

Research Article

The Role of Mediated Learning Environment (MLE) in Improving Students Oral Skills: A Case Study on the Use of Audio-Visual Aids at the Department of English, University of Saba Region

Mohamed Hamoud Kassim Al-Mahfedi^{1*}, Ahlam Abdallah Hassan Al-Jabali²

¹Associate Professor of English, Albaydha University, Yemen

²Research Student, University of Saba Region, Yemen



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ABSTRACT

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This paper aims to improve the speaking abilities of university students in the Department of English, Faculty of Education, and Faculty of Arts at the University of Saba Region, by implementing a mediated learning environment (MLE) and using audiovisual aids (AVA). The paper utilizes a case-study research design, selecting 50 fourth-level English students from the two faculties as sample subjects. Data for the study was collected using a mixed qualitative-quantitative approach. A structured student questionnaire with 40 items was used, categorized into six fields representing the independent variables: curriculum, staff teachers, students, learning atmosphere, facilities, and university. The data collected were analyzed and discussed using the mediated theory (MT). The results suggest that the inaccessibility and unaffordability of AVA are major challenges that hinder students' improvement in speaking abilities and communication skills. Staff teachers and facilities were found to be the main influencing factors and challenges that hinder students' use of AVA to enhance their oral skills, with average values of 24.11% and 24%, respectively. The study concludes that the use of a mediated learning environment, such as AVA, helps develop students' oral skills and communication, enabling them to speak confidently and actively participate.

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1. INTRODUCTION

In modern language classrooms, the question of how to engage students in their learning becomes even more crucial than what a subject matter to cover (Feuerstein, 1980, 1990). In other words, the emphasis is now on how to teach rather than what to teach. Hence, the teacher's choice of a teaching instrument, flexible teaching methods, or activities, such as the proper use of video as audio-visual aids (AVA), can replace the teacher's traditional function of serving as a mediator between the student and the subject matter. Additionally, the choice of the teaching instrument and the manner in which the language instructor uses it are crucial.

Further, mastering foreign language skills, especially oral skills, isn't an easy task. Speaking is one of a language's most crucial abilities. Speaking, according to Chaney (1998), is the process of creating and exchanging meanings in a variety of circumstances via the use of verbal and nonverbal symbols. It is an interactive process of creating meaning that involves producing, receiving, and processing information, according to Burns and Joyce (1997). To put it another way, speaking is a talent that is required in order to connect verbally and

nonverbally with people in order to persuade, negotiate, and transmit information in order to establish a common understanding.

Speaking skills are among the key qualities that need to be addressed in English language instruction for non-native speakers. Studies such as Kavaliauskiene (2013), Kayi (2012), Nombre, Segura Alonso, & de Junio (2012) have shown that while English speaking skills are necessary for students to participate actively in class, they are also the most challenging to put into practice. In line with this, it has been observed that despite the fact that English has been taught to students as a required subject since they were in secondary school, it is nevertheless typical to observe Yemeni students acting passively in class discussions because they are unable to communicate in the language.

Despite the fact that all four skills are equally crucial, it is, therefore, understandable why people refer to persons who know English as "speakers" of the language (Picollo, 2010). Subsequently, it is important for the English teacher to inspire students to master the language, particularly oral proficiency. According to Brown (2001), success in school and success later

***Corresponding Author:**

Email: Mahfadi76@yahoo.com (M. H. K. Al-Mahfedi)

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in life are both influenced by a learner's ability to communicate in a second language clearly and effectively. Oral skills are a process of oral communication that are used for ideas or thoughts so that they can interact with other people (Marzuki, 2017). Oral skills are an interactive process for creating meaning that entail information creation, acceptance, and processing (Brown, 2001).

Because they are shy to talk when their instructor wants them to, most learners find it difficult to communicate in English. They are hesitant to make mistakes because they lack knowledge of proper language. Second, because they only have a little amount of time during English lessons, they do not have many opportunities to improve their English. The most tough and difficult skill to learn is believed to be oral skills (Brown, 2001).

The main goal of teaching English at university level is to support students in developing their skills to communicate effectively in speaking, listening, reading, and writing in English. So, in order to use audio-visual tools effectively, the teacher should prefigure its aptness with relation to its designated purpose. It is a useful method for resolving issues since it may make learning exciting and encourage students to communicate and share their opinions about what they hear and see. However, we can't overlook its risky and slippery effect on the learner's interpersonal culture and value system.

In order to meet the competency standards, students must use a variety of simple spoken language phrases accurately, fluently, and acceptably to interact with the environment and express meaning in transactional conversations (to get things done) and interpersonal conversations (social interaction). These speech acts include requesting, giving, and rejecting services, requesting, giving, and rejecting things, admitting and denying facts, etc. According to the researchers' observations made throughout her four years as a student at the English Department of the Faculty of Education at the University of Saba Region, the majority of university students were unable to properly employ their oral communication abilities.

In an effort to change the way speaking is currently taught, the researchers decided to explore the challenges and the possibilities of using audio-visual media in the classroom. It is a well-liked method for teaching a second or foreign language to improve students' oral skills. The classroom is seen as an arena of human action through technological achievement.

According to Brown (2001), success in school and success later in life are both influenced by a learner's ability to communicate in a second language clearly and effectively. Most learners find it difficult to communicate in English either due to personal and subjective factors or because of lack of proper learning aids and environment. Generally, majority of Yemeni students act passively in class discussions because they are not supported to communicate in the language.

