

Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

Eshita Awal¹ Hodayra Binte Bahar²

Abstract : At present technology is at the peak of supremacy. In this research paper we attempted to torch upon technological advantages on a particular arena of language learning to explore the most unconventional phase of excessive usage of audio visual aids. The primary objective of our research is to make an evaluative study based on real life surveys that shows the demerits caused by excessive use of audio visual aids. We have used both qualitative and quantitative methods along with one case study. The findings of this survey have been illustrated by different charts which ultimately portrayed the probable disadvantages of over- using the audio visual aids in language classroom, especially in Bangladesh. The question always remains when these aids take the proactive role in the language classroom, it produces some reactive outcomes. These are never positive for an effective language learning program.

Keywords: *Audio-visual facilities, Language competency, Learning motivation, Teacher's efficiency, Language Classroom*

Introduction:

At present education has taken a new face. The system of education has changed and is continuing to change. The academic education is turning into a system of dynamic education system. For the stimulation of creativity and development of the proper attitudes and interests among the students in learning a new language, this dynamic education method is playing an important role. In today's world students are encouraged to ask questions, to explore and to be creative. To initiate these, modern technologies in modern education system play the potent and primary role.

Audio-lingual aura of techno-based language teaching has developed the process and system of learning in versatile ways and language in this trend avail of this opportunity to innovate the efficiency of learners to a satisfactory level. According to Erickson (1965), "Methodology based on that principle that a variety of audio- visual media and experiences corrected with other instructional materials overlap and reinforce the value of each other. Some of the materials may be used to motivate interest; others to communicate basic facts; still others to clear of misconceptions & deepen understanding."

¹ Eshita Awal, Lecturer, Department of English, Southeast University. Email: awal.eshita@hotmail.com

² Hodayra Binte Bahar, Lecturer, Department of English, Southeast University. Email: homaayra@gmail.com

Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

Technology has made the way of learning smooth but the big issue is too much dependency on audio-lingual system can make the learners detached and demotivated from the original effort of language learning. SLA is complicated and no doubt painstaking process especially in the third world countries. So when the students are moulded with achieving skills giving less effort then maybe apparently the acquisition that must be very apprising but true skills cannot be found among the learners. Again, the aims of learning a language can only be achieved through the proper and correct usage of the materials. Audio-visual aids are the combination of the words which refer to the instruments that are used for hearing and seeing. The common types of audible aids are the spoken words, recognizable sound effects, and music. The most frequently used visual aids are people, pictures, cartoons, graphics, maps, the printed words, and three-dimensional models. There are some processes through which we can present these aids to the learners. These are different types of projectors, blackboard, flash cards, pointer, phonograph, tape recorder, graphic charts, etc.

The primary objective to provide these tools is to provide an outline of the complex information by the illustrations of the audio-visual materials to enhance the aesthetic appeal in the classroom. Furthermore, audio-visual aids should be used to maintain a high level of interest, make students use the language at the beginning of the class and promote greater number of students' participation.

At present a number of good researches have been successfully done on the positive impact of audio-lingual system upon the entire learning and teaching processes. The pedagogical impact is a well furnished, well-equipped classroom where glossy and smart looking instruments very easily captivate the attention of the learners. So the learners get the impression that instruments are there to ease their effort. Subconsciously, they begin to believe that somehow they might not be needed to show their best effort and labour in learning. We are not against the use of aids. This paper tries to show that inter dependence among the teachers, students and instruments are expected than excessive dependence on the extreme use of audio-visual aids.

Statement of the problem:

In today's time, techno based education has already been established and gained popularity in Bangladesh. A number of educational institutions use different types of audio-visual aids in their language classrooms. However, due to lack of proper usage of these tools learners feel distracted in learning the target language. In order to discuss the negative impacts of overdoing the audio-visual aids we have taken up this study entitled "Audio-Visual Aids in Language Classroom: Friend or Foe."

