

The use of PowerPoint in teaching and learning English in the University of Education, Winneba

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Abstract

In today's world, technology is evident almost everywhere; in our homes, in churches, on streets, in hospitals, at construction sites and in financial institutions. The use of technology extends to the school as an institution and the classroom as an avenue for teaching and learning. One such use of technology is demonstrated in the mode of lesson delivery. This research sought to examine how English lessons are presented. The paper specifically explored the use and impact of PowerPoint as a tool for teaching English in the University of Education, Winneba. The sample for the study was 732. Results from the study generally show that students desire and expect the use of PowerPoint in teaching. Finding show PowerPoint impacts positively on teaching and learning but was barely used in teaching English courses. School authorities are therefore implored to provide adequate modern gadgets and training in the appropriate use of PowerPoint in teaching and learning for lecturers.

Key Words: PowerPoint; Traditional; Lecture; English; Presentation; Impact; Teaching; Learning

Introduction

The means of lesson delivery by teachers in the teaching process to facilitate learning has been the concern of many people including students. The discussion has been on the appropriate mode of presenting materials in the classroom. Over several decades, the Traditional lecture has been used as a means of presenting information. The mode of lecturer uses 'talking' with the chalk when needed and therefore referred to as 'chalk and talk'. Today, the 'chalk and talk' is still the most common mode of presenting lessons. It uses no electronic technology. With the advent of technology and the fast pace at which technology is taking control over the world, PowerPoint, has become a popular tool used in the (modern) classroom setting in most parts of the world and gradually making way into the Ghanaian classroom. It is basically a presentation program used in creating, editing, formatting, and printing of documents in slides.

Parker (2001) traces the advent of PowerPoint to Whitfield Diffie, a computer scientist and his friend Bob Gaskins who visualised a graphics program in producing and presenting materials, in 1981. Dennis Austine, a software developer later joined Gaskin to develop a black and white slide ware program which, later in 1984, became PowerPoint. PowerPoint is an application program of presentation bundled in Microsoft Office (El-Ikhan, 2010) which is basically made up of slides and allows the user to present messages in points. Information prepared in PowerPoint is mostly projected for larger audience using a Liquid Crystal Display (LCD) projector. Since its inception, PowerPoint has become the most sought after visual aid medium of communication in businesses, law, at social events such as weddings, religious services, especially church service. It is also used in teaching and learning but one wonders if the presentation of lessons in PowerPoint is really necessary in today's classroom.

According to Croxton (2016), there are currently over 50 presentation software with enhanced slides in many settings. Few of these software which are wildly used over the world are Focusky, Projekt, Articulate Presenter,

Powtoon, Slide Dog, Slideshark, ClearSlide (SlideRocket), Prezi (Personal). PowerPoint however remains the commonest presentation software. It is now one of the most widely applied software in classroom teaching. This presentation is regarded a good instructional medium and a key to enhancing effective teaching and learning. This is because, PowerPoint gives the user the opportunity to incorporate visual and auditory aspects to a presentation. It provides the opportunity to include multimedia components such as videos, charts, sounds, animations, and graphics in presenting a lesson in a more structured and engaging and interesting (Susskind, 2005) manner. According to Susskind (2005), PowerPoint aids the explanations of complex illustrations, helps to keep students' interest and attention on the presentation, and by far improves students learning. PowerPoint, however, reduces the analytical quality of a presentation, limits the amount of details that can be presented, and often weakens verbal and spatial thinking (Shock, 2009). It is often a teacher-centred instructional tool that nourishes teacher controlled lectures hence may be considered as appropriate for use in the university setting. In order to achieve the best results with PowerPoint therefore, the presenter must ensure that the slides are simple and its tendency of distracting students is less. The text should also be brief (Reynolds, 2010; McPhee: 2012) and guarantee readability. The user must also ensure that the fonts are clear, slide transition and animation are consistent, and handout accompanies the presentation (Harrington & Carr, 2010). Tompson (2009) added that, supplementary audio-visual aids and handouts can liven up even the most boring presentations, as long as they are not overdone. The handouts can be used to provide (1) an outline of key points so that the students can add their own notes, (2) additional material which might not be cover over the time and (3) list of additional sources of information such as a bibliography or useful names and addresses.

