

The Use of Audio Aids in the EFL Class at the Tertiary Level: a Plus or a Minus?

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Abstract: Audio aids function as learning facilitators and teaching machines, and motivate the learner and arrest his/her attention during the instructional process. Though such aids are greatly helpful in L₂ teaching and continually expanding their scope with the availability and development of technology, their use in the EFL class especially at the tertiary level in Bangladesh is still limited. This study was then designed to address varied issues related to the use of audio aids in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. It concludes that the use of audio aids in the EFL class is a plus, but the lack of teacher training, audio equipment and material and administrative support seriously restricts it. Hence, the researchers recommend proper teacher training, adequate audio equipment and material, necessary administrative support, and a well equipped language lab to ensure the optimal use of audio aids, and thus guarantee the learner's maximum benefit.

Key words: teaching EFL, tertiary level, audio aids, a plus

1. Introduction

It is sometimes time-consuming and/or exhausting to make second/foreign language materials (either newly constructed or adapted) suitable and acceptable to the learner because he/she may feel uninterested in and even disappointed with them as he/she finds them unfamiliar, difficult, problematic, mechanical, unattractive and so forth. Besides, the teaching methods and techniques the teacher employs may not be in consonance with the learner's needs, interests, level and aptitude. Hence, as opposed to the traditional approach to L₂ teaching including the chalk and talk method, the communicative language teaching approach encourages the teacher to act as a facilitator by helping the learner become an interested, active and efficient participant in the whole learning process (Richards and Rodgers 2002). To carry out his/her job successfully and ensure the learner's maximal benefit, the teacher has to use his/her teaching methods, techniques as well as materials in a manner that is consistent with the learner's needs and interest. And the appropriate use of audio aids can be substantially helpful in this respect (Kamal

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and Afteb 1993) since such learning aids and teaching machines stimulate, motivate and arrest the learner's attention during the instructional process. Audio-aids can be defined as models and devices that can be heard and give an image of something, somebody and some situations. They include recorded materials, radios, cassette players, cassettes and the like which are relatively cheap and available and which the language teacher with a little training can use in the L₂ class so as to make the teaching methods, techniques and materials considerably effective and interesting, and to help the learner have maximum benefit (Akanbi 1988). Unlike most other types of aids and means used in the language class, on the one hand, this type of aid enables the teacher to modify the teaching method and technique, and change the classroom situation quickly and immediately as necessary; and on the other, it attracts the learner's attention, stirs his/her imagination, reduces - his/her exhaustion, motivates him/her to be engaged in the learning process, and thus helps him/her to acquire expected proficiency in the language skills especially listening and speaking.

Different teaching aids devised and recommended by language experts are intended make the learner interested and motivated. The native speaker's voice and accent through the audio tape make the learner enthusiastic and excited. This greatly facilitates the learner's understanding of the linguistic as well as the communicative aspects. Audio aids add a life-like effect to the text book and other printed materials used to teach the target language. For example, as soon as a cassette player is played and the material is presented, the learner is immediately drawn to it. He/she feels the presence of another teacher in the classroom. With the help of audio aids, the teacher can, moreover, successfully deal with the weak and indifferent learner. These aids are seen to reduce the teacher talk and the chalk method, and reversely increase the learner's interaction and active participation. The teacher can also provide as much practice as is necessary by using audio tapes; but it is to be remembered that audio aids should be purpose oriented as well. Pike (1997) identifies some significant reasons for carefully designing and using audio aids: motivating the learner, attracting and maintaining the learner's attention, reinforcing the main ideas of the lesson, illustrating and supporting the spoken literature, minimizing misunderstanding of the learner, increasing retention, adding a touch of realism, saving both class time and expenses, helping the teacher to communicate more dearly and quickly so that the learner can understand the content clearly and easily, and helping the teacher clarify the thinking and provide a logical path for communication.

Though audio aids are found to be greatly helpful in teaching an L₂ and continually expanding their scope with the availability and development of technology, their use in the EFL class especially at the tertiary level in Bangladesh is still limited. Therefore, the present study was designed to address and explore the following questions:

- a. Are audio aids used in the class?
- b. If yes, how much are they useful?
- c. If no, why are they not used?
- d. What does the teacher think of using audio aids?
- e. What does the student think of using audio aids?