Objectives:

In this research our primal objectives are to find out the answers to three introspective questions:

1. To what extent can teachers use audiovisual aids to increase the receptive capability of the students?
2. To what extent can students be motivated to use different strategies (assumption, prediction, inference) in order to develop reading skill?
3. To what extent can audio-visual aids be influential in adopting oral skill in the target language?

Need for the study:

In the third world countries like Bangladesh, Pakistan, Nepal, Sri Lanka, etc. second language learning is a difficult task. In Bangladesh people often feel overwhelmed with using new technologies. Nowadays, in the educational sector teachers always expect not to take extra pressure in their work. To lessen the workload they rely more on using modern aids in their classroom in the name of upgrading themselves with the modern techno world. However, this excessive dependence hampers learners' learning process. We interviewed a good number of teachers. They said that when aids are presented before the students, for example, multimedia, DVD player; it is found that students become a bit relaxed in their effort. This kind of passivity is very much common in human psychology. So teacher should be aware of the exact usage of the aids.

Review of the Literature:

Rivers (1981) advocated an eclectic approach in which teachers draw upon audio visual techniques from a variety of methodologies. According to Carlos Yorio (1987), an eclectic view of language teaching is the most appropriate but in some way it lessens sensitivity of learning when too much dependence on aids take place in a language classroom. Language teachers use a variety of teaching aids to make classroom activities interesting and interactive. Teaching aids are important in the teaching-learning process. According to Ranasinghe and Leisher (2009), integrating technology into the classroom becomes more effective for the learners when a teacher prepares lessons that use technology in meaningful and relevant ways along with his/her individual teaching efficiencies.

There are several studies that focus on audio visual learning aids. Mayer (2003) investigated the role of visual aids in second language learning among English as a Foreign Language (EFL) students using pictorial stimuli paired with text, and found that the use of illustrations does aid in second language acquisition. The images serve as advance organizers, or pieces of information which, when presented prior to learning, can be used by the learner to organize and interpret new incoming information (Lin & Chen, 2007; Mayer, 2003). Furthermore, Mohammadi, Moenikia & Zahed Babelan (2010) found that the use of advance organizers has a significant positive effect on English language learning compared to traditional techniques. However, the question remains to what extent can the language classroom stimuli be interpreted by the aids of

Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

technologies and to what extent can it create a stronger impact in the learning of linguistic competence? Another study focused on the use of pictures in classes of low proficiency EFL students and found that visual aids support translation and comprehension of texts at varying levels of difficulty (Pan, Yi Chun, & Pan, Yi Ching, 2009). The infrastructure of the developing countries does not provide an equal distribution of language learning aids, efficient teachers and other supportive learning materials in the language classroom irrespective of age, profession and purpose.

Bahrani and Tam (2011) found that if students have a pre established schema of the topic they are learning about then they will be able to focus their efforts on learning English instead of constructing a mental ideas of the material presented; for instance, students who are unfamiliar with three legged chairs will focus on creating a mental construct of a three legged chair instead of learning the vocabulary in the lesson. In this way the focus should go to the cognitive understanding of the target language because the first effort should come out of students' intrinsic motivation. Later they can rely on the supporting aids as to create extrinsic motivation.

Huang and Hung (2009) conducted a study on the use of e portfolios and found that many students feel that electronic aids took place in the face to face interactions. By limiting the amount of interpersonal conversation, the students lacked opportunities to practice with the questions that may be asked within the course of a conversation; thus, the ability to communicate with one another was hurt (Huang & Hung, 2009).

Ariew and Erectin (2004) found in their study on hypermedia annotations that contextual video explanations hurt reading comprehension for intermediate level learners. Readers who utilize video annotations may rely too heavily on them and exert less mental effort to read, which, in turn, lessens their comprehension of the reading excerpt (Arview & Erectin, 2004). Acha (2009) found that children who only saw a word did better in vocabulary acquisition than other children who saw a word and a picture if the image was ambiguous. The use of pictures created a higher cognitive load in which children had to determine what the word was referring to in the ambiguous picture (Acha, 2009).

