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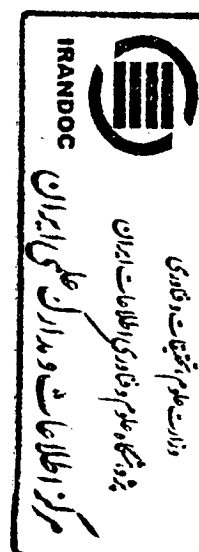
**The Impact of Power Point Presentations on Students' Learning
and Attitude: Writing in Focus**

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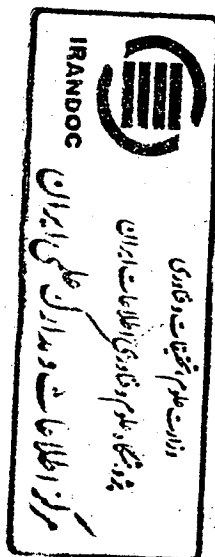
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Dedicated to:

*My caring, devoted parents for their
constant support throughout my whole
life*

and

*My kind-hearted husband for his
devotion and encouragement*

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Abstract

The current study is an attempt to investigate the impact of Power Point presentation on Iranian EFL learners' attitude and learning. The participants under investigation were 62 BA students of English Translation at the University of Isfahan. In an attempt to assess the effect of applying new technology to the class, a control and treatment group was determined. The teacher was the same for both groups. The presentation for the control group was supported by traditional, text-based style and the teacher relied on chalks and talk presentation. The presentation for the treatment group was supported by power point presentations which provided colorful, visual aids with graphics and animation.

Power Point presentation slides highlighted the features of good essay writing, e.g. how to develop an introduction, a thesis statement, a topic sentence, and a conclusion. Slides depicted a sample with enough explanation. A pretest (including grammar items, vocabulary items and reading comprehension items) was administered to determine both the students' proficiency levels and their writing skill. In the writing section of the test, a topic was assigned to them. At intervals, the instructor asked questions to assess their learning and asked them to write an essay based on what has been taught. At the end of the semester, a post test was administered. The post test included grammar items, vocabulary items and reading comprehension items. Regarding their attitude, a questionnaire was applied to the treatment group. The findings indicated that the Power Point presentation group outperformed the traditional teaching style in terms of their writing skill and interestingly they had a favorable attitude toward Power Point Presentation style.

Keywords: Power Point presentation, Attitude, Writing, Persian Learners of English

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Chapter One

Introduction

1 .1. Background to the Study

This chapter starts with a brief overview of the background of the study. It will then proceed to state the problem of the study, the purpose and significance of the study. After posing a number of questions, specific research questions and hypotheses are propounded. It will also include a short part concerning the definition of key terms.

Although many teaching methods are being discussed for university students, lecturing on a topic seems to have always been indispensable . While lecturing, in order to emphasize the basic points, a range of technology has been used, from blackboards and overhead projectors to white boards or videos.

Interestingly, in the recent years, electronic technologies have been used for presenting visual information. Programs used with these technologies are mostly Power Points. Nowadays, there are special classes in many universities and high schools, equipped with the

necessary technology to allow instructors to present relevant information to students through Power Point presentations

A Power Point presentation is a complex mixture of text, graphics, explanations, advanced software features and real-time interaction with the audience (Farks, 2008). Programs such as Power Point allow for the preparation of organized, visually attractive, easily remembered presentations for the new age audience students. PowerPoint is a computer tool for creating on-screen multimedia presentations or overhead transparencies. The program helps prepare an outline, slides, speaker's notes and handouts for the audience. Even though this tool was developed for business presentations, it has been found to be very useful in the language classroom (Bartch and Cobern 2003).

Stein (2006), Rocklin (1997), and Perry & Perry (1998) argued that Power Point supports the learning process of students and that students passively internalize the information they are taught.

Studies such as Perry & Perry (1998) and Stein (2006) have examined the effect of Power Point on motivation, self-efficacy and academic success of students. These studies have compared Power Point presentation style with traditional teaching style.

Different results have been reported in these studies. In their study on the effect of Power Point presentations on short-term and long-term memory, Nouri and Shahid (2005) found that the attitudes of students towards Power Point presentations were positive, and that Power Point presentations had an impact on short-term memory when designed appropriately; however, Power Point was found to have no impact on long-term memory of students.

In a study carried out in Turkey, it was also found that Power Point had a positive effect on academic successes of students (Akdag & Tok, 2004). In contrast, Rosenthal et al.(2003) in comparing classes using

Power Point presentations with teacher centered classes, found no statistically significant difference between the two methods according to students' academic success. Bartch and Coben (2003) found that Power Point had a negative effect on students' exam performances, although students stated that they learned more in the courses taught with Power Point. Succkind (2004) argued that the self-efficacy of students was high and their attitudes were positive in classes taught with Power Point presentations; however, Power Point had neither a positive nor a negative effect on students' academic success.