The present research attempts to address injection of the implementation of AVA to improve students' oral skills and exploring the underlying factors that contribute to the persistence of the problem and, consequently, suggests remedial solutions for them.

The research paper is designed to provide answers to the following questions:

1. What are the challenges that impede the implementation of audio-visual aids to effectively enhance students' oral communication skills?

2. How can audio-visual aids optimally be used to improve students' oral communication skills?

2. CONTRIBUTIONS

Besides being an addition to the existing body of literature on the subject of ELTS, the current study highlights certain aspects of research that are significant for common educationalists, university teachers, learners, and ELT scholars. These aspects can be listed as follows:

1. It is hoped that the present research provides insights into the humanization of technology in the context of ELTS. This means using technology to serve and enhance the human value system and culture, rather than simply mechanizing it.
2. By examining the challenges and problems associated with using audio-visual aids in teaching and improving oral skills, this research serves as a pedagogical guide and practical resource for university teachers and learners. It particularly suggests a consolidated model that incorporates virtual and audio-visual tools.
3. This research also attempts to develop and extend the teaching-learning theory of digital learning by theorizing the teacher's role in the age of e-learning.

3. LITERATURE REVIEW

The conceptual framework of this research is based on the Mediation Theory (MT) and mediated learning environment (MLE) as proposed by Feuerstein (1990 and 1991). In the context of learning a foreign language, MLE may be summed up as the interaction between a student and the learning environment through the language teacher, who acts as a human mediator.

According to Feuerstein's thesis, a learner's ability to change as a result of exposure to a stimulus rest not on intellect or other qualities that instructors at all levels often link with learning capacity, but rather on culture. In other words, people who behave well toward their chosen fields—be they social norms or academic subjects—tend to do better in such fields.

MLE is helpful because it improves quality in a learning environment. Direct stimuli, which might make learning more difficult due to their non-mediated nature, are supplemented but not meant to replace it.

Feuerstein (1991) claims that children are exposed to two different sorts of learning situations: direct learning, which involves an unmediated connection between learning material and the child's thinking, and mediated learning, which "depends on the activity of a started and intentioned adult who stands between the child and the outside world. Feuerstein (1991) describes a "mediated learning experience" as the process through which teachers support students in being able to adapt to their learning contexts.

When a child's mind "does not know how to take the content, cannot understand its meaning, or does not know how to respond" (Feuerstein, 1991), mediated learning becomes even more important. The teacher's position as a mediator between the student and the subject matter can be replaced in a mediated learning environment by the teaching tool or flexible teaching approaches or activities, such as the right use of video as audio-visual content. Feuerstein (1990) also highlights the problem of reduced cognitive modifiability, which can be summed up as the absence of modifiability when mediation is not appropriate for the learners' needs and the absence of mediated learning experiences.

Studies on effective speaking skills have shown that incorporating AVA in language learning can greatly enhance oral skills. These aids provide learners with the opportunity to hear and imitate native speakers, helping them improve pronunciation and intonation. Moreover, AVA offer visual cues that aid in the comprehension and retention of vocabulary and grammar.

Oral language refers to the use of oral speech organs as a medium of communication. A. Cregan defines oral language as "the child's first, most important, and most frequently used structured medium of communication. It is the primary means through which each individual child will be enabled to structure, evaluate, describe and control his/her experience." (Cregan, 1998, as cited in Shiel et al., 2012)

Generally speaking, oral learning skills refer to the ability to effectively listen, speak, and understand spoken language. These skills are crucial for language acquisition and fluency development. In order to facilitate oral learning, it is important for educators to provide a variety of resources and activities that cater to different learning styles and abilities. This can include interactive exercises, role-playing scenarios, and group discussions. By incorporating these elements into the language learning curriculum, students can actively engage in the learning process and improve their oral communication skills.

Speaking is one of the most important skills that students have to master in learning English. Many experts have tried to define speaking. They define speaking depending on their perceptions. "Speaking is an interactive process of constructing meaning that involves producing and its form and receiving and processing information" (Brown, 1994; Burns & Joyce, 1997). Speaking is a productive language skill (Sihaan, 2008, p. 85). Speaking is the use of language to communicate with others (Fulcher, 2003, p. 23). A. S. Hornby argues that speaking is "to say exactly what you think, in every direct way" (1289).

Speaking is perhaps the most demanding skill for teachers to teach. It is the act of expressing ideas or feelings using language. Therefore, speaking is not only uttering ideas in our mind, but also delivering and presenting new information to other people orally.

The ability to speak is very important and the purpose of learning English is to allow students to interact freely with each other. The ability to speak is a means of communication to express human thought and forms of social behavior. The process involves the complex mental and physical actions of the speaker as they produce language.

Speech ability can be defined as the ability to use words in important normal communication situations and pronunciation, stress, intonation, grammar, and foreign language vocabulary at normal levels of delivery for native speakers of that language. Oral communication is a good way for students who want to improve their ability to speak and understand foreign languages.

There are some elements in speaking that must be considered by teachers and learners in pedagogy. There are four elements in the speech process: pronunciation, vocabulary, grammar, and fluency.

1. Pronunciation is a difficult component in learning speaking ability. It is defined as the way in which a word is pronounced.
2. Vocabulary is the building block of the speaking process. When learning English, the first and most important thing a student must consider is mastering vocabulary. Having a good vocabulary helps one express idea fully and smoothly.

