

The Effective Role of Using Audio-visual Aids in EFL Classroom at a Libyan University: Libyan EFL Tutors' Perceptions

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Abstract

This study focuses on Libyan EFL tutors' beliefs towards using audio-visual aids within lectures in teaching English language at a Libyan university. The aims of the current study are to explore Libyan EFL tutors' perceptions on the use of audio-visual aids in teaching and to investigate the challenges that may face in using audio-visual aids. It is a qualitative study because 15 Libyan EFL tutors are chosen purposively (i.e hand-picked for purpose) in order to gain in-depth understanding to their perceptions and perspectives with regard to audio-visual aids. The methods that are used to collect data are semi-structured interview and observation. Thematic analysis is used to analyse the data into codes and themes. The findings reveal that the majority of the participants have positive beliefs on using audio-visual aids. They indicate that audio-visual aids contribute to increase students' understanding and comprehension, motivate students and make the lecture more interesting, and develop cultural awareness. The findings also show that few participants have little awareness of the effective role of audio-visual aids as they perceive the traditional methods of teaching as fair enough to convey their knowledge to their students. Moreover, the results reveal that limited resources and insufficient staff development workshops are the main challenges that effect on using audio-visual aids adversely.

Keywords: Audio Aids, Visual Aids, Technology, Effectiveness, Libyan EFL Tutors

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Introduction

Technology has changed the conventional classroom from the use of chalk and talk method to the use of audio-visual aids (Ho and Intai, 2017). There are many definitions to audio visual aids, according to Rasul, Bukhsh, and Batool (2011), audio-visual aids are defined as the instructional devices that are utilised in classrooms to enhance the teaching and learning processes. Audio-visual aids are devices with audio and visual presentation (Ashaver & Igyuve, 2013). There are different types of audio-visual materials include microforms, filmstrips, slides, flashcards, educational DVDs, PowerPoint, YouTube, and other online materials (Badalova, 2021). Audio-visual aids such as educational cassettes, video tapes, radio broadcast, television programs, recording devices, and computer programs play an essential role in enhancing teaching and learning processes. Teachers use different visual-aids in order to teach their students and to enhance effective learning (Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2016). Mayer (2001) and Mishra & Yadav (2004) indicated that audio-visual aids can combine text, pictures, video, animations, sound, and interactions into a lesson or presentation in order to convey a message or information to an audience. Nowadays, it is very common to find classrooms which are equipped with audio-visual aids to facilitate the teaching and learning processes (Mathew & Alidmat, 2013; Oyesola, 2014). However, Libya is in the stage of the reform and redevelopment of the education system. Therefore, this study aims to investigate the perceptions of Libyan EFL tutors towards the use of audio-visual aids in teaching English language and to find out the challenges that may face in using audio-visual aids in the Libyan context.

Research questions

The research questions are:

What are Libyan EFL tutors' perceptions and perspectives towards using audio-visual aids in teaching English?

Are there any obstacles that Libyan EFL tutors face in using audio-visual aids within lectures in teaching English? If so, what are they?

2. Literature review

2.1 Advantages of using audio-visual aids within the lessons

There are many studies about the advantages of using audio-visual aids in teaching as tools to convey concepts and ideas in an interesting and interactive manner. For instance, De Sousa and Van Eeden (2009); Ekinici, Karakoc, Hut, & Avci, (2009) indicated that the use of audio-visual aids is highly recommended in teaching different subjects because it has the potential to enhance active learning and deep understanding. Audio-visual aids are considered as an opportunity to enhance lesson plan and to provide students with another ways to process information (Kunari, 2006). Audio-visual aids can assist teachers to explain, connect, and associate ideas and concepts to make teaching and learning more enjoyable and effective (Ho and Intai, 2017). Furthermore, teachers use visual aids to increase students' ability to remember the content as Rasul, Bukhsh, and Batool (2011) stated that "if we hear

we forget, if we see we remember”. Thus, visual aids can make teaching and learning processes more effective. Cuban (2001) makes clear that when students read, they remember 10%; when they hear, they remember 20%; when they see, they remember 30%, and when they hear and see, they remember 50%. Therefore, the use of audio-visual aids plays a significant role in enhancing teaching and learning processes.

