THE ROLE OF POWERPOINT IN FOSTERING ORAL PRESENTATION SKILLS AMONG ENGLISH-MAJORED STUDENTS

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Abstract:

In an increasingly globalized world, effective oral presentation skills are essential for English-majored students, both academically and professionally. Furthermore, the integration of technology into education has become ubiquitous, and PowerPoint has emerged as a prominent tool for enhancing the effectiveness of oral presentations. This research study investigated the crucial role of PowerPoint in fostering oral presentation skills among English-majored students within the specific context of Van Hien University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. With a sample size of 80 English-majored students in two separate classes, this research employed a mixed-methods approach with quantitative surveys and qualitative interviews to comprehensively examine the influence of PowerPoint on the development of oral presentation competencies. The results indicate that while PowerPoint can enhance visual support and organization, its excessive use may detract from students' verbal communication skills. This paper also provides recommendations for educators on how to optimize its integration to benefit English-majored students' overall communication competence.

Keywords: PowerPoint, oral presentation, English-majored students, language education, communication proficiency

1. Introduction

There is no denying the significance of English in modern times. English is a prominent language spoken in many nations worldwide and is often used as a medium of communication at international conferences. Since English is one of the elements that helps Vietnam grow more connected to the outside world, teaching and studying the language has also become increasingly crucial in Vietnam in recent years.

The way that information technology has developed has an impact on many facets of education, including English learning and teaching. Particularly in Vietnam,

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PowerPoint has emerged as one of the most widely used educational technology. In order to engage an audience, Farkas (2006) claims that PowerPoint is a blend of text, images, explanations, and sophisticated features. With the development of technology, PowerPoint lectures have gained popularity in schools (Gier & Kreiner, 2009), and according to Sari (2014), PowerPoint is now the most extensively used presentation application worldwide. Additionally, students are intrigued by the frequent usage of PowerPoint tools, which have become the standard method of lecturing (Elliott & Gordon, 2006).

Drawing from prior studies, it can be stated that the goal of the studies on PowerPoint usage was to enhance English language acquisition; nevertheless, they were conducted in various settings and with distinct individuals. This research examines two distinct questions since it differs from all the other studies:

- What are the difficulties of using PowerPoint in oral presentations among English-majored students?
- How can PowerPoint help the students to foster oral presentation skills?

2. Literature review

2.1. Importance of oral presentation skills in language education
The act of presenting entails the transmission of information about a certain topic to a large group of people. The goal of this activity is to effectively convey ideas to an audience in a limited time period in order to achieve a certain goal (Lại *et al.*, 2021). An oral presentation may be defined as a brief discourse on a certain topic that aims to verbally transmit information and promote debate of ideas and opinions. The development of presenting abilities is a critical ability that requires purposeful cultivation and is likely to be useful in future professional situations (Peoples, 2015). Class presentations, according to Peoples, serve as a strategic technique of assessing students' grasp of a certain topic. This method of evaluating students focuses on their ability to express their knowledge, highlight their academic accomplishments, and shape their thoughts into a coherent oral presentation. It also provides instructors with a foundation for evaluating their student's future educational achievements.

2.2. Role of technology in language learning and teaching
Technology for education has practical applications in the areas of educational resources, instructional procedures, information transfer, content commitment, and interaction (Muhlise, 2017). Web-based technologies, mobile devices, computers, tablets, and other digital devices (Kirkwood & Price, 2014) can create an environment for cooperative learning (Marusic & Slisko, 2012) and provide learners with various methods to communicate with peers and instructors by providing access to engaging and multimedia content (Bayne, 2015).

Furthermore, technology in learning a language may assist build cross-cultural understanding, enhance language abilities, and raise motivation (Chun *et al.*, 2016). As

stated by Sabri *et al.* (2019), in order to make the process of learning successful, user-friendly apps and instruments that are suited for everybody are necessary.

