Journal of ELT and Education
p-ISSN: 2618-1290, e-ISSN: 2663-1482, Volume 7, Issue 2, Page: 38-43
Published by, Center for Academic Research and Development (CARD)

https://doi.org/10.5281/zenodo.11532820

Use of audio-visual aids (AVAs) to improve EFL speaking at the secondary level in Bangladesh

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[**Citation:** Hossain, M. M. (2024). Use of audio-visual aids to improve EFL speaking at the secondary level in Bangladesh. *Journal of ELT and Education*, *7*(2), 38-43.]

Abstract: This empirical study surveyed the perceptions of both students and teachers about using audio-visual aids to augment speaking abilities in the context of English as a Foreign Language (EFL) among secondary school students in Bangladesh. Data was collected from 100 students using a self-administered questionnaire in five institutions. A focus group discussion (FGD) was conducted among five teacher participants. The study's findings demonstrated students' positive approach to audio-visual materials in the secondary EFL classrooms. The study also unveiled a few concerns: the speed of video dialogues exceeded the comprehension capabilities of students, inadequate audio equipment, and unfamiliar subject matter of the videos frequently proved unknown to students. Suggestions comprised of choosing resources that align with students' skill levels, ensuring enough multimedia equipment in classrooms, and creating projects that are suitably demanding.

Keywords: Audio-visual aids (AVAs), EFL, speaking skills, technology, secondary level

Introduction

English language education has experienced substantial enhancements in Bangladesh in terms of both quality and resources over the course of several decades. Projectors, audio texts and visuals which were previously distinctive educational features in the developed countries, are now widely used in educational institutions in Bangladesh. The multiple educational structures in Bangladesh, such as Bengali medium, English version, English medium, and Madrasa education, all place significant emphasis on the use of English skills. Given the widespread influence of the English language on a global scale, it is imperative to improve the teaching of English by utilizing a diverse range of materials and tools. Audio-visual aids (henceforth, AVAs) can significantly impact on developing EFL speaking. Mahbub-ul-Alam and Khan (2014) mentioned that speaking in a second language beside the native one is an extra-ordinary quality. The current study investigated the impacts and implications of AVAs in EFL speaking, noting the necessity for meticulous content selection and enhanced classroom resources at the secondary education level in Bangladesh. To address the issue, the researcher set two research objectives for the study: (i) to reconnoiter the utilization and effectiveness of audio-visual elements in secondary EFL classrooms across the selected institutions in Bangladesh, considering both learners' and teachers' perspectives, and (ii) to explore the challenges of using AVAs in English classes and propose viable solutions to overcome the challenges.

Theoretical Framework

The utilization of AVAs in EFL speaking has gained significant recognition in recent years because of its capacity to improve learners' spoken communication abilities. This study investigated the influence of audio-visual aids on enhancing EFL speaking abilities among secondary school students in Bangladesh. The conceptual framework combined several theories and empirical evidence

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to offer a thorough comprehension of this teaching method. AVAs include tools like films, animations, and interactive multimedia, play a crucial role in establishing a captivating and dynamic learning atmosphere. Paivio (1986) proposed the Dual Coding Theory, which suggests that learners can process information more efficiently when it is provided using both verbal and visual channels. This dual representation enhances the ability to remember and retrieve information, which is crucial for the process of acquiring language. Within the realm of EFL, AVAs serve the purpose of delivering genuine language input, demonstrating proper pronunciation and intonation, and presenting language usage in a contextualized manner. These aspects are crucial for the enhancement of speaking skills (Mayer, 2009). Moreover, Mayer's (2005) Cognitive Theory of Multimedia Learning (CTML) asserts that learners acquire a more profound understanding when exposed to both words and pictures, as opposed to words alone. This idea emphasizes the significance of combining visual and auditory components to facilitate cognitive processes associated with language acquisition. In the context of secondary education in Bangladesh, where traditional memorization methods are commonly used, the use of AVAs might redirect the emphasis towards a more interactive and communicative approach (Rahman & Pandian, 2018).

Literature Review

The use of AVAs in EFL speaking has been the subject of several research due to its substantial influence on improving students' speaking skills. The incorporation of these tools is compatible with several instructional approaches and theories designed to enhance linguistic competence. AVAs have become an essential component of modern teaching methods. Khan (2021) mentioned that a blended learning approach with technological facilities can help students learn more adaptively.