The significant increase in the use of technology has led to innovations in language teaching (Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016). English language teachers use different audio-visual tools such as songs, power point, presentations in order to facilitate the teaching process and to ensure student-centered, interaction and connectivity to a certain topic (Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016). A study conducted by Park and Son (2009) in the EFL classroom in Korea found that teachers in EFL classroom consider computer technology including audio-visual aids as a useful teaching tool that can enhance ways of teaching by offering students a variety of language inputs and expanding students’ learning experiences in real and authentic contexts. Information on screen and animation can be considered as a significant transfer from printed text to developing students’ critical thinking (Shah and Khan, 2015). By using audio-visual aids, the attention of students become more intensive (Reddy, 2008). It could be said that audio-visual aids are crucial in learning owing to the fact that human mind registers pictures, sounds, and words in memory, and, according to the cognitive model of Mayer (2001), when pictures and texts enter the eyes and ear, they hold in the visual and auditory modalities of the short-time memory. Thus, using audio-visual aids can affect the performance as Lee and Keckley (2006) pointed out that students who are taught by using multimedia instruction show high performance.

The integration of the audio-visual aids within the lessons has many benefits. Audio visual aids such as pictures, maps, videos, projector, flash cards, symbols, graphs, diagrams, slides, wall charts, symbolic materials, television, radio, films, flannel board, bulletin board, and chalkboard have the potential to make the lessons easy to understand (Rasul, Bukhsh, and Batool, 2011; Shabiralyani, Hasan, Hamad, and Iqbal, 2016). Audio-visual aids are considered as effective tools that can increase students’ understanding, and this due to the fact that the use of visual aids are quite likely to clarify and explain the relationship between concepts and material objects (Kishore, 2003; Reddy, 2008; Rasul et al, 2011; Ho and Intai, 2017). Audio-visual materials can increase students’ knowledge (Badalova, 2022) and they can make the meaning clear because they show things that may be difficult to be explained in words (Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016). Furthermore, the audio-visual aids can promote students’ comprehension and retention (Ashaver & Igyuve, 2013; Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016). On top of that, they have the potential to increase students’ interest in that students become more motivated to learn when audio-visual aids are integrated within lesson delivery (Ho and Intai, 2017).

Audio-visual aids play a vital role in learning English language. Bajrami and Ismaili (2016) stated that the use of audio-visual aids can stimulate students to acquire the target language and to develop cultural awareness. That is to say “all audio-visual materials have positive contribution to language learning as long as they are used at the right time, in the

right place. In language learning and teaching process, learners use their eyes as well as their ears, but their eyes are basic in” (Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016, p.330-340). It can be said that Bajrami and Ismaili highlight the significance of using visual aids in teaching. Furthermore, the use of audio-visual aids can assist students to engage with the materials (Gilakjani, 2012; Jarosievitz, 2015; Sharafovna and Islomovn, 2021). Additionally, the use of audio-visual aids can enhance learning as social participation as Ivers and Baron (2002) indicated that the use of different types of multimedia can provide students with an opportunity to interact with others, and this can allow new ideas to emerge. Using audio-visual materials can also enhance students’ interaction with their teacher (Bajrami and Ismaili, 2016), and this is likely to contribute to create vivid classroom atmosphere and to enhance learning outcomes. However, teachers need to prepare the audio-visual aids before using them in classroom in order to ensure appropriateness. There are many audio-visual aids, so the selection of the appropriate audio-visual aids is crucial as Awasthi (2014) stated that the overuse of audio-visual aids may lead to unexpected outcomes.

It can be inferred that most of the studies have focused on the benefits of using audio-visual materials from students’ perspectives rather than university tutors’ perspectives. The context where Libyan EFL tutors are teaching may have a significant impact on their current teaching experience. Moreover, many studies focus on the importance of using technology in general in teaching rather than audio-visual aids. Therefore, this study focuses on Libyan EFL tutors’ perspectives towards the use of audio-visual aids in teaching English to undergraduate students.