3. Grammar is a central component of the speaking process, as it deals with how to produce correct sentences in conversation. Perfect speaking combines precise and accurate expressions.

4. Fluency is the ability to speak as fast and accurately as possible to suit the professional necessity. Being fluent means being able to speak without pausing or hesitating.

In teaching and learning speaking, it is important for the teacher to act as a pace-maker and facilitator, while the learner is the actor and event-leader.

Audio-visual aid is one of the media for teaching. According to the Advanced Learner's Dictionary, media is the means of communicating with a large number of people. Audio-visual aid is an important tool because different people respond to different learning modalities. Audio-visual aids are educational aids used in the EFL classroom to encourage the learning process and make it easier and more interesting. Materials such as charts, maps, models, film strips, projectors, radio, and television are called instructional aids (Rather, 2004). According to J. N. Madhuri (2013), "audio-visual aids are tools used to improve speaking skills that are used frequently. They use objects, pictures, and gestures systematically to elucidate meaning." L. Anderson (1994) states that audio-visual is a series of video media electronic images accompanied by audio elements. Audio-visual materials make the learning experience more concrete, realistic, and dynamic.

In order to effectively use audio-visual aids, one must learn from experience what will and won't work for an audience or group of students. The audio-visual aid can take many forms and be presented in many formats. It may be used in different settings, from classrooms to board rooms, and anywhere that information is relayed to audiences on a regular basis.

Based on the definition above, the relationship between multimedia and audio-visual aids is that audio-visual aids are a part of multimedia and serve as supporting media in terms of learning. This relationship is very closely related.

In general, teaching media can be classified into three kinds:

- a) Audio aids, which consist of radio, magnetic tape recorder, and language laboratory.
- b) Visual aids, which consist of pictures, charts, spice men, blackboard/whiteboard, flashcards, flannel board, slide projector, silent film strip projector, and overhead projector.
- c) Audio-visual aids, which consist of television, video, tape recorder, sound film strip projector, sound motion projector, and VCD player.

There are several advantages to using audio-visual aids. Nupur (2012) identified six advantages as follows:

1. Best motivators: They are the best motivators, as students work with more interest and zeal, and are more attentive.
2. Fundamental to verbal instructions: They help to reduce verbalism, which is a major weakness in schools. They convey the same meaning as words, giving clear concepts and accuracy in learning.
3. Clear images: Clear images are formed when we see, hear, touch, taste, and smell, as our experiences are direct, concrete, and more or less permanent. Learning through the senses becomes the most natural and easiest.
4. Vicarious experience: Everyone agrees that firsthand experience is the best type of educative experience, but such an experience cannot always be provided to the pupils. In some situations, certain audio-visual aids can provide a substitute.

5. Variety: Audio-visual aids provide variety and different tools in the hands of the teacher.
6. Freedom: The use of audio-visual aids provides various occasions for students to move about, talk, laugh, and comment. Under such an atmosphere, students work because they want to, not just because the teacher wants them to.

The importance of oral skills in language learning cannot be underestimated. Speaking and listening allow learners to fully immerse themselves in the language and develop fluency and accuracy. Incorporating audio-visual aids into language learning can greatly enhance oral skills by providing authentic and engaging content for learners to practice speaking and listening. Technology allows learners to access a wide range of resources, such as interactive videos and language learning apps, that can further enhance their oral skills development.

For ESL students, successful communication in the target language is considered a measure of success. Speaking serves as a link for students between the classroom and the outside world. To create this bridge, instructors must provide students with numerous opportunities to practice purposeful communication in significant contexts. This indicates that speaking efforts to communicate help learners learn to talk in a second language.

Within the field of information and communications technology (ICT), audio-visual aids are seen as a significant element in boosting learners' motivation for language learning and linguistic competency. The extensive use of ICT in language education provides learners with a brand-new learning environment with rich digital textual, visual, audio, video, and interactive aspects. However, teachers also have a responsibility to upgrade their skills and become familiar with the most appropriate and effective use of ICT in the classroom, as the success or failure of language teaching and learning largely depends on the effort and competence of teachers.

The steps in teaching using audio-visual aids are as follows:

1. Focus students' attention on the main idea of the video presentation.
2. Active viewing increases students' enjoyment and satisfaction.
3. Freeze framing allows the picture on the screen to be stopped, providing additional information about the characters' body language, facial expressions, emotions, reactions, and responses. Substitutes should be provided when necessary.

4. RELATEDWORKS

Studies and research conducted on the effectiveness of audio-visual aids have shown promising results in language learning. The use of audio-visual elements by language learners in many related studies has been shown to enhance language acquisition. Numerous studies have demonstrated that they increase instructional capacity, free up overcrowded classrooms, and give instructors a useful strategy for speaking skills development (Umar, 2014).

Similar to this, Ghazala Kausar (2013) conducted a fascinating study to learn more about Pakistani university students' perspectives on the usage of audio-visual resources. The study's findings demonstrated that they could easily learn with the use of audio-visual resources. They said they could easily remember new terms by thinking back to the event from when they had heard or seen it.

Additionally, a study was carried out by Albahiri & Alhaj (2020) to investigate the factors that stimulate speaking abilities in second language learners. The research primarily focuses on

the ideas around technology-assisted language instruction and media components that motivate students to connect and communicate successfully. The researchers mostly used YouTube as a source for films that would serve as tools. 48 students from a Saudi Arabian higher education institution served as participants in a quasi-experimental study. The study revealed that the visual components of videos significantly influenced how interested second language learners were in participating in the target language. In particular, YouTube proved to be a highly useful resource that offered meaningful interaction.

