

Pro and Cons Using Power Point Presentations with Students

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Abstract:

This paper has a twofold meaning, on one hand to emphasize the advantages brought by the using of Power Point presentations during English classes and on the other hand to raise the awareness upon the fact teaching based on slides does not always increase effective learning during English classes. Teaching in „the old school way” with students just sitting around and doing grammar exercises can be replaced by learning activities which are focused on „getting out” students of their shells. As with any technology, the way power Point is used will determine its pedagogical effectiveness.

Keywords: *advantages, disadvantages, effectiveness, presentations, new shaping etc.*

Rezumat:

Această lucrare are dublu scop: de pe o parte să scoată în evidență avantajele folosirii prezentărilor Power Point în timpul orelor de limba engleză și pe de cealaltă parte să atragă atenția asupra faptului că procesul de învățare bazat pe slide-uri nu crește învățarea eficientă în timpul orelor. Predarea în stil tradițional cu studenții care doar stau așezați și rezolvă sarcinile de lucru poate fi înlocuită cu activități de învățare care să-i scoată pe aceștia din zona lor de confort. Asemenea altor tipuri de predare bazate pe tehnologie felul în care sunt folosite prezentările Power-Point va juca un rol determinant în stabilirea eficacității acestora în context pedagogic.

Cuvinte cheie: *avantaje, dezavantaje, eficacitate, prezentări, o nouă formă*

1. Introduction

People are divided on the effectiveness of this ubiquitous presentation programme stating that power point presentations are wonderful, while others bemoan its pervasiveness. According to Van Jole³⁴ power point has a dubious reputation. It has been described as “the Viagra of the spoken word and a wonder pill for flabby lectures”.

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³⁴ Het PowerPoint denken. *FEM Ide Week*. Retrieved on February 23, 2006 from <http://www.2525.com/archive2/020928.html>



They can be an effective tool to present material in the classroom and encourage active student learning. For example, during a Geography class a single power point presentation could project images of different places and be completed with questions related to the topic, a chart of related statistics and maybe a miniquiz about what was just discussed that provides students with information that is visual, challenging and engaging. Using power point presentation for media literacy presentations, thesis statements or short stories are beneficial because different contexts are being brought during classes. They can be a „literature bath”, a starting point so that students should try to talk about different contexts to express themselves.

2. Mentioning advantages

As language teachers we use a variety of teaching aids to explain language meaning and construction so that to engage students in a topic or as a basis of a whole activity. Using power point presentations can help teachers to present information in multiple ways (a multimodal approach) through the projection of images, and video for the visual mode; sound and music for the auditive mode; text and writing prompts for both reading and writing mode; interactive slides that ask students to do something, e.g. in a group or a class activity. In the study by Szabo and Hastings³⁵ mention the fact that over 90% of students said that Power Point is more attention capturing than the traditional method of learning and 85% found “power point lectures are more interesting than traditional ones.” They concluded that” power point lectures, at least in some circumstances, mainly add to the entertainment rather than to the education of the students. Cyphert ³⁶ says that power point presentations can be paused for “a contemplative effect and they can serve as a springboard for conversation. The four major metaphors that influence teaching can be applied to power point presentations. They are described in Armenic and Craig³⁷as:

- the transfer- knowledge is a commodity to be transferred from one vessel to another.
- the shaping conception: teaching is usually directed to developing the minds of students.
- the travelling conception: the teacher leads students to new territories and by doing so he/she gains new perspectives.
- the growing conception; the teacher is a nurturer.

³⁵ Using It in the Undergraduate Classroom, Should we replace the blackboard with Power point?, p. 175-187.

³⁶ The Problems of Power Point. Visual Aid or Visual Rhetoric? Business Communication Quaterly, 67, p. 80-83.

³⁷ The Internet in Undergraduate Management Education, p.437-446.



