

Investigating EFL Students' Attitude toward the Use of Visual Aids in English Lectures

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Abstract

The aim of this research was to investigate EFL learners' attitude toward the use of visual aids in English lectures. One of the difficulties that students face might be the techniques used by the teacher in the English class. Usually, students tend to be hesitant to speak up if the teaching technique was not effective. Therefore, they feel pressurized to understand the material even though it is not their preferred learning style, which might lead to unsuccessful learning. Visual aids are a big part of today's world. Teachers tend to rely heavily on the use of visual aids. However, this research focused exclusively on students' attitude toward the use of visual aids in English lectures. It is rare to ask the students what they think is beneficial for their learning even though knowing the students preferred learning style is the best way to achieve successful learning. The most important step taken to study this problem was to find participants who are willing to state their honest opinion. The study showed that the students had a positive attitude toward the use of visual aids. The researcher recommends the Ministry of Education to make the use of visual aids mandatory in schools. Also, the researcher recommends textbook authors and publishers to provide a CD with their books that contains educational videos related to the syllables. Finally, the researcher recommends students to find the suitable tools to help them in their learning journey.

Keywords: EFL students' attitude, visual aids, English class

INTRODUCTION

Visual aids help the teachers to save time during lectures. For example, using slides to present the main points of the lecture is faster than writing them on a traditional board, then explaining the points. Also, visual aids are considered beneficial for the instructor because they help the instructor to remember the important points to be explained in class. In a way, it is like a guideline for the instructor. It has been established that this method has a lot of benefits for the instructors. However, to determine if the use of visual aids is beneficial for the learners, we must investigate their opinions. The researcher

chose to do this research because looking for the most suitable method for the students is the first step to an effective education system.

The researcher chose to investigate students' opinions about the use of visual aids in English lectures because it is rare to ask the students what they think is beneficial for their learning. Visual aids are a beneficial tool when it comes to teaching. However, it is unknown if it has a positive or negative impact on the learner. Therefore, the researcher investigated if the use of visual aids is beneficial for those who are receiving the knowledge for the first time.

THE STUDY

The purpose of this study was to investigate students' attitudes toward the use of visual aids in English lectures.

- What are the students' attitudes toward the use of visual aids in English lectures?

LITERATURE REVIEW

Mathew N.G. & Alidmat A.O.H. (2013) conducted a study on the usefulness of Audio-Visual Aids in EFL classroom: implications for effective instruction. The study was conducted on 15 undergraduate level at Aljouf University, Saudi Arabia. The participants were native Arabs and they study English Language and Literature. The research was a mixed methods research. The researchers distributed a questionnaire that contained 10 questions. Most of the questions were open ended and students were requested to express their opinions in writing. The researchers then collected the questionnaire and analyzed the students' responses. The findings of this research gave insights on students' opinions on the use of audio-visual aids. The result was that audio-visual aids had a positive impact on teaching- learning in EFL classroom. Students found visual aids helpful in understanding difficult concepts in the course. In addition, the use of these aids has a positive effect on storing the information in their brain.

Another study carried out by Aydinlu N.A. (2016) indicated that the Contextual Visual Aids had a statistically significant effect on the participants. In specific, the pre-thematic aids had the highest effect on high school students' reading comprehension. This research took place at Hekmat high school in Parsabad city, Iran. The participants of the study were 96 intermediate level female students in the age range of 15 to 16. Their first language was Persian. These participants were chosen from 140 intermediate students according to their performance in a sample Preliminary English Test (PET). The participants were divided into four groups which were three experimental groups who took three tests, which were (pre-thematic, thematic and post-thematic) and one control group.

This research is related to the previous studies mentioned above in one aspect. The previous studies both looked into the techniques in which teachers imply in EFL classrooms. On the contrary, this research is different from the previous researches in so many aspects. First, the previous studies both looked into one specific aspects of visual aids, which were audio-visual and pre-thematic aids. In this research, the researcher investigated visual aids as a whole. Second, the variations in participants. Even though the participants in one study shared the same first language as the participants in this

research, however, they were not from the same university nor do they share the same major. In the first previous study, the participants were 15 English language and literature major students from Aljouf University, Saudi Arabia. In addition, the participants of the second previous study were 96 intermediate level female students in the age range of 15 to 16. Their first language was Persian. Meanwhile, in this research the participants were 14 freshmen level at Yanbu University College, Saudi Arabia. Their first language is Arabic. There are also differences on the focus of the research. This research focuses on students' opinions toward the use of visual aids as a whole (videos, pictures, PowerPoint slides, etc) in English lectures. However, one previous study focused on the student's opinion on the use of audio-visual aids only in EFL classes. The other study did not ask students' opinions, but they examined the effect of the use of contextual visual aids in class by making tests. Both previous studies had positive results whether it was students' opinions or result of the tests the participants took. However, the results in this research might differ from the previous researches.

METHOD

This research was a quantitative research. The research is about students' opinions; therefore, the researcher designed a close-ended questionnaire to collect the data.

Participants

The participants of this research were 14 female Applied Linguistics students aged between 18 to 21 at freshmen level in Yanbu University College, Yanbu al-Sinaiyah, Saudi Arabia. Their language proficiency was pre-intermediate, and their native language was Arabic.