PowerPoint presentation has many advantages over the traditional "chalk-and-talk" lecture. However, PowerPoint is not almighty. Cornwell (2014) reveals that while some studies have found that students learn more in traditional non-PowerPoint lectures, most studies have found that PowerPoint has no measurable influence on course performance. It has minimal effect on grades on short-term or long-term memory of lecture content or on recall of content. Perhaps, PowerPoint's major strength is its ability to assist students to retain complex graphics, animation and figures but the traditional lecture method can be used as well (Shock, 2009). According to Shock, concepts are best conveyed through dialogue or verbal explanation. In view of this traditional presentation appears to be the best. Shock's (2009) findings indicate higher mean scores for graphic retention for PowerPoint (25%) than traditional (23%) but Cornwell (2014) reveals PowerPoint has no impact on learning yet students like it and the way it is used affects learning.

Researches over the years show conflicting findings about PowerPoint effectiveness in improving student learning. Nouri and Shahid(2005) assert that students perceive higher understanding of materials presented in PowerPoint than those materials presented in the Traditional lecture. In support of this assertion, Gier and Kreiner (2009) in their study on the effectiveness of PowerPoint in a psychology class conclude that when students were actively engaged in the class using PowerPoint presentation, information retention increased. In contrast to these findings however, Apperson, Laws and Scepanzky (2006) found little effects of PowerPoint on students' academic achievement. Savoy, Proctor and Salvendy (2009) also reveal that there was no evidence that PowerPoint can enhance students' performance more than the traditional lectures. Xingeng and Jianxiang (2012) conducted a questionnaire survey on students in the major college of China. The survey revealed that 28.3% of participants think PowerPoint was not helpful for their learning. In another question, 48.3% of participants think PowerPoint was not helpful for learning. Most of the participants (81.7%) prefer a blend of PowerPoint presentation with "chalk-and-talk" lectures. This is because 29.2% of students could not concentrate and easily felt tired. Again, 25% of the respondents felt PowerPoint presentations were dull and not interesting and 20.8% were of the opinion that PowerPoint presentations were monotonous and key points were not stressed. Also, 16.7% of participants see PowerPoint to contain too much information and too fast in presenting and 8.3% believe PowerPoint presentation lacks logicity.

In the English language context, Fedission (2007) cited in Zouar (2015), Nguyen-Anh (2011), Rajabi and Ketabi (2012), and Zouar (2015) conducted studies relating to the use of PowerPoint in teaching in English Language class. Fedission (2007) examined students' knowledge on sentences and nouns in an attempt to find out how the

use of technological aids in the classroom increases student achievement. Findings reveal that the use of PowerPoint increases students' test scores especially students with learning difficulties and also the low achievers. Nguyen Anh (2011) studied students' attitude toward the use of PowerPoint presentations in teaching English language course in Malaysia and found that students show positive attitude towards PowerPoint presentations over the traditional lecture. Findings further revealed a positive attitude towards PowerPoint lectures as well as the presenters. In the work, 'the effects of preparing and presenting PowerPoint in English as Foreign Language (EFL) settings on students' use of cohesive devices', Rajab and Ketabi (2012) found that preparing and presenting PowerPoint slides have a major impact on students' writing achievements and their correct use of cohesive devices. This finding was evident in the result that indicated that students taught using PowerPoint performed better than those taught using the traditional lecture. Finally, Zouar (2015) explored students' perceptions of using PowerPoint in enhancing their active participation in the EFL classroom. The study was an action research conducted in Morocco with findings positioning PowerPoint as a good instructional tool if the teacher uses it well.

The studies conducted on the subject motivated the researcher to situate the current study in the Ghanaian setting. This study therefore explored the impact of PowerPoint for teaching English in the University of Education, Winneba.

Research objectives

This study was carried out to find out the extent to which PowerPoint is used as a teaching and learning tool in English courses in specific and other courses in general. It also explored the impact the use of PowerPoint has in the teaching and learning of English language in the university. Finally, the study sought to gather students' opinions on PowerPoint use during English course sessions and university education in general.

Research Questions

The following research questions guided the research:

1. To what extent is PowerPoint used in lesson presentation in teaching English in the Department of Basic Education?
2. Has PowerPoint any impact on English language course teaching and learning?
3. What are students' opinion on the use of PowerPoint in the teaching and learning of English in the Department of Basic Education?