2.3. PowerPoint in oral presentation
2.3.1. Definition of PowerPoint

Christensson (2008) defined PowerPoint as presentation software provided by Microsoft on his website. It is frequently utilized to create commercial presentations or instructional materials. According to Fisher (2003), PowerPoint is a form of presentation software that enables users to display colorful text and graphics with basic motion and music. He went on to say that PowerPoint was widespread and simple to use. There, PowerPoint was defined as employed in the classroom for the following purposes: initial instruction, practice and drilling, games, reviews, and testing. Finally, he discussed how many computers were needed as a result of the presence of PowerPoint presentations in the education setting.

2.3.2. Effects of PowerPoint on oral presentation skills

In the words of Lari (2014), technologically exposed learners will prefer to spend time in the classroom using technology such as PowerPoint presentations rather than traditional methods because the setting has changed and restarting traditional methods will not draw students' attention in having an interactive classroom. Students said that they acquire knowledge better when instructional materials are provided in the form of PowerPoint presentations because PowerPoint is more engaging and enables them to concentrate better (Abdellatif, 2015). Furthermore, Corbeil (2007) found that students who were introduced to PowerPoint presentations favored them over textbook presentations since students exhibited a great interest in focusing in class when visual effects were employed to emphasize significant issues. Furthermore, Nouri and Shahid (2005) analyzed semester-long student impressions of multimedia and found that media technology enhanced the class presentation and debate more entertaining. According to Nouri and Shahid (2005), learners in the PowerPoint part indicated greater comprehension skills during the educational presentation.

2.3.3. Challenges in using PowerPoint for oral presentations

There are a number of limitations to using PowerPoint. Firstly, PowerPoint slides might compel presenters to read the content on slides without offering any further opinion or explanation of the issue; slides can include irrelevant details, which may cause disorientation or even distract learners from the central information; and listeners may perceive and internalize the given input quietly (Muhlise, 2017). Secondly, Savoy *et al.* (2009) emphasized the detrimental impacts of 39 PowerPoint tutorials on knowledge retention, claiming that the unidirectional character of the discourse which accompanies most PowerPoint has degraded student-generated orality. Furthermore, Apperson and his colleagues (2008) determined that students demonstrated low performance as a consequence of PowerPoint instruction but a strong desire for being lectured via

PowerPoint. Last but not least, Xingeng and Jianxiang (2012) emphasized the downsides of PowerPoint, stating that presenters using PowerPoint can overlook interaction with the audience and make a lecture monologue because the strict order of slides could restrict their natural performance.

2.4. How to create an effective visual PowerPoint

2.4.1. Font and text

Font selection has an influence on how learners absorb information in addition to aesthetics. Song and Schwarz (2008), for example, gave learners instructions for an exercise schedule that were written in either an easy-to-read or difficult-to-read font. The researchers discovered that learners who read the instructions in a difficult-to-read font were less likely to incorporate the exercise into their daily routine and judged the activity to take longer to complete than those who read the identical instructions in a vibrant font. Other studies have indicated a similar effect with difficult-to-read materials (Oppenheimer & Frank, 2008). A badly selected font may have a detrimental influence on the impression of the information as well as the presenter. Even a big event like the discovery of the Higgs Boson may be ruined by an awful font. Also, the usage of Comic Sans in the presentation of the findings was mocked in the news. Font selection may seem insignificant, yet it may have a significant influence on a presentation.

Colors used to convey text and graphs should be thoroughly considered by presenters. Color blindness is prevalent. As a result, color schemes featuring red on green or blue on yellow should be avoided in presentations. It is generally suggested to put either white on black or black on white. While placing white writing on a dark backdrop does cause some bleeding, it has been found that students are still able to view the information properly. However, this does not mean that all slides should be black and white. Text boxes may be set over visuals and photos to provide variety and clarification to the presentations. While research on the best font has been inconsistent (Duarte, 2008), Mackiewicz (2007) advises Gill Sans as an appropriate option.

2.4.2. Animations

When PowerPoint initially came out, it was exciting to see words fly onto the screen, whirl about, explode into flames, and then fly off. Students are currently used to these effects, which are more distracting than anything else (Daffner, 2003). According to Daffner, there are occasions when animations are required, such as when an instructor chooses not to allow all of the text on a slide to be demonstrated to students all at once. While various points appearing on the screen at various times may be advantageous, there ought to be no irritating animations.