Questionnaire

The researcher designed a questionnaire to know the participants' attitude toward using visual aids in grammar lectures. The questionnaire contained 7 statements and was designed on a Likert scale with the following possible responses; strongly agree, agree, neutral, strongly disagree and disagree. (See Appendix).

Data Collection Procedure

In this research, the data was collected from freshmen grammar students of YUC college in Yanbu al Sinaiyah, Saudi Arabia. First, a questionnaire was designed targeting the freshmen students studying grammar. Second, the questionnaire was given to 14 grammar students, and each questionnaire was answered individually. Third, responses were collected from all students. Finally, the researcher analyzed the data in order to answer the research question.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The researcher designed a questionnaire to know the participants' attitude toward using visual aids in grammar lectures. The purpose of this questionnaire was to collect the students' true opinions and attitude toward the use of visual aids. The questionnaire was a close-ended questionnaire that contained 7 statements and was designed on a Likert scale with the following possible responses; strongly agree, agree, neutral, strongly

disagree and disagree. The participants were asked if they agree or disagree with each statement. Table (1) shows the students' responses on the questionnaire.

Table 1. Students' responses

Statement	SA (5)	A (4)	N (3)	DA (2)	SDA (1)	Mean response
1. Visual aids (PowerPoint slides, images) help me understand better in English lectures.	12	2	0	0	0	4.85
2. Visual aids help me take notes better in English lectures.	7	7	0	0	0	4.5
3. Visual aids facilitate my observation skills, which increases my understanding during English lectures.	5	7	2	0	0	4.21
4. Visual aids help me with in-class communication with the instructor.	6	6	2	0	0	4.28
5. Visual aids (images, videos) makes English lectures easier and more fun.	11	3	0	0	0	4.78
6. Visual aids (diagrams, charts, and graphs) helps me retain information better in the future	10	3	1	0	0	4.64
7. During exams, I rely heavily on the visual aids (PowerPoint slides) provided by my teacher more than my own notes.	7	5	0	2	0	4.21

According to the results provided in the previous table, all of the participants agreed that visual aids helps them to understand and take notes better during English lectures. In addition, the majority agreed that visual aids facilitate their observation and communication skills. Moreover, the participants agreed that the use of visual aids during English lectures makes the learning task easier and more fun for them. The majority agreed on the fact that visual aids helps them retrieve information better. Finally, the results showed that the majority of the participants rely on visual aids provided by their instructor to study for their exams.

The results on this research showed similarity with Mathew N.G. & Alidmat (2013) and Aydinlu (2016). The findings of this research showed students' opinions on the use of

visual aids in general. However, the mentioned previous studies chose a specific visual aids tool. One of which was the audio-visual and the other one was contextual visual aids. The result for the previous studies showed that audio-visual aids has a positive impact on teaching- learning in EFL classroom. In addition, the use of contextual visual aids had a statistically significant impact on the participants. This means that this research answered the research question and supports the previous studies findings, given that this research had positive results as well.

CONCLUSION

To conclude, students' opinions on the tools used during their English lectures is the very first step to achieve successful learning. If English teachers use a technique that does not facilitate the students with the opportunities to communicate, take notes, activate their observation skills, or even feel like learning is a fun activity, then learning will not take place successfully. According to the students' responses, visual aids seem to be beneficial for them during English lectures. In addition, the use of visual aids has a positive effect on retaining and retrieving information, which is the ultimate goal during the lecture. The results of this study showed that students had a positive attitude toward the use of visual aids, which answered the research question about the students' attitude.

LIMITATIONS

This research had two limitations, which are the limited number of participants and time. This research focused exclusively on students' opinions. Therefore, the number of participants was limited to only 14 participants. The study would have more solid grounds in the findings if the number of participants was more than 14 students. The other limitation that the researcher faced was regarding the time. Due to the limited time provided to collect data, the researcher could not find more than 14 participants.

RECOMMENDATIONS

First, the researcher recommends the Ministry of Education to make the use of visual aids as a mandatory part of explaining language-related courses, especially English. This does not mean that teachers have to use visual aids in every class. However, if they have English grammar class 3 times a week, at least two of these classes should be explained with the help of visual aids whether it was audio-visual, PowerPoint slides, pictures, charts and graphs. The third lecture could be exercise solving and practice. Second, the researcher recommends textbook authors and publishers to provide a CD with their books that contains educational videos related to the syllabus, visual games, or audio clips to practice the correct pronunciation. In this way, if the learner is having difficulty reading the important content of the book, this CD will help the learner to expand in the learning process. Finally, the researcher recommends students to make their voices heard, and find the suitable tools to help them in their learning journey.

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APPENDIX – QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear student, please choose the suitable answer according to your opinion:

Statement	Strongly agree	Agree	Neutral	Disagree	Strongly disagree
1. Visual aids (PowerPoint slides, images) help me understand better in English lectures.					
2. Visual aids help me take notes better in English lectures.					
3. Visual aids facilitate my observation skills, which increases my understanding during English lectures.					
4. Visual aids help me with in-class communication with the instructor.					
5. Visual aids (images, videos) makes English lectures easier and more fun.					
6. Visual aids (diagrams, charts, and graphs) helps me retain information better in the future					
7. During exams, I rely heavily on the visual aids (PowerPoint slides) provided by my teacher more than my own notes.					