Methodology

Design

This is research aimed at exploring the use of PowerPoint in teaching and learning English in the University of Education, Winneba. The triangulation design (Creswell & Plano Clark, 2007) under the mixed methods was used for the study. This design is usually used to obtain information concerning the current status of a phenomenon and to describe "what exists" with respect to variables or conditions in a situation (Rosenbaum, 2010). It helps provide answers to the questions of who, what, when, where, and how associated with a particular research problem (Cohen, Morrison & Manion, 2011). This design was chosen because it is appropriate for the research objectives of the current study as the aim of the study was not to infer cause and effect but to describe the nature of the research topic (Brink & Wood, 1998). The study was conducted in the Department of Basic Education in the University of Education, Winneba. This department, with the average student population of 1,300, is the largest in one of the largest faculties in the university. It comprises of students of four levels. These are Level 100, Level 200, Level 300 and Level 400. The researcher is a lecturer in this department and hence its choice. She spoke to the students and sought their consent and willingness to participate in the study.

Sampling technique and sample size.

Purposive sampling was used to select the participants for the study because the researcher had interest in them. Data for the study were collected from 724 students in the department. This sample size comprised students of

two out of the four levels namely Level 200 and Level 300. These levels were chosen because the researcher was their instructor for at least a course as at the time of collecting the data. All participants are fluent in English and use it as a second language. Thus, one of the reasons university students were chosen is that they have been receiving tuition in English courses for at least thirteen years. Again, irrespective of participants' background, it was expected of them to have experienced the use of both PowerPoint and the traditional 'chalk and talk' method in lesson delivery and thus, they were in a better position to discuss the topic. Again, these students were more independent and had more exposure with the use of both traditional and PowerPoint presentations than those in the senior high, junior high and primary schools.

Data collection strategy

Three strategies were used in collecting data. These strategies are described as follows.

Questionnaires

Questionnaires were administered to 750 students of the department after seeking their consent. These participants comprised 386 Level 200 and 364 Level 300 students out of which 724 were analysed for use. These questionnaires were administered in the 10th week and collected in the 11th week of the second semester.

Testing

Level 200 students were also involved in classroom teaching, learning and testing in the course, 'Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology'. This course was taught by the researcher. The very first lecture of the course took place in the largest lecture hall at the north campus known as at the old pavilion with all the students under the same roof. Students were then split into two groups, A and B. Students' ID numbers were used in grouping them such that the first 190 students constituted Group A and the remaining number of students made up Group B. The lecturer met each group once in a week for eight weeks. After the group teaching, the groups were merged for the summary and concluding part of the course.

Test 1: English Phonetics

Both groups discussed topics in "English Phonetics" for a period of four weeks. Topics discussed included "Phonetics and its branches, Speech and the organs of speech, English speech sounds, and English Vowels and Consonants". The instructor ensured, to a very large extent, that same topics, explanations and examples were given. The only difference between the two groups was the mode of presentations, students' questions and lecturer's responses to these questions. The presentations for Group A were done in the Traditional 'chalk and talk' method while that of Group B were presented using PowerPoint. The presentations took place in lecture halls in the Faculty of Educational Studies (FES). After the four weeks of teaching and learning in English Phonetics, a twenty multiple-choice test item was administered to both groups in the form of a quiz. The same set of test items were administered to both groups under the same examination condition. The quiz was taken at the same time by both groups at FES 302, 308, 312 and 318 as each group was further divided into two.

Test 2: English Phonology

Topics in "English Phonology" were discussed for four subsequent sections. "English Phonemes, Consonant Clusters, English Syllable Structure: Restrictions and Problems, Stress and Intonation" were the topics discussed. This time, teaching and learning was done using PowerPoint for Group A. Group B had its presentations done in the traditional lecture mode. Each group's presentation took place at the FES and lasted for four weeks. The instructor once again, put measures in place to ensure uniformity in presentation and in the information given to the students during lectures. Again, twenty multiple choice test items on "English Phonology" were administered to the students after the four sessions at the FES.