Another study done by Susskind (2009) also found that Power Point had a positive effect on self-efficacy and attitudes of students; however, it had no effect on students' academic success. Moreover, Savoy, Proctor, & Salvendy (2009) stated that Power Point presentations had a negative effect on information retention.

In other studies (Apperson, Laws, & Scepanisky, 2008; Frey and Birnbaum, 2002; Rickman & Grudzinski, 2000) students were asked to assess the Power Point presentations used in their classes in terms of multimedia principles and efficient use. In these types of studies both positive and negative opinions were stated. Students stated that they preferred key sentences to be written, and terms and definitions to be written in full text. Although students stated a preference for text that was supported by images, they wanted teachers to use slides for discussion purposes, and to avoid simply reading the text from the slides (Apperson, Laws & Scepanisky, 2008). Students stated that they wanted teachers to use Power Point to present the course content in a clearer and better organized way and to provide the opportunity, at any time, to review basic points that they may have been missed during the course (Frey and Brinbaum, 2002).

It is important to remember that Power Point presentations should be designed appropriately in order to be able to support learning.

Electronic presentation packages like Power Point allow the preparation of dynamic and innovative presentations, and make the presentation fun, as well as attracting the attention of audience. The most important factor for an effective presentation is “preparing the presentation with an appropriate design” (Holzel, 1997).

Stein (2006) stated that the number of viewers, the environment, and the title of the subject to be presented should be taken into consideration while preparing a Power Point presentation slide; each slide should not contain more than 25 words; if the speaker needs to add more text, this should be divided over several slides, or made available to audience in printed form.

In a study with 1500 students by Rickman & Grudzinski (2000), students chose Power Point as the most efficient information technology tool, but also stated that they were not pleased with poorly designed presentations and being taught a course very rapidly.

Seaman (1998) stated that when teachers presented their presentations visually and distribute the slides to students as written materials, students could follow a course more easily and did not have difficulty in taking note. It was reported that the colors used in the presentations attracted the attention of the students, allowing them to organize contents more easily. Seaman estimated allocated time for students to process information decreased when Power Point slides were utilized. The learning objective should be known when choosing the items to be shown in presentations. To sum up, Seaman argued that events are best presented in text form, and ideas are best presented with a sample.

The following sections illustrate the precise problem this thesis addresses, research questions, research hypotheses, and also the purpose and significance of the study.

1.2. Statement of the Problem

Microsoft Power Point use in education is very prevalent. It is believed that Power Point presentations can improve the efficiency of EFL teaching and learning. Preparing Power Point presentations can be an effective teaching and learning process which stimulates intellectual curiosity and moves students from passive role of recipients to the active role of builders of knowledge and provides a real audience for communication (Burns and Sinfield, 2004).

Technological advances have led to a boom in the use of multimedia presentations in college classrooms. Multimedia formats are popular with faculty and students alike. In fact, faculty and students think (i.e., perceive) that the use of multimedia presentations improves student learning (Hogarty, Lang, and Kromrey, 2003).

While the use of PowerPoint and multimedia in the classroom has significantly increased globally in recent years (Connor and Wong, 2004; Bartsch and Cobern, 2003), few studies have systematically investigated its impact on student learning and attitudes.

Rebele et al (1998) note that little research exists regarding integration of technology in the curriculum, and suggests that researchers should examine whether technology improves learning. Further, Rebele et al. (1998) recommend "researchers should explore how educational technology can contribute to the continuing evolution and improvement of education" (p.207).

A study examining the relationship between multimedia and students' learning and attitudes was conducted by Butler and Mautz (1996) in a laboratory experiment conducted during a 30-minute time period. Butler and Mautz (1996) found an interaction between the effects of the multimedia presentation and the students' preferred class representation style (i.e., whether the student was considered a "verbal" or imaginal" learner).

Teachers have been using computers in EFL courses for many years and have employed a variety of computer applications and methodologies. Some agree with Murphy-Judy (1997) that "the readers whose foreign language education is improving now should not be trained in defunct literacy practices, but rather should be prepared to function in this new world".

Literacy today is increasingly electronic and telecommunicational. Many presentation software applications are in use. In the Division of Foreign Languages, Microsoft Power Points may be used.

PowerPoint presentations incorporate graphics, animation, and color imagery. Reynolds and Baker (1987) found that presenting materials on a computer increased attention and learning, and learning increased as attention increased.

In spite of the potentials of the Power Point presentations, to the best of researcher's knowledge, there have been very few empirical studies examining the impacts of Power Point presentations on EFL students' learning and attitude. This study aims to clarify the impact of Power Point presentations on students' learning and attitudes.

1.3. Research Questions and Hypotheses

The present study pursues the investigation of the following two research questions with rationales for each question which are theoretically grounded in the literature review .

RQI: Is there any significant difference between traditional style of teaching writing and PowerPoint presentation style in the learners' performance on the course (Writing skill and cohesive features)?

RQII: Does Power Point presentation of the course promote significantly the attitude of the learners toward their instruction?