The 2020 study conducted by Keetha Kathirvel and Harwati Hashim investigated how audio-visual materials assist in improving speaking skills and the benefits of using audio-visual materials. The study's findings revealed that audio-visual materials contribute a lot to both teachers and students in language learning, especially in improving speaking skills. The use of audio-visual materials creates an interactive, fun and, most importantly, effective education experience for students. Audio-visual materials have become a great helper for teachers to teach students from home and for students to understand the lesson better.

In a study by Smith and Johnson (2018), it was found that students who were exposed to audio-visual materials performed better in oral proficiency tests compared to those who only had access to traditional classroom resources. A meta-analysis conducted by Lee et al. (2019) concluded that audio-visual aids have a significant positive effect on language learning outcomes, particularly in terms of speaking skills. Other studies have also supported these findings. For instance, a research study conducted by Garcia et al. (2020) found that incorporating audio-visual aids in language classrooms increased students' motivation and engagement, leading to improved language acquisition. Besides, a survey conducted by Chen and Wang (2017) showed that students who utilized audio-visual materials reported higher levels of enjoyment and satisfaction in their language learning experiences.

Other studies have also shown the positive impact of incorporating audio-visual aids in various educational settings. A study by Johnson et al. (2019) observed that using multimedia resources in science classrooms enhanced students' understanding of complex concepts and improved their overall academic performance. Smith and Brown (2018) revealed that incorporating audio-visual materials in history lessons increased students' retention of historical facts and improved their critical thinking skills. These studies collectively highlight the effectiveness of audio-visual aids in promoting active learning and enhancing students' educational experiences across different subjects. These findings suggest that incorporating audio-visual aids into language learning programs can be a valuable tool for improving oral skills.

However, it is important to note that the effectiveness of audio-visual aids may vary depending on individual learning styles and preferences. Some learners may respond better to visual stimuli, while others may benefit more from auditory cues. Therefore, language educators should strive to provide a diverse range of resources and activities that cater to different learning styles. In addition, the quality of audio-visual materials used should be high, as poor production or unclear audio can hinder comprehension and learning progress. By carefully selecting and integrating audio-visual aids into language learning curriculums, educators can create a more engaging and effective learning environment for their students.

Challenges and limitations identified in previous studies include the difficulty in finding audio-visual materials that align

with specific language learning objectives. Another challenge is the lack of accessibility to high-quality audio-visual resources, especially for students in remote areas or with limited internet access. Some studies have found that individual preferences or learning difficulties can make it challenging to find audio-visual aids that suit specific needs. However, by addressing these challenges and finding innovative solutions, educators can overcome these limitations and create an inclusive and effective language learning experience for all students.

5. METHODOLOGY

5.1 RESEARCH APPROACH AND DESIGN

The research design and approach for this study involve a mixed-methods approach, combining qualitative and quantitative data collection methods. The qualitative component consists of the researchers' observations to gather in-depth insights into the students' experiences and perceptions of the oral learning activities. This allows for a thorough understanding and evaluation of the effectiveness of these activities in improving oral communication skills through the use of audio-visual aids. The quantitative component involves administering a questionnaire to measure the students' progress in their oral communication abilities. This provides objective data to support the findings from the qualitative analysis.

Generally, this mixed-methods approach provides a comprehensive evaluation of using audio-visual aids in oral learning activities to improve students' oral communication skills. By combining qualitative and quantitative data, the researchers can gain a holistic understanding of the effectiveness of these aids and activities and identify any potential challenges. They can then suggest remedial solutions for improvement. This approach ensures that the findings are well-rounded and can be used to inform future teaching practices and curriculum development.

5.2 PARTICIPANTS

The participants of this study were randomly chosen. Fifty fourth-level students from the Department of English, Colleges of Arts and Education, at the University of Saba Region in Mareb were selected during the academic year 2022-2023.

5.3 DATA COLLECTION METHODS AND INSTRUMENTS

The researchers employed a mixed-methods approach to collect data for this study. First, data was collected through direct observation by the researchers. Then, a well-structured questionnaire was prepared and administered to the participants. The questionnaire was divided into 6 sections representing the different areas of investigation, and it consisted of 42 items. This questionnaire was designed to assess the effectiveness of audio-visual tools in improving students' speaking skills, as well as the challenges associated with using these tools. The purpose of distributing the questionnaire was to gather quantitative data on the participants' attitudes towards the activities and their perceived improvement in English language skills. The questionnaires provided numerical data that could be analyzed statistically, giving a clearer understanding of the overall effectiveness of the audio-visual tools and activities in enhancing the participants' oral skills. According to Burns (2010:81), questionnaires can provide three different categories of information: factual or demographic information (such as respondents' identities, backgrounds, and experiences),

behavioral information (what they currently do or have done in the past), and attitudinal information (attitudes, views, beliefs, interests, and values).

The purpose of the questionnaire was to determine how the students felt about using audio-visual aids (AVA) for teaching speaking. The questionnaire consisted of 40 questions and provided 5 possible response options: Strongly Agree (SA), Agree (A), Disagree (D), Strongly Disagree (SD). These questions were related to the students' attitudes towards learning to speak, their reactions to using AVA, and their opinions on the use of AVA. The variables and items of the questionnaire are listed in Table 3.1.

