of them are free. Teachers around the world are able to join by registering to the website that publish the webinar, then the invitation will be sent to their email asking them to re-register and follow the schedule of the webinar. Some of the known webinars that the writers have followed are Cambridge English teacher webinar that can be accessed from <http://www.cambridgeenglishteacher.org>); Teaching English Webinar at <http://www.teachingenglish.org.uk/webinars>; McMillan Webinars at <http://www.macmillanenglish.com/webinars>; Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinars from US Embassy or RELO at <http://www.shapingenglish.ning.com>; etc.

Teachers can find and listen to the famous experts on language teaching such Jeremy Harmer, Jack C. Richard, and many other presenters from other discipline such as psychologist Carol Numrich. Many kinds of interesting topics and issues such as critical thinking, blended learning, CLIL approach, 21st Century Skills for language teachers, and many other topics that related to the methods and technique in teaching the four language skills, are discussed in webinars.

How to Register and Attend the Webinar

There are several ways that should be taken by the webinar viewers before they are entering the room of each meeting in the webinars. The writers have investigates how to register and attend the webinar to the three webinars, Pearson ELT Webinars, Cambridge English Teachers Webinars and Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinar Courses. These are some common steps that can be followed to register and attend the webinars:

Registering

- 1) Register to the ning or website
- 2) Wait for the confirmation email
- 3) Visit the website to check the schedule of each webinars
- 4) Pay attention to the different zone of time
- 5) Participate in the discussion about the topic that is going to be discussed
- 6) Check your email, click on the specific link provided by the moderator to enter the webinar room (usually a day before)

Attending

- 1) Check your headset and internet connection
- 1) Enter the room with your registered user name or email
- 2) it is better to attend the room at least 5 minutes before the event
- 3) Great other attendants on the chatbox
- 4) Check again the sound from the webinar room
- 5) Wait for the moderator announcement on the chatbox
- 6) Participate in the discussion
- 7) Ask anything about the topic on the chatbox

However, there are several differences that you can find about how to register and attend the webinars. For example, in Shaping the Way We Teach English Webinars, you should register several weeks before the events. the room slot is limited for only about 40 attendants. Moreover, you should send a registration email to RELO Secretary or US Embassy. You can choose either registered as an individual viewer, or a viewing host. As an individual viewers means you are a single viewer in your place and computers. But, if you are registered as a viewing host, you can invite some people, either your students or colleagues, to attend together.

Software Platform of the webinars

Several webinars providers use different software platform to launch the webinar room. The writers have investigated three kinds of software that are used for launching the webinars. The software are adobe connect, blackboard collaborate and Saba Software. lets discuss the details of the three software.

Adobe Connect

Adobe Connect (formerly Presedia Publishing System, Macromedia Breeze, and Adobe Acrobat Connect Pro) is software used to create information and general presentations, online training materials, web conferencing, learning modules, and user desktop sharing. The product is entirely Adobe Flash based. All meeting rooms are organized into 'pods'; with each pod performing a specific role (i.e. chat, whiteboard, note, etc.).(Wikipedia: 2012)

Blackboard Collaborate

Saba Software

Saba is a public (NASDAQ: SABA) software company that provides e-Learning and human resource management software. Its products and services are delivered using a Software-as-a-service (SaaS) model, named Saba People Cloud. Hundreds of organizations of every size, from every industry and every geographic region are using Saba's robust collaborative and social technologies to become more competitive through innovation, speed, agility, and trust. Saba People Cloud applications are underpinned by global services capabilities and partnerships encompassing strategic consulting, comprehensive implementation services and ongoing worldwide support. Saba's customer base includes Amazon, Baker Hughes, Cisco and many others. It was named one of Forbes Magazine's "Most Trustworthy Companies" in 2010, cited s a leader in all three categories of Forrester Research's Talent Management report and named a "Leader" in Gartner's 2011 "Magic Quadrant for Corporate Learning Systems (Wikipedia, 2012)

Interaction on the Webinars

Attending webinars is different with the video conference that showing people or the presenters on the viewers' monitors. Interaction or communication between the speakers and attendants can be done by using microphone on each side, either presenters or attendants. On the other hand, webinars do not present the presenter visually on the attendants' monitors. They could only listen to the audio presentation. The interaction can be happened using the chatbox. Therefore, the attendants can only find the chatbox, to interact with the other attendants, moderators, and presenters. They type questions or response related to the topic of discussion on the chatbox. Powerpoint slide or presentation box, are provided on the webinars. Also the written version of the presenters' speech is provided in the textbox below the powerpoint.

Resume

Based on the explanation above, however, the writers have experience the three of webinars. All of them have the recorded version so that the attendants are able to replay the webinars any time they wish. Most of all, through webinars the attendants should not go outside or visit the place in order to attend the seminar. They can

feel the essences of attending the international seminars since the presenters are the experts in English language teaching from other countries.

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