2.2 The challenges that EFL teachers face in using visual-aids

Little studies have focused on the challenges that EFL teachers encounter in using audio-visual aids. The study of Park and Son (2009) about the factors that affect EFL teachers’ use of audio-visual materials in Korea revealed that searching for appropriate materials and integrate them within textbooks to meet students’ needs and levels are the greatest challenges. Limited training workshops for teacher is the main challenge that Bangladesh EFL teachers encounter at the tertiary level (Maniruzzaman and Rahman, 2008). Similarly, Jadal (2011) reported that many Indian English teachers are unable to use audio-visual materials. The beliefs and attitudes that teachers have about the use of audio-visual materials for language teaching may affect their decisions with regard to its use. For Dias (1999), the use of visual materials to create social learning (i.e., learning as social participation) is challenge for EFL teachers because some activities in the EFL textbooks can lead to frustration. However, Dias does not elaborate further to explain in depth the reasons behind that frustration.

The Libyan education system depends on traditional methods of teaching and teacher-centred approach, so the use of monitors, Smart Boards and interactive software programs can be challenge. Thus, the present study is intended to find out the challenges that Libyan EFL tutors may encounter in using audio-visual aids in EFL classroom at a Libyan university.

2- Method and tools

It was a qualitative study to explore Libyan EFL tutors' perceptions and perspectives on the use of audio-visual aids in teaching English to undergraduate students and the obstacles that they may face. The study focused on a group of Libyan tutors who were teaching English to undergraduate students who were studying at English Language Department. The sample was 15 participants: 7 males and 8 females. Purposive sampling was used to select the participants (i.e. hand-picked for purpose) (Tashakkori and Teddlie, 2003). The participants were chosen according to the following criteria: they were all Libyans, they were teaching English at university, their major is English Language, they were native speakers of Arabic, and they volunteered to participate in the study, but they had different educational background, and they were from different ages.

Semi-structured interviews and observations were used to collect data. Semi-structured interview was the main source of data and it was chosen because according to Kvale (2007), it is flexible in that the researcher can follow up the interviewees' responses and to ask for clarification. The interview that lasted about 30 minutes was recorded. The participants were observed in a number of sessions. The observation includes: the tutor's usage of audio-visual aids within the lesson. The observation was chosen to gain first-hand data and to observe the respondents in the classroom directly (Hammersely and Atkinson, 2007; Robson, 2011). The researcher adopted a complete observer role without intervention in order to observe things as they are and record field notes. I observed the participants by sitting at the end of the class, I observed what happened and listened to what was being said. Field notes were recorded after the end of the sessions. The ethical issues such as permission from university and the tutors to be observed was sought. Furthermore, anonymity was taken into account in that the names of the participants were anonymised (i.e they were given second names) in order to protect them and to enhance objectivity. The participants were also informed about the research questions, aims and their right to withdraw if they feel uncomfortable, and this is called 'informed consent'. Moreover, the data was treated with care and saved in the Hard Driver and protected with password (i.e confidentiality) (The bera, 2011). The data was analysed by using "Thematic analysis" (Braun and Clarke, 2006) in which the data was analysed into codes, sub-codes, and themes. The data was collected in Arabic language, and, then, transcribed and translated.

3- Results and their discussion

3.1 Libyan EFL tutors' perceptions

The findings of this study indicated that almost all tutors have positive beliefs towards the use of audio-visual aids in teaching. Some participants reported that audio-visual materials are beneficial in terms of facilitating deep understanding and comprehension. Amina, for instance, said that: "by using audio-visual aids, students can understand more". Similarly, Hala noted that "audio-visual material can make a lesson easy to understand". Yusef added that "using audio-visual materials makes the lesson easier to comprehend". Adel also indicates that "Images that students see on the screen can be easily comprehended than

descriptive reading materials”. It appears that the findings of the current study are consistent with previous studies of De Sousa and Van Eeden (2009); Ekinici, Karakoc, Hut, & Avci, (2009) who stated that audio-visual aids can enhance deep understanding and comprehension.