2. Research design and methodology

2.1. Subjects

This study was conducted with 32 university teachers and 120 tertiary level students randomly selected from two public universities –University of Dhaka and Jahangirnagar University, and eight private universities – Daffodil International University, Stamford University, State University, Northern University, Darul Ihsan University, Northern University, Eastern University and University of Development Alternative (UODA) in Dhaka. The teachers being Bangla speaking had at least a postgraduate degree in English language and/or literature. And all the students possessed the same mother tongue Bangla, and were learning English as a foreign language.

2.2. Instruments

To address and explore the research questions, a quantitative method including two questionnaires, one for the teachers (see Appendix-I) and the other for the students (see Appendix-II), was exploited. The present researchers designed the questionnaires on the basis of their first-hand experience of using audio aids for teaching EFL especially EFL listening and speaking skills at the tertiary level in Bangladesh.

Each of the questionnaires consisted of eight items related to the research problems stated in the introduction. The first items in both the questionnaires were related to the question ‘Are audio aids used in the class?’. The second and the fourth items in both the questionnaires were concerned with ‘If yes, how much are they useful?’. The fifth and the eighth items in both the questionnaires were linked to ‘If no, why are they not used?’. The third, sixth and seventh items in Teacher Questionnaire had relations to the question ‘What does the teacher think of using audio aids?’. And, the third, sixth and seventh items in Student Questionnaire were connected to ‘What does the student think of using audio aids?’. It is worth mentioning that the questionnaires contained almost identical items chosen with a view to comparing and contrasting the opinions of the two groups of respondents.

2.3. Data collection and analysis

The data for the study were collected from 32 English teachers as well as from 120 students learning English as a foreign language at the tertiary level. To tap the teachers' responses to the use of audio aids in the EFL class, the second researcher personally contacted each of the teachers and requested them to respond to the items in the questionnaire. And to collect the students' responses to the use of audio aids in their EFL class, the researchers received cooperation of the teachers who administered the questionnaire after an explanation of the purposes of the study and some preliminary instructions. The data collected from the teachers and the students were then scored by hand.

2.4. Presentation and interpretation of findings

Teacher questionnaire

The teacher questionnaire contained eight items which were concerned with the teachers' opinions on the different aspects of the use of audio aids in their EFL classes. The responses of the 32 English teachers to the questionnaire are recorded and discussed item wise as follows:

The first question to the teachers was posed as 'Do you use audio aids in your English classes?'

Teacher Table: 1

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
Do you use audio aids in your English classes?	Yes	32	100%
	No	0	00%

N=32

Teacher Table: 1 above indicates that all the teachers answered the question in the affirmative. That is, 100% of the subjects used audio aids in their EFL classes.

This finding indicates the acquaintance of the teachers at the tertiary level in Bangladesh with modern language teaching equipment and aids which make EFL teaching and learning relatively more scientific as well as more effective. It also shows that the teachers have expertise in using audio aids for teaching EFL, which the students find attractive and useful. Further, this phenomenon is consistent with the widely prevailing and popular communicative language teaching approach (Richards and Rodgers 2002).

The second question to the teachers was put as ‘Do you think that audio aids are useful for teaching English?’

Teacher Table: 2

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
Do you think that audio aids are useful for teaching English?	Yes	28	87.5%
	No	4	12.5%

N=32

As Teacher Table: 2 shows, 28 out of 32 teachers ticked ‘Yes’ while 4 teachers ticked ‘No’. In other words, 87.5% teachers thought that audio aids were useful for teaching English as a foreign language; but only 12.5% found that it was not useful to use audio aids in their English classes.

The result clearly uncovers that a great majority of the teachers find it useful to use audio aids for teaching EFL at the tertiary level in Bangladesh as is seen in other settings, for example, Nigeria (Agun and Okunrotifa 1977).

The third question to the teachers was framed as ‘Are you satisfied with the use of audio aids in your English classes?’

Teacher Table: 3

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
Are you satisfied with the use of audio aids in your English classes?	Strongly satisfied	8	25%
	Slightly satisfied	24	75%
	Dissatisfied	0	00%

N=32

As displayed in Teacher Table: 3, Out of 32 teachers, 8 teachers ticked ‘Strongly satisfied’, 24 ticked ‘Slightly satisfied’, and none marked ‘Dissatisfied’. That is, only 25% teachers were found that they were strongly satisfied with the use of audio aids in their English classes whereas 75% appeared to be slightly satisfactory in this respect.

The finding conspicuously reveals that all the EFL teachers at the tertiary level in Bangladesh are more or less satisfied with the use of audio aids for their teaching.