In this section we will look at a variety of ways in which power point presentations can be helpful both for practical and for motivational reasons:

- **Drills:** useful for „drilling” grammar items, for cueing different sentences or practising vocabulary (sometimes these grammar or vocabulary drills can be boring just shown in a textbook).

- **Understanding:** an easy way of explaining a theoretical framework, a concept, etc.

- **Ornamentation:** if the slides are interesting they will appeal the class, having the power (at least for the more visually oriented) to engage students and spark their interest.

- **Prediction:** they can be useful for getting students to predict what is coming next in a lesson.

- **Discussion:** power point presentations can stimulate questions such as „What is it showing?” „How does it make you feel?” „What was the artist’s/photographer’s purpose in designing it in that way”, etc. We can also write a description of a picture we might then use to invent the conversation taking place between two people, as in a role-play activity.

- **ESL Warm -Up Activities** with Power Point Presentations ESL Warm -up activities with Power Point Presentations can be used during English classes in many ways: before the lesson begin, to break the ice before the beginning of the lesson, or even as time filler. Warmers bring energy to class and definitely fills the time with more learning when the lesson runs shorter than expected. Below there are some of the games that can be used during the English class with available Power Point templates to help you start.

- **Games (Communication)** Boggle Vocabulary Game -this game is based off the game boggle in which players attempt to find words in sequences of adjacent letters. The purpose of the game is to discover as many words as possible within a jumbled square of twenty-five randomly selected letters. A valid word can only be formed if each letter is contiguous (i.e. side by side, above or below, or on the diagonal) with the text and no letter position can be used more than once in any given word. It can be played individual, in pairs or in groups. *Vocabulary Bingo* -This is a quick no-prep vocabulary review game. Use the power point to show the winning pattern for the round. Students can make the grid and write vocabulary words on their notebook or you may use the Bingo card template.

Disappearing Words- In this simple ESL activity students are shown a word, a phrase or a sentence that disappears in two seconds! They need to remember what they saw and write them down on a mini-whiteboard or paper. The fastest team to show the correct answer wins the round.



Give Me 5-The teacher calls out a student to give five things on a given category in 30 seconds! This is a good activity for reviewing vocabulary.

Word Snake- Each team makes a line near a board, then one student per team comes to the white board and writes a word. The next student has to use the last letter of the word on the board to make another word. At the end of the game, the team with the longest word snake with all the words joined up wins the game.

Hidden Pictures-The teacher slowly removes the squares while students take their turns guessing what is the picture hidden behind it. The student who guesses the right word wins the game.

Hot Seat-One student will help the person in the „hot seat” to guess the secret image behind him/her before the time runs out. This is a classic way to develop word association and description.

Categories Guessing Game

This is like a Hot Seat game where the person in the hot seat has to guess what's behind them. This time, however, they need to guess as many words as they can from a chosen category.

Initials-Students are shown different pictures and they need to take the first letter from each picture to form the mystery word.

Visual Puzzles-In this simple language game students will guess the mystery word based on two or three images. The pictures are the clue to the puzzle so the slides must be able to identify them first, then combine the words to get the answer. For example, the pictures of an “ic” and the letter “t” will create the word “iced” “tea” or “water” with “fall” will be “waterfall”.

Anagrams- It is a word, a phrase or a name found by rearranging the letters of another word. In this game the students work in teams to identify the signed words of the 1. Anagrams 2. Jumbled words. You may choose categories like: Food, Sports, Movies, etc.

Teachers have always used pictures to facilitate learning. They can be adjusted to slides in Power Point. Pictures are extremely useful for a variety of communication activities, especially where they have a game-like feeling such as to describe and draw activities.

The teacher can divide a class into four groups (A,B,C,D) and give each group a different picture that shows a separate stage in a story. Once the members of the group have studied their picture we take it away. New groups are formed with four members each- one from group A, one from group B, and so on. By sharing the information they saw in their pictures, they have to work out what the story the pictures together are telling. Slides with pictures are useful for getting students to predict what is coming next in a lesson. This use of pictures is very powerful and has the advantage of engaging students in the following task.