The findings also show that using audio-visual materials can contribute to improve students’ pronunciation and develop cultural awareness. Hadi, for instance, pointed out that “watching videos and films assist students to improve their pronunciation”. Sara explained that “Audio-visual aids enable students to have an opportunity to listen to native speakers. This contributes to develop students’ English skills”. Nora states that “the use of audio visual aids in the classroom enhances students’ receptive skills”. The results are similar to the study of Bajrami and Ismaili (2016) who indicated that the use of audio-visual aids can help students to develop cultural awareness; however, the current study added that audio-visual aids can enhance the development of the four skills: listening, speaking, reading and writing and the pronunciation.

The data also revealed that using audio-visual aids have made the lecture more interesting and assisted students to be motivated and work effectively and efficiently. Mawada, for example, stated that “watching videos in the module Second Language Acquisition makes the teaching-learning process more interesting and encouraged students to learn”. The findings of this study are in line with the study of Ho and Intai (2017) who found that audio-visual aids can make the lesson interesting and motivate students to learn.

However, the results showed that few EFL tutors such as Aisha and Adel have negative attitudes towards the use of audio-visual aids in teaching as they believe that there is no need to use audio-visual aids in the classroom and they consider traditional methods of teaching are fair enough to convey their thoughts and ideas. For instance, Aisha reported that “students can understand me without using audio-visual aids. I and my students are comfortable with grammar-translation method”. Although Libya EFL tutors at university have the contents of the course, they have the freedom to use the methodology they want and whether they want to integrate audio-visual materials with their lectures or not. During the observation, it was observed that about 9 tutors used audio-visual materials in the form of Power Point Presentation, Project, and video shows in their mobile phones while other tutors did not utilise any type of technological devices in the class. During the interview, those participants perceive that the accent, vocabulary and language structures that are used in audio-visual aids are difficult to be understood by students. For example, Amina who stated that the use of audio-visual aids assist students to learn more reported that:

I am teaching the first semester. When I use video to explain some points in ‘Second Language Learning’, many students say that ‘we don’t understand the accent and the they speak very fast. Therefore, I rarely use it within the lecture. (Amina interview)

It is obvious that although Amina had awareness of the significance of using audio-visual aids in class; she gave up using it. This can be due to students’ negative attitudes towards the use of audio-visual aids within the delivery of the lecture and students’ familiarity with traditional methods of teaching and teacher-centred approach.

3.2 The Challenges

3.2.1 Insufficient resources

The results indicated that Libyan EFL tutors who have integrated audio-visual aids with lessons face a number of challenges that adversely affected teaching and learning processes. Nora, for instance, stated that:

At the beginning of my teaching job, I was very excited and interested in using PowerPoint and Videos. I prepared presentations and students were excited and listened attentively. Then, I stopped doing that because my laptop is out of order and the faculty has no IT department to borrow equipment such as computers, laptops, loudspeakers. (Nora interview)

The above comment revealed that Nora is motivated to integrate audio-visual aids into the lecture, but limited resources or nonexistent hindered her. This is quite likely to have a negative impact on students in terms of understanding, comprehension, and engagement within activities. In addition, Sara highlighted another challenges that relate to persistent power outages and weak connection:

I used to include YouTube with the lesson from my mobile phone, but the internet connection is very weak. To make matters worse, while I was using my loudspeaker in the listening exercise, the power suddenly cut off. I stopped using audio-visual aids, I use my mobile phone only in the listening lectures. (Sara interview)

The comment of Sara indicated that there is lack of facilities at the university as she used the pronoun “my” to refer to the equipment which means these devices are hers. It is obvious that she was motivated like Nora to include audio-visual aids within the lesson; however, the power cut off prevented her. The perceptions of Nora and Sara are similar to the study of Maniruzzaman and Rahman (2008) who state that insufficient resources is one of the challenges that EFL teachers in Bangladesh face. However, the present study added that persistent power outages and weak connectivity are the main challenges that Libyan EFL tutors face, and this can be due to the negative impact of the conflict. However, the situation is improving now.