Notwithstanding, a great majority of the subjects (75%) have slight satisfaction which is indicative of the lack of teacher training, teacher motivation and administrative support.

The fourth question in the Teacher Questionnaire was ‘Which English classes are more effective and interesting to the student?’

Teacher Table: 4

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
Which English classes are more effective and interesting to the student?	Classes with audio aids	28	87.5%
	Classes without audio aids	4	12.5%

N=32

Teacher Table: 4 demonstrates that 28 out of 32 teachers marked ‘Classes with audio aids’ and the remaining 4 teachers marked ‘Classes without audio aids’. That is, 87.5% teachers supported that English classes with audio aids were more effective and interesting to their students while only 12.5% opined that English classes without audio aids were more effective and interesting.

Lending support to Adeyanju (1988), this finding clearly discloses that language classes with audio aids are more effective and interesting to the learner than those without audio aids.

The fifth question to the teacher was constructed as ‘Are you satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution?’

Teacher Table: 5

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
Are you satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution?	Strongly satisfied	0	00%
	Slightly satisfied	32	100%
	Dissatisfied	0	00%

N=32

As Teacher Table: 5 exhibits, all the teachers ticked ‘Slightly satisfied’, and none marked ‘Strongly satisfied’ or ‘Dissatisfied’. That is to say, 100% teachers were slightly satisfied with the audio facilities provided by their institutions.

This result of the study unfolds that all the teachers have a little satisfaction with the audio facilities provided by their respective institutions as the facilities are not sufficient.

The sixth question in the Teacher Questionnaire was ‘How is the performance of the students in the classes without audio aids?’

Teacher Table: 6

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
How is the performance of the students in the classes without audio aids?	Strongly satisfied	0	00%
	Slightly satisfied	20	62.5%
	Dissatisfied	12	37.5%

N=32

According to the statistics in Teacher Table: 6, 20 out of 32 teachers marked ‘Slightly satisfied’, 12 teachers marked ‘Dissatisfied’, and none marked ‘Strongly satisfied’. That is, 62.5% teachers were slightly satisfied with the performance of their students in the classes without audio aids while 37.5% were dissatisfied with the performance of their students in the class with same condition.

This finding can be attributed to the fact that the performance of the students fails to reach the teachers’ expectation and the program target because of the lack of audio facilities.

The seventh question to the teachers was designed as ‘How is the performance of the students in the classes with audio aids?’

Teacher Table: 7

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
How is the performance of the students in the classes with audio aids?	Strongly satisfied	12	37.5%
	Slightly satisfied	16	50%
	Dissatisfied	4	12.5%

N=32

Teacher Table: 7 exhibits that out of 32 teachers 12 ticked ‘Strongly satisfied’, 16 ticked ‘Slightly satisfied’, and 4 ticked ‘Dissatisfied’. In other words, 37.5% teachers were

strongly satisfied with the performance of their students in the classes with audio aids, and 50% teachers were slightly satisfied with their students' performance in the same condition; but 12.5% teachers were dissatisfied with the performance of their students in the classes with audio aids.

This finding obviously reveals that the performance of the students reaches the teachers' expectation and the program target because of the use of audio aids for teaching EFL.

The eighth question in the Teacher Questionnaire was 'What limitations do you face in using audio aids in your English classes?'

Teacher Table: 8

Question	Choices	Scores	Percentage
What limitations do you face in using audio aids in your English classes?	Lack of audio aids	16	50%
	Lack of teacher training	12	37.5%
	Lack of administrative support	4	12.5%

N=32

As per the results in Teacher Table: 8, 16 teachers ticked 'Lack of audio aids', 12 teachers ticked 'Lack of teacher training', and 4 teachers ticked 'Lack of administrative support'. That is, 50% teachers thought that the lack of audio aids was their main limitation; 37.5% thought that the lack of teacher training was their main limitation; and 12.5% considered the lack of administrative support as their main limitation on the use of audio aids in their English classes.

The finding discloses that the lack of audio aids and teacher training tremendously hampers the audio facilities in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh. Besides, the lack of administrative support is to some extent responsible for the insufficient use of audio aids in the class.

Student questionnaire

The student questionnaire consisted of eight items that were related to the students' views on the varied aspects of the use of audio aids in their English classes. The responses of the 120 students to the questionnaire are put forward item wise as follows:

The first question to the students was formulated as 'Does your English teacher use audio aids in your classes?'