Semi- structured interviews

Eight students were also engaged in focus group interviews. These students were the course representatives of each of the two levels (Levels 200 and Level 400). Depending on the course and venue allocation, a class (Level) in the department may be divided into two, three, four, five or six groups but generally, each of the two

levels were divided into two groups. Each group had two course representatives thereby making a total of eight course representatives for the two levels. Two focus groups were raised with each comprising the course representatives of each of the two levels. Each interview lasted for between fifty and eighty minutes. The use of the above data collection strategies is aimed at ensuring the credibility of the study.

Data analysis and presentation

Data collected were organised using frequencies and percentages in tables and chart as well as verbatim quotes from the interviews. The researcher created themes based on her own interpretation and judgement especially where responses were regarded similar.

Findings and discussion

Bio-Data

Table 1: Demographic characteristics by gender of respondents

Gender	Frequency	Percentage %
Female	244	33.7
Male	480	66.3
Total	724	100

Table 1 presents the demographic characteristics of respondents by gender. 244 (33.7%) respondents were females while 480 (66.3%) of same were males representing the higher percentage. This data show a significant difference between the number of males and females.

Table 2: Demographic characteristics by current age of respondents

Current age	Frequency	Percentage %
17-26	548	75.7
27-36	162	22.4
37-46	14	1.9
Total	724	100

Table 2 shows the age range of the respondents used in the study. 548 (75.7%) of the respondents were between the ages of 17-26 years while 162 (22.4%) were between the ages of 27-36 years. 14 (1.9%) were between the ages of 37-46 years. This indicates that majority of the respondents who are currently in school and undergoing training to teach in the basic schools were between 17-26 years. This shows that majority of the respondents were between 17 and 26 years.

Table 3: Demographic characteristics by level of respondents

Level	Frequency	Percentage %
200	380	52.5
300	344	47.5
Total	724	100

Table 3 describes the demographic characteristics of respondents by their level in the university. The table indicates that 380 (52.5%) were in level 200 and 344 (47.5%) represent the Level 200 respondents. Majority of the respondents, representing 380 (52.5%), were in level 200.

Research Question 1: To what extent is PowerPoint used in lesson presentation in teaching English in the Department of Basic Education?

Table 4: English course(s) presented in PowerPoint

No. of English courses	Frequency	Percentage %
0	6	0.8
1	374	51.6
2	322	44.5
3	18	2.5
4	4	0.6
5	0	0
6	0	0
Total	724	100

Table 4 shows English courses presented in PowerPoint. 6 (0.8%) of the respondents indicated none of the English courses in the department was presented in PowerPoint while 374 students representing 51.6% of the respondents claim one of the English courses was presented in PowerPoint. This indicates that 718 of the respondents representing 99.2% of the sample have read at least one English course that was presented in PowerPoint. The department had a total of six (6) English and English related courses. Two different courses were taken in each of the first three years (Level 100-300) making a total of the six courses. In the final year (Level 400), no English course was taken. The presentations in Tables 3 and 6 therefore show that PowerPoint was used in teaching one out of the four English courses at the end of Level 200 and two out of the six courses at the end of Level 400 (at the time of collecting data).

Table 5: Common mode of instruction delivery in English Language courses

Method	Frequency	Percentage %
PowerPoint	107	14.8
Traditional	617	85.2
Total	724	100

Table 5 describes the methods of instruction delivery during lectures in English Language courses since students joined the department. Majority of the respondents representing 617 (85.2%) claim that Traditional lecture was the major method of instruction delivery and 107 (14.8%) of the respondents claim that PowerPoint was the major method of instruction delivery during lectures in English Language courses.

The analysis from Tables 6 and 7 indicate that the Traditional Method was the more common means of presenting English Language lessons in the department. Out of the four English courses expected to be taken by the Level 200's, three were presented in Traditional lecture mode. Four out of the six English courses taken by the Level 300's were also presented in the Traditional lecture mode.

Table 6: Preferred mode of instruction in English language courses

Method	No. of Respondents	Percentage (%)
Traditional	59	8.1
PowerPoint	665	91.9
Total	724	100

Table 6 presents students' preferred mode of instruction in the English language classroom. The analysis indicates that a total of 665 out of the 724 respondents desired the use of PowerPoint as opposed to 59 students representing 8.1% of the sample expressing interest in the Traditional lecture mode of presenting materials in the English language classroom. This shows students' desire in the use of PowerPoint for teaching and learning in the department. This desire is shown in the number of respondents who although have experienced both

methods in teaching and learning, opted for the use of PowerPoint as a teaching tool for English language. These respondents are not age or gender specific. For instance, a total of 665 respondents prefer the use of PowerPoint in the teaching and learning English in the department and this is higher than the 480 male respondents. Again, the 665 respondents are higher than the 548 respondents who fall within the age range of 17-26 which is the highest in that category.