Table 3.1. Variables and Question Numbers in the Questionnaire.

No.	Variables Measured	Item Numbers
1	Curriculum	1 -8
2	Staff Teachers	9-17
3	Students	18-27
4	Atmosphere	28-32
5	Facilities	33-37
6	University	38-40

5.4 PROCEDURE

The researchers employed both quantitative and qualitative analysis to analyze the data. They utilized the findings from the respondents' questionnaire responses to identify the challenges and possibilities of using AVM to enhance students' speaking abilities. Microsoft Excel was used to examine the data once it was gathered and categorized. The subsequent stage involved presenting the data, followed by drawing conclusions from the results and communicating the information.

5.5 VALIDATION AND RELIABILITY

The validation procedure was completed by having three instructors from the relevant departments assess the instrument and verify the gathered data to ensure its validity. These instructors were given the opportunity to share their thoughts, observations, and suggestions regarding the study. Three criteria, namely relevance, correctness, and method, were utilized to validate the questionnaire items.

6. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The results are analyzed based on data obtained to evaluate the challenges of using audio-visual aids to improve students' oral skills in the light of the mediated theory of learning environment proposed by Feuerstein (1990 and 1991). Three sorts of information are revealed by the questionnaire's findings: factual or demographic (the respondents' identities, backgrounds, and experiences); behavioral (what they now do or did in the past); and attitudinally (beliefs, attitudes, views, interests, and values). However, the results can be discussed in the light of the proposed hypotheses and their validity.

Table 4.1 statistically shows the frequency and distribution of the participants' responses to the questionnaire on the challenges of audio-visual aids to improve students' speaking skills at the department of English, Faculties of Arts and Education, the University of Saba Region, Mareb, during the academic year 2022-2023. A total of 50 students were randomly selected (50%) from the Faculty of Education and (50%) from Faculty of Arts.

Table 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Total Responses

Items		Response Frequency & Percentage									
Section 1: Challenges Related to Curriculum.		SA		A		D		SD		I don't know	
1	The curriculum doesn't include audio- visual tasks.	27	54%	13	26%	7	14%	2	4%	1	2%
2	The audio- visual exercises given to Ss are not clear.	11	22%	17	34%	15	30%	4	8%	3	6%
3	The teaching materials don't include sufficient audio-visual tasks.	21	42%	12	24%	15	30%	2	4%	0	0%
4	The audio- visual tasks given to ss by the teachers aren't relevant to the curriculum	19	38%	21	42%	5	10%	5	10%	0	0%
5	We didn't Study Courses focus on audio – visual tasks	27	54%	15	30%	5	10%	3	6%	0	0%
6	We were not given audio- visual exercises during our study	29	58%	14	28%	6	12%	1	2%	0	0%
7	The accent of the oral tasks given wasn't familiar to ss.	14	28%	16	32%	9	18%	7	14%	4	8%
8	We have not been taught sufficient courses in speech sounds.	18	36%	16	32%	10	20%	5	10%	1	2%
Section 2: Challenges Related to Staff Teachers											
9	The oral skills staff teachers are not qualified enough to teach these skills	25	50%	10	20%	11	22%	2	4%	2	4%
10	The staff teachers don't have enough experience of teaching oral skills	23	46%	12	24%	12	24%	3	6%	0	0%
11	The staff teachers are not interested in using audio-visual tasks	23	46%	12	24%	10	20%	1	2%	4	8%
12	The staff teachers don't take care of oral skills exercises.	25	50%	10	20%	11	22%	4	8%	0	0%
13	The staff teachers lack the capacity to teach oral skills.	22	44%	17	34%	9	18%	2	4%	0	0%
14	They don't present audio – visual exercises properly in the classroom.	20	40%	15	30%	9	18%	4	8%	2	4%
15	They didn't teach us speech sounds in a good way.	26	52%	10	20%	9	18%	4	8%	1	2%
16	Teachers didn't give us a chance to speak or do oral presentation.	29	58%	11	22%	6	12%	4	8%	0	0%
17	Teachers speak more than students in the classroom.	24	48%	15	30%	9	18%	1	2%	1	2%
Section 3: Challenges Related to the Students											
18	Students are not interested in oral skills activities.	21	42%	12	24%	11	22%	5	10%	1	2%
19	Students don't pay attention during the listening tasks in the classroom.	19	38%	16	32%	5	10%	10	20%	0	0%
20	Students are not engaged with the teacher during the oral skills activities.	18	36%	11	22%	13	26%	7	14%	1	2%
21	Students make noise while the listening activities in the classroom.	28	56%	9	18%	2	4%	7	14%	4	8%
22	Students cannot use technology for many reasons.	16	32%	15	30%	10	20%	8	16%	1	2%
23	Students lack motivation to have audio – visual exercises.	22	44%	14	28%	8	16%	4	8%	2	4%
24	Students didn't give the teacher a chance to prepare oral skills activities.	26	52%	13	26%	6	12%	4	8%	1	2%
25	Students didn't react with the teacher during the oral skills exercises.	27	54%	14	28%	7	14%	2	4%	0	0%
26	Students didn't focus on self-improvement and practice at home.	19	38%	19	38%	3	6%	7	14%	2	4%
27	Students are not able to use computer professionally.	24	48%	10	20%	5	10%	2	4%	9	18%
Section 4: Challenges Related to Learning Atmosphere											
28	Students study in large classes which are not suitable for listening tasks.	19	38%	17	34%	9	18%	3	6%	2	4%
29	Our classes are noisy; therefore, we don't hear well	15	30%	19	38%	15	30%	1	2%	0	0%