Singh (2005) also asserted that AVAs augment learners' experiences by offering multimodal input that surpasses conventional methods. These educational tools, such as computers and multimedia devices, establish an authentic and captivating learning atmosphere, stimulating students to engage in learning via curiosity and active participation (Rather, 2004). AVAs encompass audio resources (such as speech, music, and radio), visual aids (including images, films, and charts), and audio-visual aides (such as videos, TV, and computer programs).

AVAs also provide a multitude of advantages when it comes to teaching EFL speaking. Viewing movies assists learners in comprehending and retaining language usage within a specific context. This is achieved by incorporating visual and auditory features. Video usage has become widespread since the 1970s, offering genuine language input and displaying linguistic and paralinguistic characteristics that improve speaking abilities (Harmer, 2001).

Ultimately, the literature emphasizes the significance of AVAs in enhancing EFL speaking abilities. These learning aids serve the dual purpose of motivating and engaging learners, while also providing genuine and contextualized language input that is crucial for successful language acquisition. The function of AVAs in EFL classrooms remains crucial as technology in education advances, providing valuable assistance for teaching and learning processes in various and significant ways. This paper aimed to examine the unique influence of these aids on the speaking skills of secondary school students in Bangladesh. It seeks to offer valuable insights into effective teaching methods that can improve language learning results.

Methodology

This study utilized a self-administered questionnaire as Bryman (2016) suggested, which enabled participants to complete the survey at their own convenience. This methodology was selected to guarantee that participants experienced a sense of ease and were able to allocate sufficient time to offer well-considered and dependable responses.

Sampling and Participants

The survey sample consisted of five teachers (two females and three males) with at least two years of teaching experience and 100 students from five distinct secondary schools in Dhaka, Bangladesh.

The student-participants, ranging in age from 18 to 20, came from Bengali-medium school, where Bengali was their first language (L1) and English was their second language (L2). Every participant was subjected to audio-visual resources in their educational environments. The study sought to acquire insights into how these technological tools improved their English language learning.

The survey also collected EFL teachers' viewpoints to gain a thorough knowledge of the impact of AVAs in the classroom. Out of the teachers, four possessed MA degree in English and one was actively working towards MPhil degrees. All the student participants were English language learners, either as a foreign language or as a second language.

Data collection and Analysis

The researcher selected five institutions and acquired consent from the authorities to carry out the surveys. Surveys were strategically planned to circumvent holidays and examination times. Students filled out the questionnaires during their breaks, while teachers, despite their demanding schedules, also managed time to participate. The administrative departments of the selected institutions offered substantial collaboration in aiding the research. The responses were meticulously examined and are provided in the following chapter. Both the instructor and student surveys are attached to the dissertation. The data analysis involved the utilization of percentage statistics to precisely represent the findings. The discussion chapter establishes a link between the research questions and the conclusions, offering an elaborate analysis of the gathered data.

Findings and Presentation of Data

Students' Perception on the Use of AVAs

The researcher asked ten three-scale questions and one multiple response question to know their perception on the prospects and problems of AVAs in the classroom (Table 1). This type of scale measures the degree of a particular aspect, with each option demonstrating a diverse level of intensity.

Table 1. Students' perceptions on AVAs in EFL speaking skills

SL	Queries (Q)	Responses in Percentage (%)			
		Response Options			Mean ($\bar{x}$)
1	How often do your English classes use audio-visual aids (e.g., videos, audio recordings, multimedia presentations)?	Sometimes (30%)	Often (17%)	Always (53%)	2.23
2	How well do you understand the content presented through audio-visual aids in your English classes?	A little (0)	Moderate well (33%)	Very well (67%)	2.67
3	Are you comfortable with the technology used to access audio-visual aids in your English classes?	No (0)	Somewhat (28%)	Yes (72%)	2.72
4	How challenging are the tasks and exercises that follow the use of audio-visual aids in your English classes?	Slightly (18%)	Moderately (49%)	Very (33%)	2.15
5	Do you think audio-visual aids help in improving your pronunciation skills in English?	Not at all (0)	Somewhat (26%)	A lot (74%)	2.74
6	Do audio-visual aids help you remember new vocabulary and grammar better than traditional teaching methods?	No (0)	Moderately (14%)	Yes (86%)	2.86
7	Do audio-visual aids help you better understand the culture and customs of the native English language users?	A little (0)	Somewhat (26%)	Quite a bit (74%)	2.74
8	Do you feel more motivated to learn English when audio-visual aids are used in the classroom?	A little (0)	Somewhat (32%)	Quite a bit (68%)	2.68
9	Does watching movies improve your speaking?	Slightly (11%)	Moderately (28%)	Significantly (61%)	2.52
10	How would you rate the overall effectiveness of audio-visual aids in your English language learning experience?	Not effective (0)	Moderately effective (18%)	Very effective (82%)	2.82