Slides showing pictures can stimulate questions such as: „*What is it showing?*” „*How does it make you feel?*” „ *What’s the artist’s / photographer’s purpose in designing it?*” ” *Would you like to have it in your house?* „*How much would you pay for the picture?*” Storytelling ³⁸ has become a power point trend because both emotions and information need to be packaged in exciting stories to be persuasively communicated. To do this, core messages and content should be visualised with pictures or videos. Many presenters use flat design which favours simple, two-dimensional icons, graphics and diagrams. There is another useful function for visually enhancing presentations: the Morph transition³⁹. It can be used to create animations and transition effects in a presentation. The Zoom effect is great for presenting infographics and it can be used to create interactive slide overviews.

Power Point slides can be suitable for generating language cards or even posters.

In multinational classes, for example many students will enjoy providing short guides/ descriptions about their own countries

3. Mentioning some disadvantages

Using power point slides has contributed to the belief that expecting and requiring students to read books, attend classes, take notes or do assignments is unreasonable. Courses designed around slides therefore propagate the myth that students can become skilled and knowledgeable without working through dozens of books, hundreds of articles, etc. Latest reviews of research on Power Point found that while students liked Power Point better than overhead transparencies, Power Point did not increase learning. Research comparing teaching based on slides against other methods such as problem-based learning where students develop knowledge and skills by confronting realistic, challenging problems-predominantly supports alternative methods. Alley, Schreiber, Pamsdell and Muffo⁴⁰ suggest that power point slide design „affects audience retention” and they conclude that „succint sentence headlines are more effective”. A major pedagogical issue with power point presentations is that receivers are “passively engaged” rather than “actively engaged”⁴¹.

³⁸ Storytelling in power point is the process of translating your presentation’s argument into a compelling narrative.

³⁹ The Morph transition **allows you to animate smooth movement from one slide to the next**. You can apply the Morph transition to slides to create the appearance of movement in a wide range of things-text, shapes, pictures, SmartArt graphics, and WordArt.

⁴⁰ How the design of headlines in presentation slides affects audience retention, p. 233.

⁴¹ Jones, 2003.



Slides encourage instructors to present complex topics using bullet points, slogans, abstract figures and oversimplified tables with minimal evidence. They discourage deep analysis of complex situations because it is nearly impossible to present a complex, ambiguous situation on a slide. This gives students the illusion of clarity and understanding. There are a host of possible reasons for a lecture going wrong: a badly planned course, inadequate preparation, feeling uninspired on the day, disengaged students, a too large audience, a poorly designed auditorium. The physical face – to face lecture is potentially a complex and open event where the students, the readings, the lecturer and a case-based on a theoretical problem interact.

A power point presentation locks the lecture into a course and cuts off the possibility of improvisation and deviation, and the chance to adapt to student input without veering off course. To be interesting and relevant in a lecture teachers need to ask questions and experiment not by providing solutions and results. As it turns out power point presentations has not empowered academia. The basic problem is that a lecturer is not intended to be selling bullet point knowledge to students, rather they should be making the students encounter problems.

Conclusion

In the past three decades there has been a decisive shift in the media that have been used to communicate messages in education settings. We have gone from "chalk and talk" period to "flip-charts and Power Point slides". The teaching of English is in a constant state of flux with new theories and practices and materials erupting all over the world on an almost daily basis. In a world where certain values are immutable and where the qualities that make a good teacher may well be universal, change is nevertheless the lifeblood of this profession. Nowadays, we should be mindful that using power point presentations is having a serious effect on education Power point is not only a means of facilitating what teachers have always done but also, it is changing the way we engage with our students in the disciplines we profess.

All in all, we should also be aware of the culture customs and behaviour that are dragged along with power point presentations and how they affect the way we think about our students and our disciplines.



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