Beasley and Chuang (2006) concluded that too much support or support of the wrong kind can be distracting and, therefore, detrimental to the learner. Audio visual aids also cannot be used to take place of teacher interaction and should be used to emphasize speaking skills, pronunciation, fluency, vocabulary and listening skills situations (Seferoğlu, 2008).

The amount that an audio visual aid integrates into a lesson is up to the teacher and if the teacher fails to incorporate it correctly or if the students do not possess the skills in which to properly utilize the audio visual tools, students will be unable to comprehend the material (Ariew & Erectin 2004; Seferoğlu, 2008). If not utilized properly, audio visual aids are ineffective language learning tools.

Methodology:

Both qualitative and quantitative methods have been used in this research paper.

The questionnaire, consisted of both closed ended and open ended, is done to find out the impact (both positive and negative) of using audio-visual aid in language classroom. It comprises 12 questions. This survey provides a better understanding and insights of using this teaching tool in a language class. A total of 95 people from various universities and ages are selected. Among them 32 students are from Dhaka University, 30 of them are from Jahangirnagar University and rest of 33 students are from Southeast University. Among the respondents, 52.6 % of the people belong to the age of 20 to 25 years, 42.1 % is from 26 to 30 years and only 5.3 % is within 31-35 years. This paper also includes one case study done with a 23 years old student, Mr. Zahid Karim. He is a student of Anthropology in Brac University; one of the private universities in Dhaka. He shares his personal experiences of learning English as a target language in an English as a Second Language (ESL) classroom that expanded for six months (72 hours).

Observation:

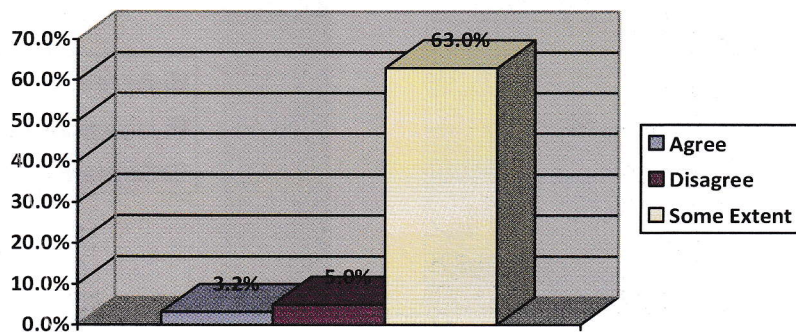
During the research we ensured the availability of the resources used in language classroom by these universities, utilization of various tools and also provided sufficient time to the respondents to answer the questions in order to achieve authenticity.

Findings and data analysis from questionnaire:

Quantitative questions:

1.3.2 % of the people say effective usage of audio visual aid can increase learners' motivation in learning a second language whereas only 5% people say it cannot. However, majority (63%) agrees that to some extent it does increase motivation in learning.

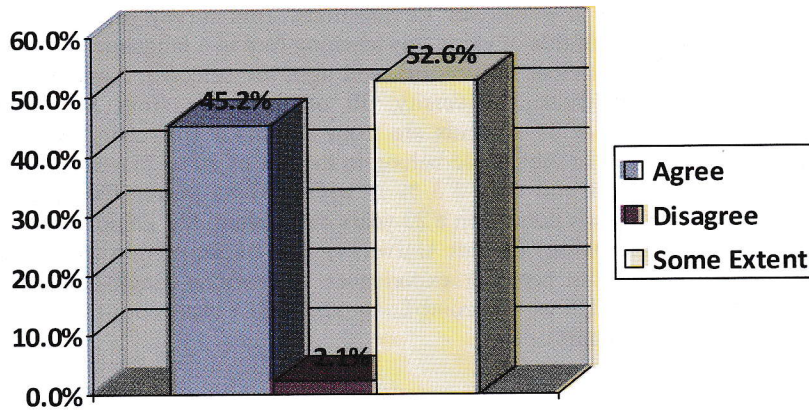
Tab-1. Effective usage of audio visual aid can increase learners' motivation in learning a second language



2. In response to the question whether audio visual aid increases the learning rate or not, 52.6% says to some extent it does. Again, 45.2% respondents say that it really increases learning rate whereas 2.1 % says straight no.