The discussions in this section suggest that at most 33.33% of English courses were presented using PowerPoint. By this I can conclude that PowerPoint is barely used in teaching English courses. In the same manner, PowerPoint is not a popular means of lesson delivery in the department.

Research Question 2: Has PowerPoint any impact on English language course teaching and learning?

Test scores on multiple choice tests

This section presents and discusses the test scores on the two multiple choice questions administered to students after the use of both PowerPoint and the Traditional lecture in lesson presentation. Test 1 is presented first followed by Test 2.

Test 1: English Phonetics

Table 7: Test 1 results

Test 1 Results	No.	Absent	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation
Group A-Traditional	189	1	11	12.1	10.3
Group B-PowerPoint	194	2	15	15.4	11.0

From the twenty multiple choice test items on English Phonetics administered to students it was realised that out of the twenty test items, both groups had the lowest score of 6. However, Group A who were lectured using the Traditional method had the highest score of 18 and Group B had 20 as its highest score. Both groups recorded at least one student absent.

Table 7 presents the results obtained after administering the first test to determine the impact of PowerPoint presentations on the teaching of English language courses as against that of the Traditional method of lesson delivery. Results collected from the test shows a mean and standard deviation of 12.1 and 10.3 respectively for students in Group A. Group B recorded a mean score and standard deviation of 15.4 and 11.0 respectively. This shows that, students in Group B who received instruction through PowerPoint presentations performed better than students in Group A who received instruction through the traditional medium. This is confirmed by the fact that the mean of Group B is higher than that of Group A. Table 10 also reveals that the modal mark after conducting the test for group A was 11 while that of group B was 15. This clearly shows that a lot of students who received instruction through PowerPoint presentations obtained higher marks than those who obtained instructions through the traditional medium.

Test 2: English Phonology

Table 8: Test 2 results

Test 2 Results	No.	Absent	Mode	Mean	Std. Deviation
Group A-PowerPoint	190	-	14	14.7	10.8
Group B-Traditional	192	4	12	13.2	9.7

Table 8 presents the results obtained after administering the Test 2 to determine the impact of PowerPoint presentations on the teaching of English language courses as against that of the Traditional method of lesson delivery. Results collected from the test showed a mean and standard deviation of 14.7 and 10.8 respectively for students in Group A. The mean score and standard deviation of 13.2 and 9.7 respectively were recorded for students in Group B. This shows that, students in Group A who now received instruction through PowerPoint

presentations performed better than students in Group B who received instruction through the Traditional medium. Again, this is confirmed by the fact that they recorded higher mean scores. This coincides with Shock's (2009) finding that indicated higher mean scores for graphic retention for PowerPoint and contrasts Cornwell's (2014) finding that PowerPoint has minimal effect on grades on short-term or long-term memory of lecture content or on recall of content.

Also, Table 8 recorded an increase in the modal mark for Group A, who previously received instruction through the Traditional method and now received instruction through PowerPoint presentation, from 11 to 14. The table also saw a decrease in the modal mark of Group B, who previously were lectured using PowerPoint and now received instructions through the traditional medium, from 15 to 12. These findings again show that PowerPoint increased students' test scores while the Traditional lecture decreased test score. A clearer comparison of the mean scores obtained by students from test 1 and 2 are presented in the following figure.