Student Table: 1

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
Does your English teacher use audio aids in your classes?	Yes	81	67.5%
	No	39	32.5%

N=120

As displayed in Student Table: 1, 81 out of 120 students answered the question in the affirmative while the remaining 39 students did in the negative. That is to say, 67.5% respondents found their English teacher using audio aids in their classes; but 32.5% did not find their teacher using audio aids.

Though majority students admit that their teachers use audio aids in their EFL classes, it is in contradiction with the teachers' views since one hundred percent teachers claim to use audio aids in their classes. However, it is here clear that audio aids are used in most of the EFL classes at the tertiary level in Bangladesh, which is in harmony with the communicative language teaching approach (Richards and Rodgers 2002).

The next question in the student questionnaire was framed as 'Do you think that audio aids are useful for learning English?'

Student Table: 2

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
Do you think that audio aids are useful for learning English?	Yes	117	97.5%
	No	03	2.5%

N=120

Student Table: 2 shows that 117 out of 120 students responded to the question positively whereas the rest did negatively. That is, 97.5% students thought that audio aids were useful for learning English; but only 2.5% students did not consider audio aids to be useful.

The finding is in a very close correlation with that which is related to the teachers since a great majority of the students (97.5%) and the teachers (87.5%) feel that audio aids are useful for teaching and learning EFL.

The third question to the students was posed as ‘Are you satisfied with the use of audio aids in the English classes?’

Student Table: 3

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
Are you satisfied with the use of audio aids in the English classes?	Strongly satisfied	06	5%
	Slightly satisfied	63	52.5%
	Dissatisfied	51	42.5%

N=120

According to the statistics in Student Table: 3, out of 120 students, only 6 students ticked ‘Strongly satisfied’, and 63 ticked ‘Slightly satisfied’; but 51 students ticked ‘Dissatisfied’. In other words, only 5% were strongly satisfied and 52.5% slightly satisfied with the use of audio aids in their English classes whereas 42.5% students were found to be dissatisfied.

As this finding discloses, unlike all the teachers being satisfied, a good number of students (42.5%) are dissatisfied with the use of audio aids although majority students are more or less satisfied with the use of audio aids in their English classes. The finding can be attributed to the lack of teacher training, inadequacy of audio facilities and limitation of administrative support.

The fourth question to the students was put as ‘Which English classes are more effective and interesting to you?’

Student Table: 4

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
Which English classes are more effective and interesting to you?	Classes with audio aids	105	87.5%
	Classes without audio aids	15	12.5%

N=120

Student Table: 4 demonstrates that 105 out of 120 students ticked ‘Classes with audio aids’ and the remaining 15 students ticked ‘Classes without audio aids’. That is, 87.5% students supported that English classes with audio aids were more effective and

interesting to them while only 12.5% opined that English classes without audio aids were more effective and interesting.

This result lends complete support to the teachers' views, and demands sufficient use of audio aids in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh.

The fifth question in the student questionnaire was designed as 'Are you satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution?'

Student Table: 5

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
Are you satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution?	Strongly satisfied	06	5%
	Slightly satisfied	48	40%
	Dissatisfied	66	55%

N=120

As per the statistics in Student Table: 4, out of 120 students, only 6 students marked 'Strongly satisfied', and 48 students marked 'Slightly satisfied'; but 66 ticked 'Dissatisfied'. That is, only 5% were strongly satisfied and 40% slightly satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution whereas majority students (55%) were found to be dissatisfied.

Here, majority students (55%) are dissatisfied and a good number of them (40%) slightly satisfied with the audio facilities provided by the institution though all the teachers are slightly satisfied. But, it is clear that the present audio facilities are inadequate, most probably, due to the lack of teacher training and administrative support.

The sixth question in the student questionnaire was designed as 'How is your performance in the English classes without audio aids?'

Student Table: 6

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
How is your performance in the English classes without audio aids?	Strongly satisfied	24	20%
	Slightly satisfied	42	35%
	Dissatisfied	54	45%

N=120

As exhibited in Student Table: 6, 24 out of 120 students marked 'Strongly satisfied', 42 students marked 'Slightly satisfied', and 54 marked 'Dissatisfied'. That is, 20% students were strongly satisfied and 35% were slightly satisfied with their performance in the classes without audio aids while 45% were dissatisfied with their performance in the class with same condition.

Though majority students (55%) are more or less satisfied with their performance in the English classes without audio aids, a considerable number of students (45%) being in a very close association with the teachers (37.5%) are dissatisfied.