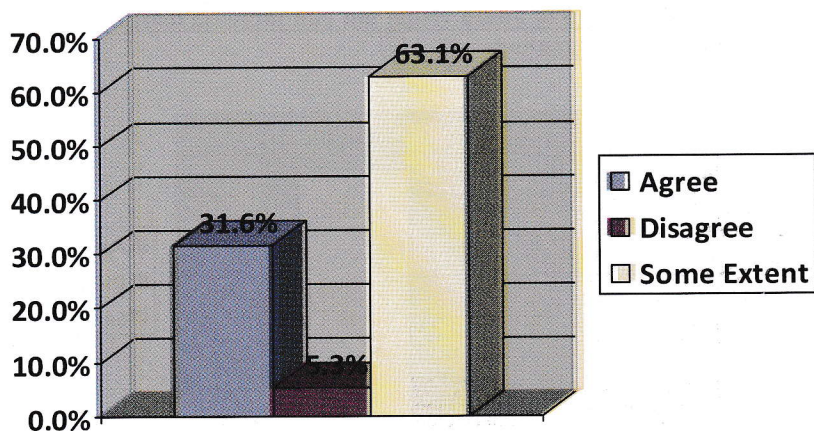
Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

Tab-2. Audio visual aid increases the learning rate or not



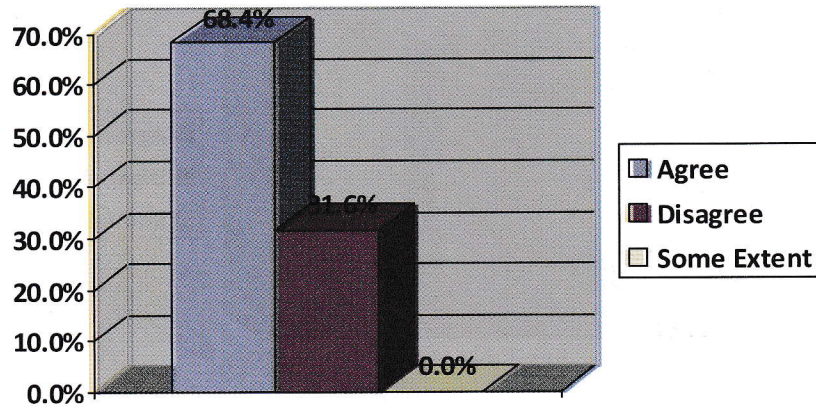
3. When the respondents are asked the question whether they agree that audio visual aid can hold learners' attention for a longer period of time, 63.1 % says to some extent they are successful to hold the attention. However, 5.3 % disagrees with the opinion to the respondents where 31.6 % people directly agree to it.

Tab-3. Audio visual aid can hold learners' attention for a longer period of time



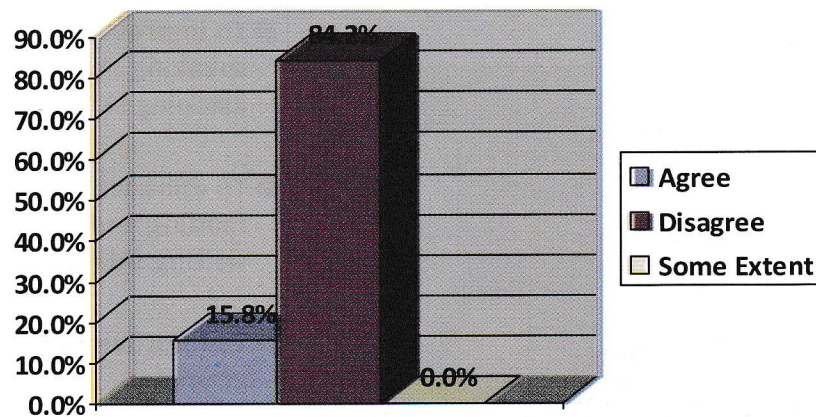
4.68.4 % agrees to the fact that effective use of audio visual aid can make class more interesting whereas 31.6 % people disagree with it.