	during the listening tasks.										
30	The location of our classroom is not suitable for studying oral skills.	21	42%	19	38%	5	10%	5	10%	0	0%
31	Students are not seated properly to listen comfortably.	19	38%	11	22%	9	18%	0	0%	11	22%
32	The crowded classroom doesn't enable us to a achieve any oral skills activities	20	40%	13	26%	8	16%	9	18%	0	0%
Section 5: Challenges Related to Facilities											
33	There is no language lap in the university.	25	50%	15	30%	9	18%	3	6%	2	4%
34	The department doesn't have audio-visual tools.	20	40%	11	22%	9	18%	7	14%	3	6%
35	Students didn't have their own audio- visual facilitator to practice at home.	27	54%	10	20%	3	6%	3	6%	7	14%
36	Students face financial challenges to get recorders and mp3 to practice.	19	38%	15	30%	9	18%	6	12%	1	2%
37	There is no power to achieve audio-visual tasks.	29	58%	9	18%	5	10%	5	10%	2	4%
Section 6: Challenges Related to the University											
38	University administration is not aware of the importance of audio – visual aids.	13	26%	17	34%	9	18%	8	16%	3	6%
39	University administration doesn't cooperate with the teachers to use audio – visual aids.	20	40%	14	28%	8	16%	6	12%	2	4%
40	The department of English doesn't follow teachers and present audio – visual aids	21	42%	15	30%	9	18%	5	10%	0	0%

Table 4.1 illustrates that there is a strong consensus among the 50 participants regarding the various challenges faced in the use of AVA. The highest degree of agreement among students (SA & A) is seen in items 6, 5, and 25 with frequencies of 43 (86%), 42 (84%), and 41 (82%) respectively, indicating the lack or inaccessibility of AVA. This is closely followed by items 1, 4, 16, and 33 with a total frequency of 40 (80%). On the other hand,

disagreement among participants is evident in items 20, 2, 22, 3, 33, and 38 with frequencies of 20 (40%), 19 (38%), 18 (36%), 17 (34%), and 17 (34%) respectively. These findings support the third hypothesis that Yemeni university students have low confidence in their speaking abilities and tend to be passive language speakers.

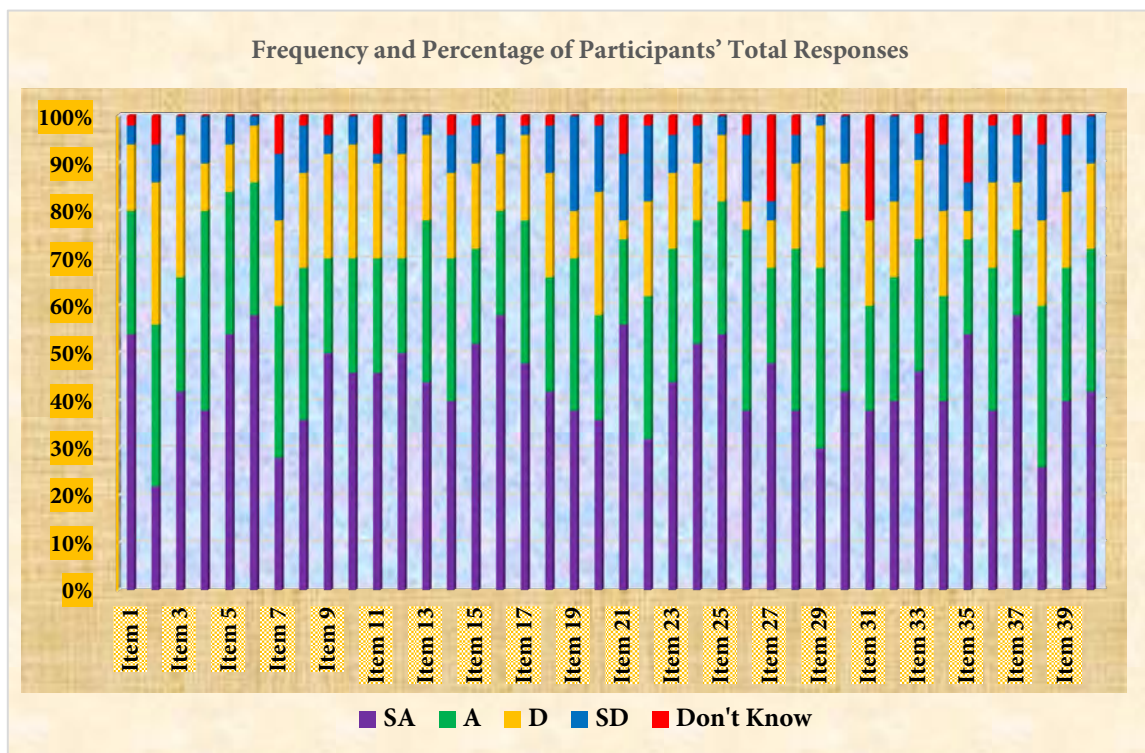


Figure 4.1: Frequency and Percentage of Participants' Total Responses

Significantly, it has been found that the main challenges are generally related to the inaccessibility and unaffordability of the AVA for learners. This is apparent from the participants'

responses as shown in the table. The results demonstrate that AVAs are inaccessible to the students. In their responses to questionnaire items no. 4, 5, 24, 28, and 30, the participants agree

that they have difficulties in using AVAs. They couldn't access them either because the curriculum isn't supported with exercises, tasks, and activities based on AVAs or because of students' interference, inappropriate classroom arrangement or atmosphere, or unequipped learning environment. Similarly, the results of their responses to questionnaire items no. 1, 6, 13, 16,

17, 33, and 37 show that the majority of the participants agree that AVAs aren't available or affordable either due to the deficiency/lack of equipment or tools or not being used by the staff teachers. Besides the personal and subjective cause, it can be the outcome of the lack of a motivating learning environment as indicated and demonstrated by the results in Tables 4.1-4.3.