The seventh question in the student questionnaire was set as 'How is your performance in the English classes with audio aids?'

Student Table: 7

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
How is your performance in the English classes with audio aids?	Strongly satisfied	36	30%
	Slightly satisfied	57	47.5%
	Dissatisfied	27	22.5%

N=120

Student Table: 7 demonstrates that out of 120 students 36 ticked 'Strongly satisfied', 57 ticked 'Slightly satisfied', and 27 ticked 'Dissatisfied'. That is to say, 30% students were strongly satisfied with their performance in the classes with audio aids, and 47.5% students were slightly satisfied with their performance in the same condition; but 22.5% students were dissatisfied with their performance in the classes with audio aids.

Like the teachers (87.5%), a large number of students (77%) feel the need of audio facilities for improving their performance in the EFL class.

The eighth question to the students was posed as 'What limitations do you find in the use of audio aids in your English classes?'

Student Table: 8

Question	Options	Scores	Percentage
What limitations do you find in the use of audio aids in your English classes?	Lack of audio aids	75	62.5%
	Lack of teacher training	12	10%
	Lack of administrative support	33	27.5%

N=120

According to the statistics in Student Table: 8, 75 students ticked 'Lack of audio aids', 12 students ticked 'Lack of teacher training', and 33 students ticked 'Lack of administrative support'. In other words, 62.5% students thought that the lack of audio aids was their main limitation; 10% thought that the lack of teacher training was their main limitation; and 27.5% considered the lack of administrative support as their main limitation on the use of audio aids.

Resembling the finding concerned with the teachers, this finding discovers that the lack of audio aids, teacher training and administrative support all reduces the audio facilities in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh.

3. Inferences

The presentation and interpretation of the findings of the study above lead to the following inferences:

As to the first research question 'Are audio aids used in the class?', it could be concluded that audio aids are more or less used in most of the EFL classes at the tertiary level in Bangladesh, which is in consonance with the contemporary communicative language teaching mode (Richards and Rodgers 2002).

Regarding the second research problem 'If yes, how much are they useful?', it could be considered that audio aids in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh are substantially useful since the use of such aids makes teaching attractive and effective, and reinforces learning by stimulating and motivating the learner and arresting his/her attention during the instructional process.

To answer the third question 'If no, why are they not used?', it might be thought that the lack of teacher training, audio aids and administrative support is responsible for the insufficient use of audio aids though the use of audio aids considerably adds to EFL learning at the tertiary level in Bangladesh.

To respond to the fourth question 'What does the teacher think of using audio aids?', it is evident that the teachers do not have sufficient training and motivation as well as adequate audio equipment and administrative support required for using audio aids in the EFL class.

And, to address the fifth question 'What does the student think of using audio aids?', it is noticeable that the students find audio aids much useful for leaning EFL but suffer from the lack of trained teachers, insufficient audio facilities and limited administrative support as well.

Hence, it could briefly be concluded that the use of audio aids in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh is a plus, not a minus, but it is seriously hampered due to the lack of teacher training, the insufficiency of audio equipment and material, and the indifference of the administration.

4. Suggestions

Based on the aforementioned findings and inferences, a number of suggestions can be put forward.

Firstly, it is already found that audio aids are used in the EFL class at the tertiary level in Bangladesh to some extent. But, it should be ensured that every teacher would maximally use audio aids including audio equipment and material in each and every class to develop the learner's oral communication skills encompassing speaking and listening. In this connection, King and Womack (1983) maintain that listening provides the aural input that serves as the basis for language acquisition and enables the learner to interact in spoken communication; and audio aids could be the most useful and exciting means of teaching the learner this communicative English.

Secondly, though the use of audio aids proves to be substantially useful for both teaching and learning EFL, the limitations of this means, such as the lack of teacher training, the inadequacy of audio aids and the indifference of the administration should be reduced considerably. That is, the arrangement of adequate and proper teacher training, availability of appropriate audio equipment and material, and necessary administrative support and monitoring can ensure the optimal use of audio aids in the EFL class, and thus guarantee the learner's maximum benefit.

Thirdly, the teacher should have expertise as well as interest to use audio aids in his/her EFL class so as to make his/her teaching effective and facilitate learning to a considerable extent.

Last but not least, there should a well equipped language lab having sufficient and suitable audio facilities which the learner can use any time to practice EFL skills and improve his/her linguistic as well as communicative ability.

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