Tab-4. Effective use of audio visual aid can make class more interesting



5. In response to the question whether audio visual aid helps to improve speaking skills or not, 84.2% people say it does not whereas only 15.8% agrees with it.

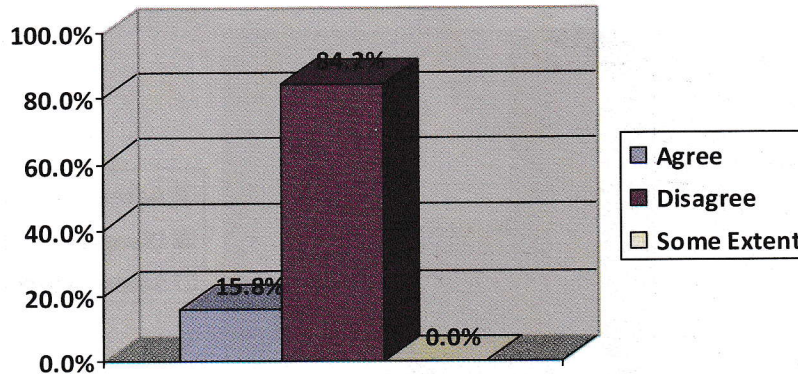
Tab-5. Audio visual aid helps to improve speaking skills or not



6.84.2 % of the people says that audio visual aid cannot help to learn grammar whereas only 15.8% says that it helps in learning the grammar of second language.

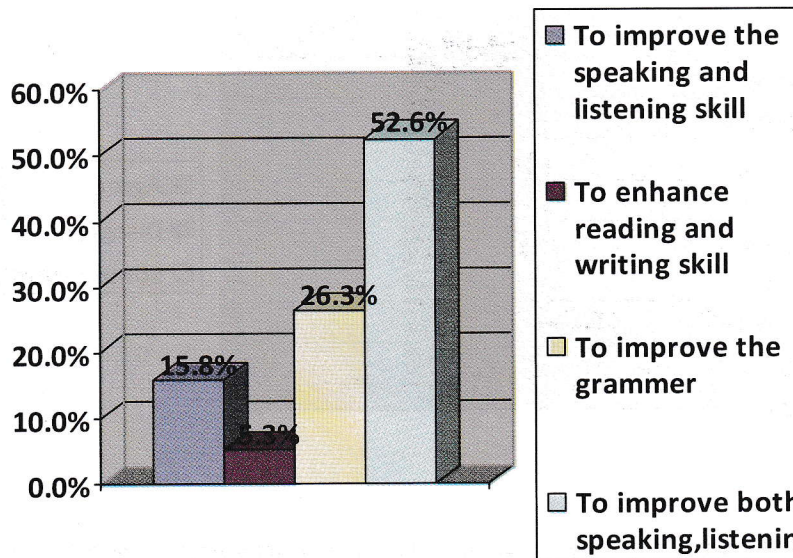
Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