Table 4.2: Distribution of participants' degree of responses to factors affecting their oral skills

TOTAL RESPONSES (2004)	SA		A		D		SD		DON'T KNOW	
SUM	871	43.60%	554	27.60%	335	16.70%	171	8.50%	73	3.60%
AVERAGE	21.775	21.775%	13.85	13.85%	8.375	8.375%	4.275	4.275%	1.825	1.825%
MIN.VALUE	11	22%	9	18%	2	4%	0	0%	0	0%
MAX.VALUE	29	58%	21	42%	15	30%	10	20%	11	22%

The results presented in Table 4.2 reveal that out of a total frequency of 2004 responses, 1425 (71.2%) say "Agree" to the questionnaire items, whereas only about 25.10% "Disagree". This

indicates that students' mediated learning environment has a great effect on the improvement of students' oral skills.

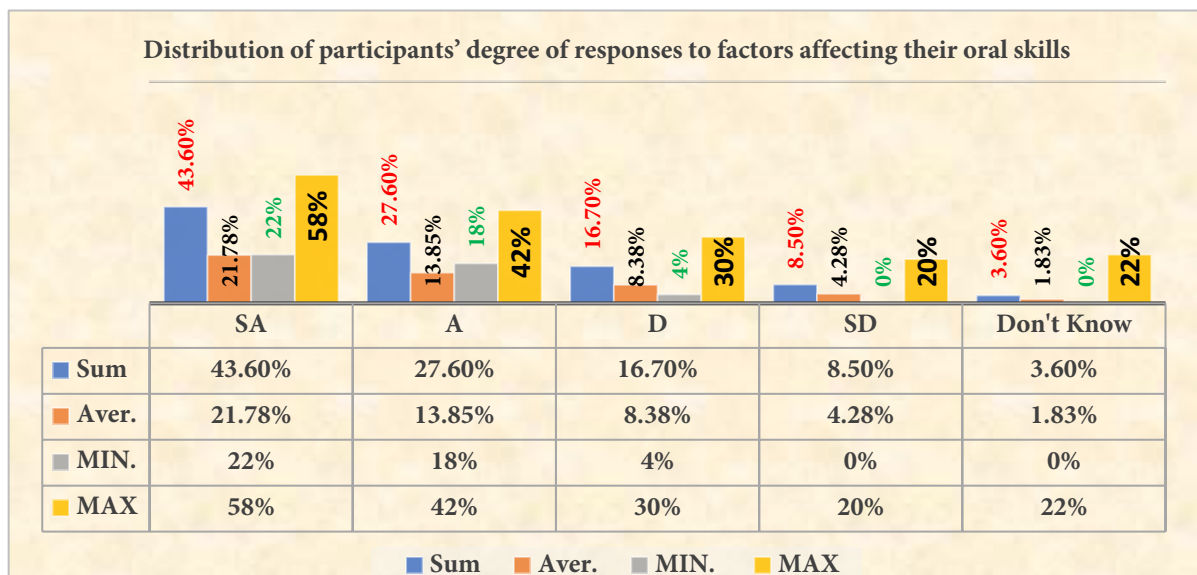


Figure 4.2: Distribution of participants' degree of responses to factors affecting their oral skills

Moreover, challenges related to Staff Teachers, Curriculum, Facility, and Students have been found to be the major hindrances for students when using AVA to improve their oral skills. These challenges have an average value of 37.11%, 36.25%,

36%, and 35%, respectively. Atmosphere and University rank last with respective average values of 34.6% and 33.3%. This supports the argument that Yemeni university teachers' methods and curriculum are still traditional and teacher-centered.

Table 4.3: Distribution of the signification of factors affecting the participants' oral skills

Challenge / Scale	Curriculum		Staff Teachers		Students		Atmosphere		Facilities	University		
	Total	Aver.	Total	Aver.	Total	Aver.	Total	Aver.	Total	Aver.	Total	Aver.
SA	166	20.75%	217	24.11%	220	22%	94	18.8%	120	24%	54	18.0%
A	124	15.50%	118	13%	133	13.3%	79	15.8%	60	12%	46	15.3%
SA+A	36.25%		37.11%		35%		34.6%		36%		33.3%	
D	72	9.0%	90	10%	77	7.7%	46	9.2%	35	7%	26	8.66%
SD	29	3.63%	32	3.55%	52	5.2%	18	3.6%	24	4.8%	19	6.33%
Don't Know	9	1.13%	14	1.55%	11	1.1%	13	2.6%	16	3.2%	5	1.66%

Figure 4.3: Distribution of the signification of factors affecting the participants' oral skills

Although they almost agree that AVA is not used properly and efficiently, the results reveal that participants provide great

factual and demographic information, as shown in their responses to items 11, 27, 31, and 35, with the highest frequency