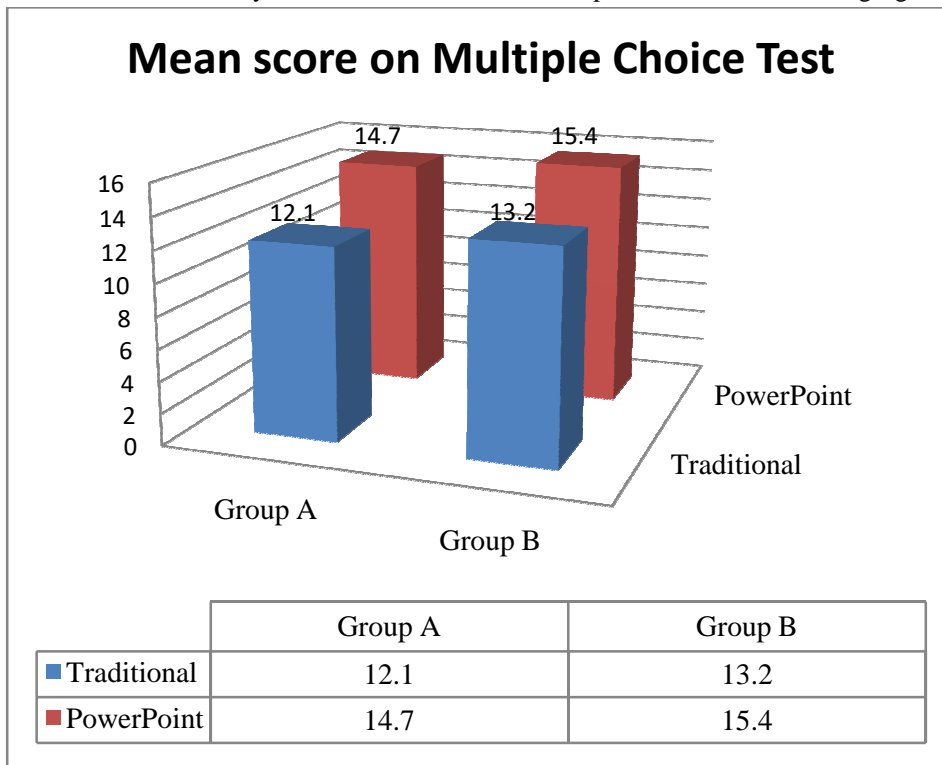


Figure 1: Bar chart showing the mean scores after multiple choice test

Description of the bars

1. Rows: The front row represents Traditional lecture presentation while the back row represents PowerPoint presentation.
2. Columns: Left column stands for Group A and the right column stands for Group B.

The multiple choice test was conducted to test research question two which sought to find out whether PowerPoint presentations had any impact on the learning of English language course. The comparison between the two modes of lecture presentation in Figure 1 revealed, after analysing the results of the two tests administered that students who received instruction through PowerPoint presentation performed better than students who received instructions through the traditional medium. PowerPoint presentation recorded mean scores of 14.7 and 15.4 as against 12.1 and 13.2 for the Traditional method. The findings show that students perform better after receiving instruction through PowerPoint presentation. This coincides with Rajab and Ketabi's (2012) findings that students taught using PowerPoint performed better than those taught using the traditional lecture. This is because such students obtained higher scores as compared to those who received instruction through the Traditional medium. The reason for this may be that PowerPoint lecture benefits recall,

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or perhaps recognition, from memory (Szabo & Hastings, 2000). It can therefore be concluded that PowerPoint presentation as a means of lesson delivery has positive impact on students' learning and confirms Fedisson's (2007) findings that the use of PowerPoint increases students' test scores. This was probably due to the fact that when students were actively engaged in class using PowerPoint presentation, information retention increased. Also, data depicting the differences in scores confirms that PowerPoint keeps students' interest and attention on the presentation hence improves their learning.

Research Question 3: *What are students' opinion on the use of PowerPoint in the teaching and learning of English in the Department of Basic Education?*

Data recorded from the semi structured interviews exposed some related issues in the cases where the students have been involved in PowerPoint lectures. Students shared their experiences in the few English lessons they had using PowerPoint. These experiences shared are presented and discussed in this section.

Lecturer student relationship and class control

PowerPoint lectures were considered lecturer centred by most students. According to students engaged in the interview,

The lecturer pays too much attention on the slides.

Our lecturer sometimes concentrates on the slides and not the students.

Presenters in the PowerPoint classroom distant themselves from the students they happen to teach. This is because the lecturers seem to have an organised or arranged form of presentation and too careful to miss the next slide. As such, the lecturer's movement was restricted during the presentation.

The lecturer stands in front of the class and talks.

What the lecturer does apart from talking is to change the slides.

PowerPoint presentations make the lecturer ignore most students especially those at the back row.

In the lecturer's attempt to be close to her laptop to enable her change the slides when needed, she was seen as stationary at the front of the classroom just by the whiteboard. This the lecturer did because there was no wireless presenter/pointer. It was also noted that in an attempt to finish the number of prepared slides,

"the lecturer sometimes rushes through slides when time is almost up".