2.4.3. Videos and images

The selection of pictures or graphics is critical. Comprehension delivered verbally with suitable visuals maintains better than comprehension presented at the same time with both graphics and text (Mayer, 2009). This indicates that when lecturers address to visuals

on a slide rather than images plus repetitive text (i.e., bullet points that reinforce what the speaker is addressing), students recall more effectively. However, pictures and graphics must be picked with caution. The pictures on a slide must be consistent with the presenter's messages. Bartsch and Cobern (2003) stated that images that are unnecessary or incompatible with the presenter's vocal outputs might actually reduce student retention. Presenters should also avoid using pictures with low quality (less than 1600 1200 pixels), clipart, or photos with watermarks. A watermark on a blurry photograph is distracting and may seem amateurish. The same may be said with clip art; using clip art in a presentation is fairly obsolete, and it is sometimes considered as unprofessional. Luckily, there are currently a variety of tools accessible to help presenters select appropriate photographs.

Moreover, presentations should include videos. Using an internet connection to stream content might be dangerous and disrupt the presentation's flow. There are various websites where presenters may lawfully download video files. The presenters who are bothered about copyright concerns should consult with their institution's copyright expert.

3. Research methodology

3.1. Sample and sampling procedures

This research included 80 second-year English-majored participants from two distinct classrooms at Van Hien University in Ho Chi Minh City, Vietnam. The majority of those students have intermediate or higher English proficiency; practically, all courses at this institution include presenting as a fundamental aspect of students' learning development. Because this is the workplace where the researcher delivers courses, the researcher would want to gather data from the population at this institution. As a result, the researcher was able to complete the article more easily and efficiently.

Their presentation topics were closely related to the courses in their classes. Eventually, the participants were surveyed using a prepared questionnaire to get quantitative data, and five of them were asked to participate in an interview to gather qualitative data.

3.2. Research instruments
3.2.1. Questionnaire

The researcher employed a questionnaire with Likert scale items and closed-ended questions. The five-point scale was utilized for this study because of its popularity in reducing confusion, raising response rates, and improving the dependability of survey data (Jenkins & Taber, 1977). Closed-ended questions, suggested by Oppenheim (2001), offer several advantages, including time and cost savings, ease of processing, and use in testing hypotheses.

The questionnaire of this research possessed 12 items, each concentrating on the difficulties of using PowerPoint and how PowerPoint might assist students develop oral

presenting abilities. In addition, the questionnaire items in this research were provided on a Likert scale, with five answer possibilities ranging from "strongly disagree" to "strongly agree."

3.2.2. Interview

The investigator was able to gain thorough insights into the viewpoints of the chosen persons by using a semi-structured interview. The chosen instrument provides a number of benefits, including the capacity to focus on a specific issue and produce results quickly (Cohen *et al.*, 2000). This study's interview contained five open-ended questions aimed at collecting qualitative data. These questions were designed to get a thorough understanding of the participants' views and effectiveness in regard to the study.

3.3. Data collection procedures

In the beginning, the items in the questionnaire were piloted to a group of five students majoring in English who would not the participants in the research. This procedure was carried out in order to assess the clarity and logic of the provided questions. Following that, the questionnaire was administered and the interview was conducted in an official capacity.

According to the start of the survey, participants in two distinct classes were instructed to create a group presentation using the PowerPoint tool. Participants choose their presentation subjects depending on their compatibility with the topics presented in their class sessions. After an appointed period of preparation, the participants continued to give their presentations using PowerPoint on the next day of the class. Following the presentation, a questionnaire was sent to all participants, and the data was gathered by the researcher for quantitative analysis. Finally, a decision was taken in which five students were chosen at random to take part in an interview that became the source of the qualitative data.

3.4. Data analysis procedures

The author evaluated quantitative data collected from questionnaires provided to students using the statistical program SPSS. The findings of the surveys were thoroughly reviewed using descriptive statistics. As stated by Mackey and Gass (2005), descriptive statistics are a simple means for academics to get a better understanding of a database. Meanwhile, qualitative data was acquired by using information gained from semi-structured interviews with participants. The data collected in this study was thoroughly analyzed, with a particular emphasis on studying the problems in utilizing PowerPoint and how this tool helps students improve their oral presenting abilities.