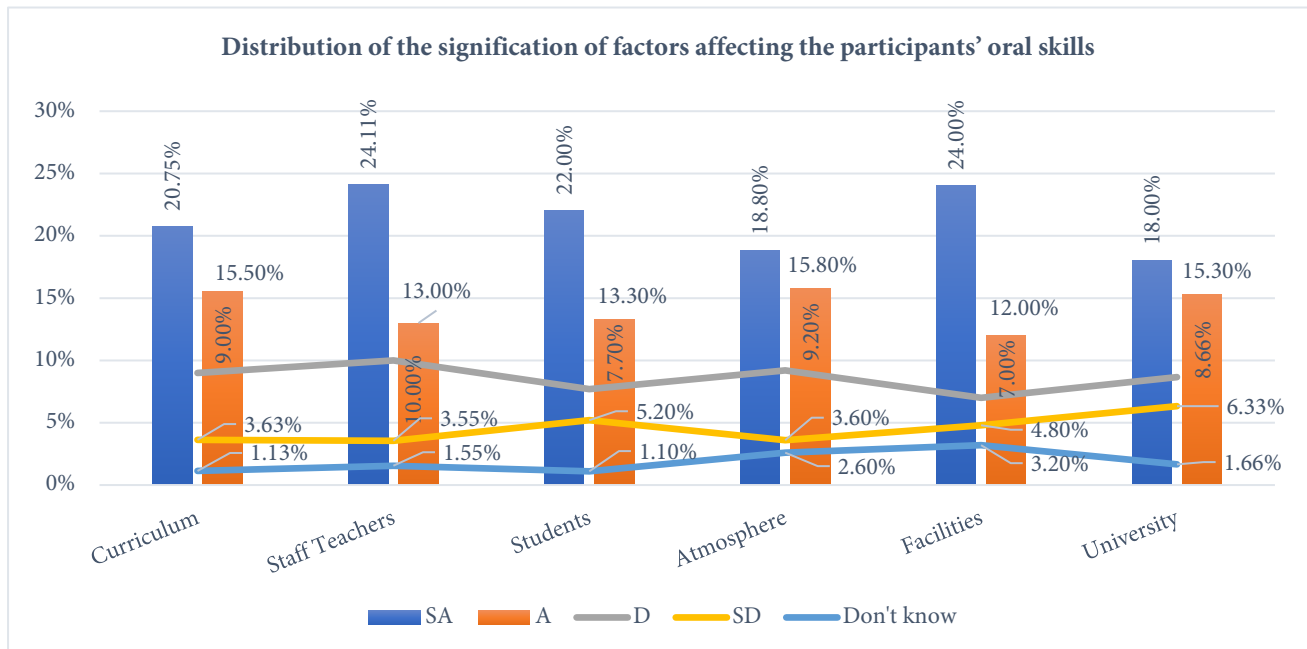
being "I Don't Know." There is also a consistent and symmetrical representation of interest in the research topic, with participants expressing their views from different perspectives. No conflicting or paradoxical responses have been found, as the participants

consistently focus on the problem from section 1 through section 6, advocating for AVA to be effectively affordable, accessible, and properly usable.

7. FINDINGS

The major findings of the study can be listed as follows:

1. The majority of the participants (an average of 71.2%) have been found to be aware of the importance of using AVA as effective tools to improve speaking and oral skills. They strongly agree or agree that there are challenges that impede the implementation of AVA.



2. Teacher's methods (average 37.11%) and current curriculum (average 36.25%) are still traditional and do not incorporate and utilize MLE efficiently to enhance students' oral practice.
3. Although they have attributed the challenges to the lack of availability of facilities (average 36%), they agree that students' attitudes and behavior (average 35%) are also significant factors and problematic in using AVA.
4. The main challenge in using mediated learning environments, such as AVA, to improve oral communication skills is the inaccessibility or unaffordability of AVA.
5. Medium or little awareness of the university and atmosphere has been observed as determining challenges to students' learning abilities (average 34.6% and 33.3% respectively).
6. Students' attitudes, feelings, and opinions have been highly recorded and energetically distributed equally throughout the questionnaire, which can be easily recognized through the closely approximate rates given to the significance of the affecting factors.

8. IMPLICATIONS

Despite the notable progress made by the English department at the University of Saba Region in overcoming the various challenges of using audio-visual aids for enhancing students' oral skills, some challenges still persist. Based on the study's findings, the main difficulties lie with teachers' methods, curriculum, and facilities. As a result, the following recommendations are presented:

1. To improve learning outcomes, there should be sufficient resources and technology infrastructure, access to high-quality audio-visual materials, and training and support for both students and instructors on how to use them effectively.
2. Workshops and seminars can be organized to familiarize instructors and students with the available resources and techniques for effective utilization.
3. Incorporating a mediated learning environment, such as the use of AVA, is a powerful tool that helps students master speaking skills.

9. SUGGESTIONS FOR FURTHER WORK

More studies are suggested to examine the efficiency of certain audio-visual tools, such as podcasts, videos, and online language learning platforms, in order to gain a better understanding of their impact on oral proficiency. By exploring the potential benefits of different audio-visual aids for learners at different levels of competence and in various learning environments, it may be possible to develop language learning programs that cater to each student's specific needs. Furthermore, researching the use of immersive and interactive audio-visual tools like virtual reality or augmented reality could uncover new opportunities for enhancing speaking skills in language acquisition.

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