This, the presenter was without any considerations for the students. To the lecturer, she needed to finish the set of slides prepared for that particular lesson.

Sometimes, the lecturer ends the slide show abruptly but the remaining slides are not presented nor discussed in the subsequent lesson.

The "Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology" lectures were usually held in a large long room called 'Old Pavilion'. This room is about 120ft x 60ft and with a blackboard. Another place of lecture was an average lecture hall at the Faculty of Educational Studies. There were no whiteboards in any of these lecture halls hence the PowerPoint slides were projected on a wall, the colour of which was 'dirty cream'. This attitude had a great effect on the student in the classroom.

Sometimes, the presentations get so blur such that those of us in front could not even see.

My colleagues who sit at the back and even those who sit around the centre often complain of their difficulty in reading the slides.

Some students concentrate on 'whatsApping' and 'facebooking' during PowerPoint lectures because of the large class size.

The class size was of concern to these students because the class was a very large one with each group comprising about 195 students.

Another student also added that, *"the large size of the class and the posture of the projector cause a small area of projecting the slides on the wall".*

Gadget Use

The classroom setting and the positioning of the gadgets also contribute to the effective use of PowerPoint in presenting lessons. The availability and proper use of gadgets play a good role in effective PowerPoint delivery. PowerPoint projector screens, PowerPoint wireless presenters, Cordless microphones, Projector rods to hold the projector at fixed positions to ensure a clearer and larger slides view and possibly, smart projector screens must be made available and used properly. One student concluded “I was late one time and I had to sit at the very back of the class. I realised that the screen size displayed on the board was very small making reading from the back difficult”. Notwithstanding these reservations, students expressed very positive observations and comments with the use of PowerPoint.

PowerPoint creates interest

In Level 200, most of my colleagues did not like phonetics because the presentations were boring.

When the lecturer was using the lecture method for my group, some of my friends were running to the other group until the lecturer started checking the role and awarding marks for attendance.

Material presentation using PowerPoint arouses students’ interest. As such, the correct use of PowerPoint may go a long way to sustain this interest. The font type and size, amount of information per slide, the communicative nature of the slides among others are very good avenues for arresting students’ interests.

Students’ involvement and participation

The slides serve as guide.

When you read what is presented on the slides, it tells you the way the information is going.

PowerPoint makes the class lively.

We think and ask a lot of questions.

We answer many questions in class because we are sure we will not be too wrong.

These interactions suggest that PowerPoint ensures not only the effective presentation of materials but also meaningful learning. This therefore promotes high student involvement and participation in lessons. The use of the PowerPoint tool must be varied in presenting materials. The slides must not be used in place of “*reading materials or textbooks*”. The lecturer must not only speak to the slides but must ensure the proper use of real life situations and examples within the scope of the students to arouse and maintain their involvement and participation in the topic under discussion.

Comprehension and note making

The aim of every lecturer in teaching is to ensure the comprehension of materials presented to the students. This is achieved when students grasp concepts taught and are able to relate to discussions on the topics. Students shared their thoughts on the role of PowerPoint instruction on their comprehension of materials. Some of the comments are as follow

Presentations flow well and are consistent.

Information are well organised in the slides.

The lecturer using PowerPoint doesn’t beat about the bush.

She goes straight to the point.

Most of the lecturers who do not use PowerPoint talk so much that they deviate from the topic.

The orderly organisation and presentation of materials and the way and manner the slides are presented ensure easier understanding as compared to the traditional chalk and talk method. As the lecturer moves gradually from one sub-topic to another and even systematically in presenting materials on a particular topic, the students are able to follow the presentations and easily make their own notes.

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We move from one topic to another.

We exhaust discussions on one topic or sub-topic before moving to another.

One Course Rep added, “due to the well organised nature of the lesson, note taking becomes easier compared to lessons where we don’t use PowerPoint. This finding replicates Susskind’s (2005:212) finding that ‘the use of PowerPoint multimedia improves students’ self-efficacy concerning note taking capabilities even when notes were not available in advance’.

Preparation before class

The provision of handouts before a lecture also helped students a great deal to prepare before class. The handouts guide the students to know the topics and sub-topics to be treated in class.