The study surveyed 100 secondary school students in Bangladesh to evaluate the impact of AVAs on improving EFL speaking skills. The data in table 1 demonstrated the perceptions of the students about the use of AVAs. The responses for the first query (Q1) showed a mean score of 2.23 for the frequency of AVA usage, with 53% of students reporting AVAs are always used in their English classes, 30% saying they are used sometimes, and 17% often. The mean score for understanding

content (Q2) presented through AVAs is 2.67, with 67% of students indicating they understood the content very well and 33% moderately well. Regarding comfort with technology, the mean score is 2.72 (Q3), with 72% of students feeling comfortable and 28% somewhat comfortable. The tasks and exercises following AVA use had a mean score of 2.15 (Q4), considered moderately challenging by 49% of students, very challenging by 33%, and slightly challenging by 18%. The mean score for the impact of AVAs on improving pronunciation skills is 2.74 (Q5), with 74% of students believing AVAs greatly improved their pronunciation skills. Additionally, the mean score for AVAs facilitating remember new vocabulary and grammar is 2.86 (Q6), with 86% thinking AVAs are better than traditional methods. Understanding the culture and customs of native English speakers through AVAs had a mean score of 2.74 (Q7), with 74% feeling they helped to a considerable extent. The motivation to learn English with AVA usage had a mean score of 2.68 (Q8), with 68% of students feeling more motivated. Watching movies had a mean score of 2.52 (Q9) for improving speaking skills, with 61% of students seeing significant improvement. Overall, the effectiveness of AVAs in English language learning had a mean score of 2.82 (Q10), with 82% of students rating AVAs as very effective and 18% as moderately effective. The overall mean score across all questions is approximately 2.71, indicating a positive impact of AVAs on EFL speaking skills in the surveyed students.

Frequently Faced Obstacles

In response to the multiple response question, the study documented five major problems that the students frequently encounter using AVAs in secondary classroom. These are: (i) fast speed of the videos exceeding the students' comprehension level, (ii) problems with unfamiliar subject matter, (iii) lack of sound system issues, (iv) easy tasks resulting no new learning, and (v) lack of internet facilities. However, some discrete problems were also mentioned by few students that are put in others. The data are presented in fig 1.

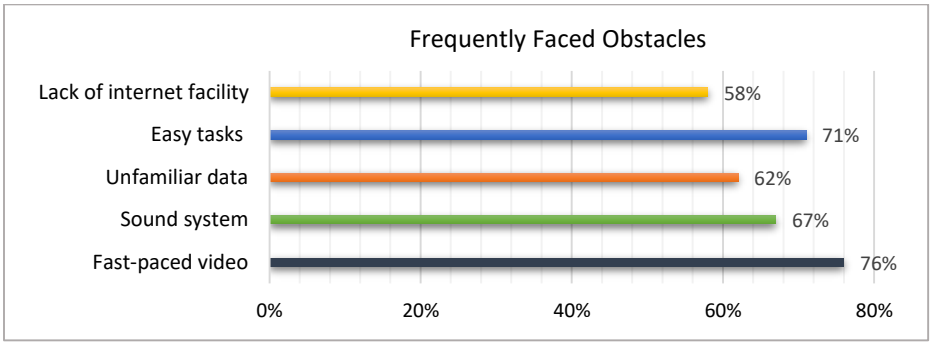


Fig 1. Frequently encountered problems using AVAs in classroom

FGD Report

The focus group discussion included five EFL teachers who deliberated on the incorporation of technology in their classes. The educators emphasized that frequently used technologies encompassed projectors, audio-visual aids, and interactive whiteboards. Additionally, they noted the regular utilization of instructional tools and online resources to augment language acquisition. The teachers noted a significant enhancement in student engagement and comprehension when utilizing these devices. According to their study, students displayed increased motivation and participation, specifically in activities related to speaking and listening. Nevertheless, it was seen that the advantages differed among pupils, with certain individuals adjusting more well than others. In terms of institutional amenities, the teachers commended their schools for offering fundamental technology resources but stressed the necessity for more extensive assistance. They noted that certain schools are adequately equipped, while many others are lacking in gadgets, hence impeding effective instruction.