3.2.2 Age factor and insufficient staff development workshops

The findings showed that age plays a significant role in the degree of familiarity with the visual aids in that tutors who aged 45-50 are less familiar with using audio-visual aids within the lecture than those who aged 21-30. For example, Soad who is 45 years old stated that:

I use grammar-translation method in teaching English, because I have no idea about the other methods. I want to include songs, videos, and presentation to help students to be active and to understand better, but I have no idea about these visual materials. In the past, our teachers and the curriculum didn't encourage the use of visual aids at all. Thus, students' performance rates are low. (Soad interview)

Soad' comment indicates that she had limited knowledge of modern methods of teaching. Therefore, she prefers to be in the safe side and stick to traditional method of teaching. It is clear that her previous educational experiences had adversely affected her current teaching

experience as she was studied out-dated curriculum that did not require the use of technology and modern methods of teaching. However, the current Libyan curriculum requires the use of modern methods of teaching and visual aids. It is clear that she needs training courses to develop her knowledge and skills with regard to the use of visual aids. For Soad, her lack of knowledge of using audio-visual materials had a negative impact on the students' performance. Field notes from the observation also confirmed that the integration of audio-visual aids in teaching has a positive impact on students' performance in terms of enthusiasm to absorb English, understanding, and motivation.

Similarly, Mortada who is 49 years old reported that:

I try to use communicative language teaching in teaching 'Phonetics'. I skip the activities that require using DVDs, or videos. To be honest with you, I do not know how they work (silence). Thus, I use only marker and white board. Students often ask for these activities to understand more, but I have told them that 'I can't use those devices'. (Mortada interview)

The above comment reveals that although Mortada had knowledge of modern methods of teaching, but he was not good with technology. His perception indicated that he skipped some activities that rely on using audio-visual aids, and this can affect students' performance negatively as these activities might be essential for students to understand the lecture. It is clear that like Soad, Mortada needs staff development workshops that are concerned with audio-visual aids, its usage, and the significance of integrating them within teaching.

4- Conclusion

This study focuses on a group of Libyan EFL tutors who are teaching English at a Libyan faculty with regard to the effectiveness of using audio-visual materials within the lectures. It was found that most of the participants have awareness of the effective role of using audio-visual materials in teaching process. They indicate that audio-visual aids can contribute to motivate students, enhance students' understanding and comprehension, improve their receptive skills, and make the lecture interesting. However, the results show that few participants have negative beliefs towards using audio-visual aids since they perceive the traditional methods of teaching are fair enough to convey their thoughts and ideas. Those tutors believe that the accent, vocabulary and language structures that are used in audio-visual aids are difficult to be understood. The findings also reveal that although the majority of the participants perceive integrating audio-visual aids within the lesson as beneficial, they encounter few challenges such as limited resources and insufficient staff development workshops.

Some suggested solutions for overcoming the challenges During the interviews, the participants indicated some challenges that face them while integrating audio-visual aids within the lesson, and they suggested some solutions to overcome them. To the best of the researcher's knowledge, some unique solutions are not listed in the literature, and this study suggests the solutions that can help tutors to overcome the challenges. First of all, almost all tutors have proposed that the university should provide tutors with audio-visual aids such as DVDs, Projects, and Laptops in order to assist tutors to give lectures efficiently and

effectively. It can be said that teaching aids have the potential to support teaching and learning processes in terms of increasing students' motivation and making the lecture enjoyable and interesting. Unfortunately, some tutors may ignore activities that require the use of audio-visual aids due to the unavailability of technological devices and teaching aids. Another suggested solution is that workshops and training courses that are concerned with the use of audio-visual aids such as Presentation Skills, how to prepare PowerPoint sides and how to use Projects and DVDs, and the methods of integrating them within the lesson. These workshops are significant in terms of providing tutors with knowledge and professional skills to be competent in the implementation of technology, particularly audio-visual aids. These workshops should be obligatory for all tutors.

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