4. Results and discussion

4.1. Results

To explore the challenges of using PowerPoint and how this tool improves the oral presenting abilities of English-majored students, quantitative data was acquired using surveys and qualitative data was gained through interviews.

Table 1: The difficulties of using PowerPoint
in oral presentation among English-majored students

	Items	N = 80	
		M	**S.D.**
1	I feel comfortable when using PowerPoint for my presentation in the class.	3.40	.880
2	I have faced technical problems as using PowerPoint for orally presenting.	3.43	.854
3	I get nervous while having to operate PowerPoint and to present at the same time.	3.59	.990
4	It takes me a great deal of time to prepare PowerPoint slides.	3.62	.946
5	I have encountered difficulties in interacting with the audience when using PowerPoint for oral presentations.	3.68	.776
6	Using PowerPoint makes me stray away from my presenting content.	3.39	.974
Total		**3.52**	**.903**

Note: M: mean; S.D.: standard deviation.

According to Table 1, the mean scores and standard deviations for each item indicating the challenges students confront with PowerPoint presentations are shown in Table 1. On a 5-point scale, the mean scores varied from 3.40 to 3.68, showing generally moderate levels of agreement with dealing with problems. "I have encountered difficulties in interacting with the audience when using PowerPoint for orally presenting" (M=3.68, SD=0.776) had the highest mean score. It demonstrates that many students struggle to engage and connect with their audiences during PowerPoint-assisted presentations. The item with the second highest mean score (M=3.62, SD=.946) depicts the stress from the amount of time that most students have to use to produce and design PowerPoint presentations. The item "I get nervous while having to operate PowerPoint and present at the same time" (M=3.59, SD=0.990) had the third highest mean. This demonstrates that for some students, the additional burden of navigating the presentation slides exacerbates their public speaking nervousness. Other negative aspects of PowerPoint, such as distraction or technical difficulties, were heavily discussed by the participants.

Table 2: How PowerPoint can help the students to foster oral presentation skills

Items		N = 80	
		M	**S.D.**
7	Using PowerPoint has enhanced my confidence in oral presentation.	3.65	.781
8	Visual aids from PowerPoint slides assist me in explaining and organize my speaking ideas better.	3.35	.873
9	Prepared slides of PowerPoint help me to present more fluently.	3.69	.686
10	PowerPoint encourages me to prepare more elaborately for my presentations.	3.80	.892
11	Interactive features of PowerPoint support me to engage the audience more effectively.	3.85	.887
12	Presenting by PowerPoint has enhanced my ability to maintain eye contact with the audience.	3.84	.818
Total		**3.70**	**.823**

Note: M: mean; S.D.: standard deviation

Table 2 displays that the mean scores varied from 3.35 to 3.85, with a total mean of 3.70 out of 5. This suggests that most participants believed that PowerPoint may help them improve their oral presenting skills. "PowerPoint encourages me to prepare more elaborately for my presentations" (M=3.80, SD=0.892) was the notable item. It also indicates that students believe PowerPoint drives them to work better on their presentations. "Interactive features of PowerPoint help me engage the audience more effectively" (M=3.85, SD=0.887) came in second. This demonstrates that students assume PowerPoint improves their capacity to actively engage and interact with the audience. Other significant benefits included higher confidence (M=3.65, SD=0.781) and the capacity to keep eye contact with viewers (M=3.84, SD=0.818). "Visual aids from PowerPoint slides assist me to explain and organize my speaking ideas better" (M=3.35, SD=0.873) scored the lowest but still good mean.