The conversation also raised other obstacles. The teachers voiced their apprehensions regarding the insufficient quantity of gadgets, frequent power interruptions, and unstable internet connectivity. These problems frequently interrupted teaching and learning processes and restricted the use of internet resources. In addition, they highlighted the necessity of regularly maintaining equipment and providing teachers with enhanced training to enhance the application of existing technologies. To summarize, although technology has a beneficial influence on EFL teaching and student outcomes, there are substantial infrastructure and logistical obstacles that must be overcome in order to fully harness its potential.

Discussion

The survey and FGD covered the current state and challenges of employing AVAs and other technology in Bangladeshi EFL classrooms. An average score of 2.71 across questions shows that AVAs improve subject comprehension, pronunciation, vocabulary retention, and cultural knowledge among EFL students. Notably, 82% of students found AVAs highly beneficial in improving their English. These findings support prior study suggesting multimedia tools can improve language acquisition by delivering diverse and interesting resources for different learning styles (Mayer, 2009; Gilakjani, 2012). According to Mayer (2009), people learn better from words and pictures than from words alone. Gilakjani (2012) added that audio and video resources improve language understanding and retention. The FGD with EFL teachers confirms the survey results, with AVAs and other technology improving student involvement and performance. Discussion also revealed major issues such a lack of gadgets, frequent power outages, and inconsistent internet connections. These infrastructure limitations prevent EFL classrooms from integrating technology effectively and must be solved to fully benefit from AVAs. The teachers' comment on institutional facilities and technological problems matches prior literature, emphasizing the necessity of solid infrastructure and teacher training in educational technology adoption (Higgins et al., 2012). Higgins et al. (2012) stated that schools must offer instructors with the right technology and training. In conclusion, AVAs and other technologies in EFL education can improve students' learning experiences, but infrastructural and logistical issues must be addressed. To maximize instructional tool use, future projects should provide access to trustworthy technology resources and train teachers.

Recommendations

The study recommended some measures to improve the utilization of AVAs. Some major issues are depicted below that require administrative and institutional concerns of the institutions:

a) Students struggle to keep up with fast-paced video dialogues, which hinders comprehension and demotivates them. Teachers should carefully choose materials that match students' competency levels to address this issue. Considering Krashen's (1985) input hypothesis (i+1) can make content challenging and understandable for students.

b) The schools lack adequate multimedia technology, which hinders learning. When dialogues are unclear, students lose interest and learn less. Therefore, providing sound systems and multimedia equipment in all classrooms can solve this problem.

c) Sometimes, videos usually provide unfamiliar data to students, making it hard for them to relate, resulting in a lack of understanding and motivation. To fix this, videos should be properly reviewed before being utilized in class. Students will understand topics better if they choose familiar materials. Khan and Hasnahana (2019) stated "while preparing learning materials, real-life communication should be facilitated and learners' background knowledge should be kept in mind, and their known context to be chosen so that the learning process becomes an interesting journey" (p. 111).

d) Post-viewing tasks is challenging for learning. Too much simple tasks don't help students. When creating lesson plans supported by AVAs, tasks should be somewhat above students' present level of skill to challenge and stimulate learning.

e) Above all, EFL teacher's pro-social behaviors are necessary for students as Khan (2020) recommended in a study of similar context.

Conclusion

The study concluded that AVAs have beneficial effects in EFL speaking skill, as they offer students authentic instances of language usage. These materials provide students with exposure to different accents, colloquial language, slangs, and cultural subtleties, all of which are essential for comprehending the cultural context of the target language. Videos provide a valuable opportunity to see and understand the target culture, which is crucial for using the language accurately in that particular setting. Although there are advantages to using videos in language classrooms, stakeholders encounter few obstacles, including the fast pace of the videos, unfamiliar subject matter, and insufficient multimedia equipment. The results indicated that the meticulous choice of materials and assignments, taking into account the competency levels of students, is crucial for achieving efficient language acquisition. Furthermore, it is imperative to resolve any problems related to multimedia equipment in order to establish an optimal learning environment. Although the study offers useful insights, it is not without limitations, and further research is required to thoroughly investigate these difficulties in a large scale.

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