Tab-6. Audio visual aid helps in learning the grammar of second language



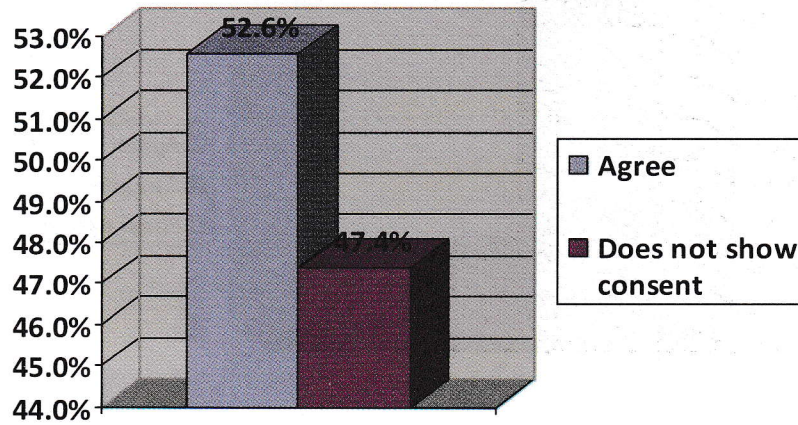
7. In response to the question why audio visual aid is used in their own language classroom, 15.8 % says this is used to improve the speaking and listening skill. 5.3 % says it is used to enhance reading and writing skill and only 26.3 % says it is used to improve the grammar. On the other hand, 52.6 % says that audio visual aid is used to improve speaking, listening, reading and writing skills.

Tab-7. Why audio visual aid is used in their own language classroom



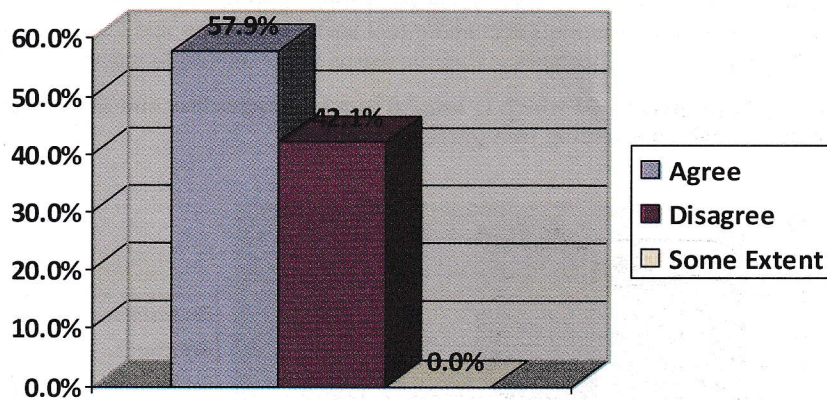
8. When the respondents are asked whether they believe that this teaching tool should only be used for pronunciation, 52.6% agrees whereas 47.4% does not show their consent.

Tab-8. This teaching tool should only be used for pronunciation



9. 57.9 % people say that visual aid can teach the body language such as gestures, pauses, raise eye brows etc. whereas 42.1 % people show their disagreement.

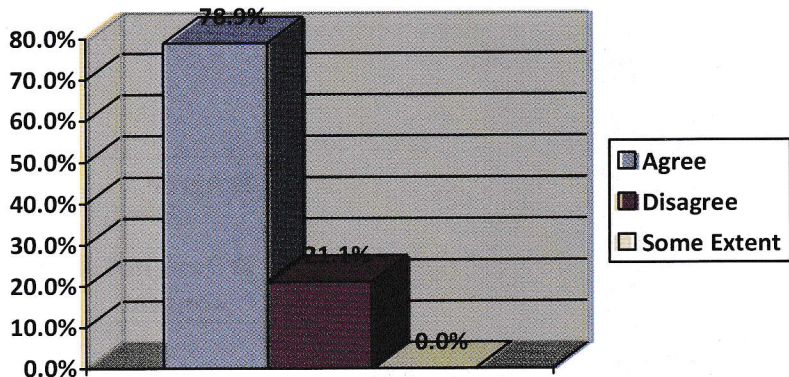
Tab-9. Visual aid can teach the body language such as gestures, pauses, raise eye brows etc.



10.78.9% people say that this teaching tool decreases the usage of books, magazines and journals in ESL class whereas 21.1 % says it does not.

Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

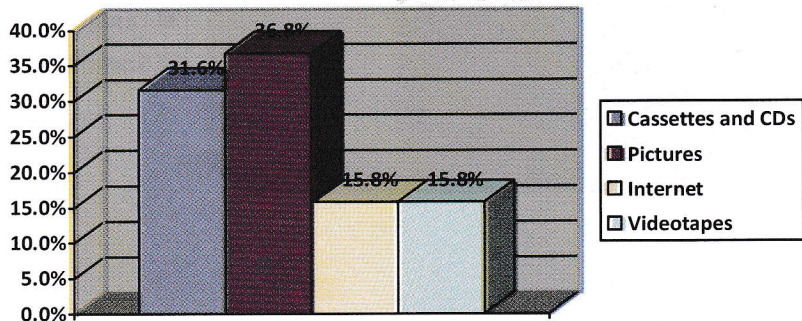
Tab-10. This teaching tool decreases the usage of books, magazines and journals in ESL class



Qualitative questions:

11. Respondents are asked an open ended question where they have to select the appropriate aid which is helpful in ESL class and demanded the reason behind selecting that particular aid. 31.6% selects cassettes and CDs, 36.8 % selects pictures, 15.8 % prefers internet and 15.8% prefers videotapes. According to the majority people who select pictures, it can illustrate the materials well. The graphic portrayals demonstrate the meaning very well. Again, it proves the old adage, "A picture is worth a thousand words." Again, people who prefer internet say that it is interesting to see live shows in the class which make the class interesting and increase learners' attention. People who are more concerned to improve their pronunciation select audio tool such as cassettes and CDs. Lastly, 15.8% people go for videotapes giving the reason to get interest in class.

Tab-11. Appropriate aid which is helpful in a language class and demanded the reason behind selecting that particular aid



12. Respondents are also asked to justify their answer in response to the question of how over usage of audio visual aid hinders language class in learning the second language. Audio visual aids are the supplements of the class lecturers but if they are used too much then it can replace the lecturers. Teachers who rely on this tool too much ultimately slow down the process of learners' learning rate and also it can create a distraction in the class.

Case study:

Mr. Kari, before enrolling in the English language learning course in his university (Brac), used to understand English but unable to speak it fluently. His receptive skill was better than the productive skill. Furthermore, he had difficulty in understanding different kinds of pronunciations and sign languages. As he was not familiar with gestures, redundancy or pauses he could not understand the importance of those in conversation. Furthermore, he also faced problems in different kinds of grammar such as preposition, adverb, etc. At the initial stage of the course his teacher started using various aids such as video player and CDs. His speaking and listening skills slightly improved after watching and listening to numerous video and audio tapes. Those tapes helped him to get familiar with different kinds of sign languages which play vital role in speaking. Moreover, it also improved his listening skill. He has got the opportunity to hear native pronunciation. However, a class fully packed with slide presentations, CD players and demonstrations of various types of pictures started to diminish his attention from the lectures. Also, he was not given the opportunity to speak in the target language in the class. Even though his listening skill improved speaking skill stayed in the back seat. Eventually he started losing his interest in the class. When he was asked the reason behind the failure of holding the interest and attention in the class, he said that too much use of anything is not good.

Findings:

When a learner sees that the teacher's task is done by the machine then it distracts him. The over usage of aids in the class weakens teacher –student relationship. It creates a gap and eventually learners do not feel comfortable to speak about the problem to the teacher. In addition, the language teacher who is supposed to make students motivated applying his/her own teaching efficiencies becomes less effective in the classroom while a dependence on aids helping him/her to do so. Like Mr. Karim, the number of the students (under survey) undergo a mental stagnation whether to depend on techno aids or on himself or on the teacher. This triangular problem can only be solved out by the appropriate and speculative approach made by the language teachers. It is the teacher who should maintain an equal balance in this triangular relationship- Teacher – (aids) - Students. It is the responsibility of the language teachers to make students understand how to create a co-relation between individual effort and logistic support of technologies.