Five random participants were interviewed in semi-structured interviews to acquire a more thorough comprehension of their experiences using PowerPoint for oral presentations so that the qualitative data could be collected and analyzed to fortify the research questions. More importantly, the qualitative findings aligned with the quantitative results in this paper. In terms of the difficulties when utilizing PowerPoint, some students share their experiences as follows:

"When I used PowerPoint, I might not remember whether all the information is presented in the slide which I was talking about, so I did not tend to use a lot of effects. There are also a lot of functions in the PowerPoint and I was confused to remember them all, which can make me a little nervous when presenting live. I still do not have time and any tool to overcome this challenge." (Student 1)

"Normally, I spend about 2-3 hours to prepare the slides. I think it is quite time-consuming because I have to select the important information from the materials to show on the slides.

Also, I am not very familiar with all the functions in PowerPoint so it takes me a lot of time to find the appropriate features or buttons in the software. Sometimes, I have to google to find out how to set the effects I want." (Student 2)

Regarding the effectiveness of using PowerPoint in their presentations, the students expressed in their interviews that:

"I think I have had much more confidence when presenting with PowerPoint. If I do not use any visual aids, the audience will pay full attention to me, which can make me feel quite nervous and under pressure. I also have to improve my body language and eye contact if there is no slide. By contrast, the slides will help divert more attention, and it can act as a useful illustration so that the audiences can better understand what I am talking about." (Student 3)

"My brainstormed ideas are often spontaneous and disorganized. Therefore, I used PowerPoint slides to help me present more fluently to the audience. PowerPoint slides with suggested titles, subtitles, and picture places work as an outline for me to present the ideas. In addition, presenting via PowerPoint can provide the audience with visual aids, which helps the audience to better understand the ideas as they are conveyed in simple visuals." (Student 4)

"Guidance should be given in PowerPoint also. I suggest presenting the guidance via PowerPoint as an example of an effective presentation. General principles such as the dominance of images and graphs in PowerPoint; the clear font and elegant design should be applied in this example." (Student 5)

4.2. Discussion

The study's results shed light on the significance of PowerPoint in the development of oral presenting abilities among English majors. Both quantitative and qualitative data demonstrated that, although PowerPoint has specific benefits, it also has major drawbacks if utilized incorrectly.

Students cited challenges with interaction, preparation time, technological difficulties, and public speaking fear that was worsened by slide manipulation. This is consistent with earlier studies demonstrating how relying too much on slides may reduce audience engagement and natural voice delivery (Xingeng & Jianxiang, 2012; Savoy *et al.*, 2009). More advice on building presentations that improve rather than replace spoken information is clearly required.

However, the research found that PowerPoint provided advantages such as greater confidence, organization, elaboration in preparation, and audience concentration via visual aspects. These quantitative results were confirmed by interviews, with students stressing how slides helped organize presentations and maintain audience

interest. This adds to previous research proving technology's ability to improve motivation and learning when used wisely (Chun *et al.*, 2016; Lari, 2014).

5. Recommendations

To optimize the integration of PowerPoint in fostering oral presentation skills among English-majored students, it is recommended to maintain a balance between visual and verbal elements, enhance critical thinking skills alongside the use of PowerPoint, and provide training in visual design and layout. Meanwhile, practical recommendations include encouraging the effective use of multimedia, organizing practice sessions with feedback, and promoting audience interaction. Further research ideas involve conducting comparative studies across different educational settings and cultural contexts, as well as investigating the long-term effects of PowerPoint integration. It is also important to be mindful of potential social and cultural impacts, ensuring cultural sensitivity in presentation design and addressing the digital divide. By implementing these recommendations, educators can enhance English-majored students' overall communication competence, preparing them for academic and professional success.

6. Conclusion

This research examined PowerPoint's difficulties and how it may assist English-majored students deliver oral presentations. Quantitative and qualitative studies help optimize PowerPoint in language instruction. PowerPoint may improve organization and confidence, but audience interaction, time constraints, and public speaking stress can complicate its use. To maximize advantages and minimize problems, a balanced strategy is essential. The findings suggest instructors should teach clear, content-focused slide design to boost verbal communication. Apart from technology, students must learn presenting fluency. In conclusion, PowerPoint may help English-majored students improve their oral presentation skills when strategically combined with verbal aptitude development.

Conflict of Interest Statement
The authors declare no conflicts of interest.

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