Sometimes, the handouts state reading assignments before the class.

Madam, most of the time, gives us group discussions in the handouts and she organises quick class tests before the lessons start.

The lecturer prepares before the lesson because she also reads to prepare the slides.

It was very difficult for us to understand and write some IPA symbols but when we got the handout from the other group we got the concept far better.

Teaching and learning must be handled in such a manner as to make students feel part of the process. In doing this, students must be given the opportunity to explore and prepare themselves for the new information. Students must formulate questions and set their own goals in the classroom. This they may be able to do when they are guided or exposed to the new information and what is expected of them ahead of time. The provision of handouts ahead of the class will be beneficial in this direction. PowerPoint presentations and handouts therefore make both the lecturer better prepared for classroom teaching and learning (Frey & Birnbaum, 2002 cited in Susskind (2005)) just as students.

Suggestions for the ‘Introduction to English Phonetics and Phonology’ course

PowerPoint is by all standards the world’s most used mode of presentation in education. The use of PowerPoint is what students, especially those in the tertiary or higher education expect of all their lecturers (Rickman & Grudzinski, 2000). Students, in the English language classroom equally expect the use of PowerPoint in lesson delivery. They advised,

All lecturers must be encouraged to use PowerPoint to aid understanding.

All lecturers who teach English should use PowerPoint in teaching because I understand better when PowerPoint is used.

There is also the need for lecturers to incorporate word, graphics and media into their presentation. This is necessary especially in the Phonetics and Phonology class. According to students,

The correct pronunciation of these speech sounds must be played so we hear them.

Speeches could be recorded and played.

Topics like ‘stress’ and ‘intonation’ may be better understood if multimedia aspects were considered.

Discussions from the semi structured interviews with the support the finding that PowerPoint creates interest in lessons. It also revealed that PowerPoint encourages students’ involvement and participation in lessons and ensures as well as enhances comprehension. Note making was easier for students in the PowerPoint classroom. Handouts given by lecturers ahead of lessons were seen to be double edged swords. As much as these handouts helped students prepare well before class and ensured their involvement in the lessons, they also kept some away from attending lectures.

Some of my mates turn to feel they have the materials of what will be discussed at the lecture and for that matter they do not see the need to attend the lecture (a response from a member of the focused group).

To avoid this weakness and keep all students in class, the PowerPoint presenter must ensure that handouts provide an outline of key points, entice students to take their notes, provide additional materials that couldn't be covered over time, and give a list of additional sources of information.

Conclusion

The purpose of this research was to examine the impact of the use of PowerPoint on teaching and learning in English Language courses. It was found out that PowerPoint was barely used in teaching English language courses and in the department in general. This is because very few lecturers present course materials using PowerPoint. The study also identified that PowerPoint aids understanding and retention. This results in increased test scores with the use of PowerPoint as against a decreased score with the use of the Traditional method. Finally, the study showed that university students irrespective of age, gender or level in the university expect the use of PowerPoint in the teaching and learning of all courses (in vast contrast with Jianxiang&Xingeng (2012). This is due to reasons that the tool ensures that both lecturers and students prepare well ahead of their lessons. It also helps presenters to organise their materials well to ensure easy flow as well as keep presenters and students on course. However, this tool should not be used to only demonstrate to all, especially students that an instructor is using technology. It should rather be used to assist students to structure their thoughts in order to help improve their learning and thereby ensure effective lecture atmosphere. PowerPoint impacts positively on English language teaching and learning,

Implications of the study

For effective use of PowerPoint in the English language classroom, audio-visual aids and multimedia materials must be incorporated as they can liven up even the most boring presentations (Tompson, 2009). An instructor may blend different technologies creatively in the classroom in order to promote learning and to satisfy students' learning needs. Necessary gadgets such as PowerPoint projector screens, PowerPoint wireless presenters, cordless microphones, projector and smart projector screens should be provided in lecture halls. The student population and the size of the lecture hall as well lecture environment should be conducive to ensure optimal effect of the PowerPoint experience. The research indicates that it is necessary that greater investments are made in PowerPoint enriched instructions specifically in the English Language classroom and the University of Education, Winneba in general. Professional development workshops could be organised for English language teachers to give them hands on training on the integration of PowerPoint in lesson delivery in English Language courses.

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