Audio-Visual Aids in a Language Classroom: Friend or Foe

Recommendations:

1. So at the beginning of learning small hearing tool can be used to make the tone, intonation, pitch, variation of L2 words much more clarified for the learners. Gradually when the learners develop the skills they can be introduced to a more developed instrument. For example, in a classroom there are 30 students. Now they are expected to assume the summary of the BBC news heard for ten minutes. The effective way is to make the learners listen to the news through the multimedia for five minutes. Then the student should be asked to make out the extract of the video tape. But if the words are broken down, pitch is too much illustrated and intonation is listened to the students through exemplification, then the innate capacity of assumption is destroyed.
2. In a reading composition class what teachers basically need to do
 - Let the students know the basic tactics of reading.
 - Idea of assumption
 - Ability to grasp the idea of unknown structures or words.
 - Huge practice of reading interesting books, magazines, newspapers, articles, etc.
 - Practice of dictionary use

These above are the very basic ways of teaching reading composition in classroom. Ages after age L2 learners of various kinds are following these methods. In the language classroom the teacher can use multimedia to read out things before the students. This is an excellent idea because through this way the students can lively follow the academic approach of reading. If these ways are implemented then there is no wrong in it. However, if the teacher repeatedly keeps using multimedia exemplification of reading compositions then eventually the students get passive and lose creative understanding of reading materials. Once the students are made aware of learning they should be guided to run by their own effort.

3. To develop speaking and writing skills in the target language students can be displayed with appropriate number of audio and visual aids where they can be introduced to the real life communications in the target language. It may help to have a strong impact among the learners and spur them to speak out with fluency being little bit irresponsible to mistakes such as grammatical and structural. In a target language speaking class, the most important issue is to make students positive towards the spoken language and use of audio visual aids can do this task very smoothly but eventually students lose their linguistic competency (depth of grammar, use of diction and syntactic structure) which is important in gaining efficiency in writing. The reason behind this lacking may refer to recurrent use of audio visual aids over the less use of organized manual teaching methods (books, lectures, group study etc.) produced by the efficiency of concerned language teacher.

Conclusion:

We can come to a conclusion that usage of audio visual aids may guaranty an effective impact on both in teaching and learning the target language .However, excessive usage of these tools and the academic interdependence between aids-teachers and aids-students can surely have negative impact on the students in learning the target language along with linguistic competence and hinder in developing the teaching efficiencies among the language teachers. If we turn our attention to any language classroom then the excessive use of any technology will create passivity in the efforts of teachers and learners. In this paper our main aim was to search the ultimate result of excessive dependence on using audio-visual aids. So use of technology undoubtedly is a blessing but if the use takes place of determining factor of L2 learning procedure then it surely hinders the learning process.

References

- [1] Acha, J. (2009). The effectiveness of multimedia programmes in children's vocabulary learning. *The British Journal of Educational Technology*, 40, 23-31.
- [2] Ariew, R., & Ercetin, G. (2004). Exploring the potential of hypermedia annotations for second language reading. *Computer Assisted Language Learning*, 17, 237-259.
- [3] Bahrani, T., & Tam S. S. (2011). The role of audiovisual mass media news in language learning. *English Language Teaching*, 4, 260-266.
- [4] Chen, T., & Lin, H. (2007). Reading authentic EFL text using visualization and advance organizers in a multimedia learning environment. *Language Learning & Technology*, 11, 83-106.
- [5] Beasley, R. E., & Chuang, Y. (2006). The effects of web-based American music, lyrics, definitions, and explanations on Taiwanese ESL learners. *Journal of Educational Technology Systems*, 34, 461-471.
- [6] Huang, H., & Hung, S. (2010). Implementing electronic speaking portfolios: perceptions of EFL students. *British Journal of Educational Technology*, 41, E84-E88.
- [7] Mohammadi, M., Moenikia, M., & Zahed-Babelan, A. (2010). The role of advance organizers on English language learning as a second language. *Procedia -Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 2, 4667-4671.
- [8] Seferoğlu, G. (2008). Using feature films in language classes. *Educational Studies*, 34, 1-9.
- [9] Rivers, W. (1981). *Teaching Foreign-Language Skills*, 2nd Edition. Chicago, Ill.: University of Chicago Press.