MA STUDENTS' VIEWS ON THE LECTURERS' USE OF POWERPOINT PRESENTATIONS IN ONLINE LIVE LECTURES DURING THE COVID-19 LOCKDOWN

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Abstract

PowerPoint Presentations have been one of the content delivery tools used heavily by the lecturers in online live lectures during the Covid-19 lockdown. They were chosen by the lecturers for the delivery of the lessons with the belief that they provide an effective visual support and organization of the content. However, do students have the same views on the use of PowerPoint presentations? The study aimed to present the views of MA students' on the lecturers' use of PowerPoint presentations during online live lectures. To meet the aim of this research, qualitative research method was used. Data obtained from structured interviews which consisted of 4 open-ended questions. Participants presented their views on the use of Power Point presentations during live lectures in terms of positive and negative sides mentioning the problems, if any, and their suggestions to those problems. The study group was comprised of 16 MA students who were studying at Near East University during the Spring term of the academic year 2019-2020.Results of the research indicated that in MA students' views, the use of materials presented through PowerPoint proves to be practical in the lesson, offers visual richness while at the same time providing efficient monitoring and evaluation.

Keywords: Power Point presentations, online live lecture, Covid-19.

Introduction

Technology assisted learning has conquered the classrooms as the need for providing attractive, visual, audial, interactive, and authentic materials has gained importance. This need escalated even more during the Covid-19 period. The Covid-19 lockdown has made it obvious that there is a huge need to use instructional tools that can be integrated into online delivery of lessons. This sudden shift towards fully online education all over the world raised the need to look for online applications and online/computer-based tools that can provide an efficient and practical way of transferring the target content to students. The use of such applications and tools integrated into the lessons lead to an interactive lesson where there is an opportunity to get access to multi-media content (Bayne, 2015; Conole, 2013).When transferring content during online delivery, the traditional way of lecturing through online platforms might result in attention loss especially in large group teaching, lack of visuals to support teaching, lack of interaction between the students and the materials and lack of seeing the relationship between the concepts explained. Adding the lack of face-to-face education to all these issues, we can conclude that delivery mode in online teaching should be supported with a tool that can eliminate the demotivating effects of lecturing. Due to their widespread use during the lockdown period, the use of PowerPoint presentations can be considered as the fit for purpose tool.

PowerPoint is a presentation tool that visualizes the information by giving the opportunity to support the content with texts, visuals, graphics, animations and multimedia tools (Fakas, 2006; Ögeyik, 2017). It is believed to be an effective tool in facilitating the recall of information because of the way it is presented through PowerPoint mainly with the use of visuals, auditory tools and organization components (Jalali & Talebi, 2014). Moreover, the information received through multiple stimuli is better processed in the brain (Baddeley, 1992) and leads to a deeper internalization of the content (Mayer, 2005). Other advantages of PowerPoint include the practicality it provides for modifying, editing and adding to the content, and the use of less time in presenting the content (Gamabri, Taiwo & Balogun, 2015).

On the other hand, some argue against the use of PowerPoint claiming that it is no different than lecturer-centered lessons (Creed, 1997) and the fact that the content is written on the slides may cause the lecturer to read the slides word by word leading to the lack of discussion and any other relevant explanations (Ögeyik, 2017).

The studies done on the effectiveness of PowerPoint use have resulted in conflicting findings. Gier and Kreiner (2009) have indicated that lessons led by PowerPoint presentations increased the amount of information recalled as a result of their study conducted with psychology students. Susskind's study (2005) showed no significant differences in success level between those students who were exposed to lectures delivered by the use of PowerPoint and those students who received lectures without it. In Apperson, Laws and Scepansky's (2008) study although the students mentioned that they preferred to be instructed through PowerPoint, their performance as a result of this type of instruction was found to be poor. There are also studies that showed the positive effects of the use of PowerPoint. Alkash and Al-Dersi (2013) concluded that PowerPoint use eased the comprehension of main points of teaching theories and promoted success for student-teachers. Additionally, Bektaş (2014) found out that PowerPoint-supported teaching has affected students' motivation positively in a social studies lesson. On the other hand, for those students who were taught without PowerPoint the motivation level decreased. San (2019) recorded that when PowerPoint used for instruction, the students' ability for selecting and concentrating towards the target content was much better.

Considering these conflicting studies and the shift to fully online education during this period of Covid-19, this study has been done to further explore how the use of PowerPoint presentations were managed during the online live lessons, what the impressions of the students have been and whether the findings would be consistent with the previous studies done. Hence, in order to point out the views of MA students' on the lecturers' use of PowerPoint presentations during the online live lectures, this research study has attempted to find answers to the following questions:

1. What are the MA students' views on the use of PowerPoint presentations in online live lectures during Pandemic?
2. What are the problems faced during PowerPoint Presentations regarding the education provided by online live lectures, Pandemic according to the MA students' views?

Methodology

Research Model

A qualitative research method for this study was chosen because according to Merriam (1998), qualitative research methods are exclusively appropriate in realizing the meaning that participants give to events that they experience. This study was carried out to determine the views of MA students on the lecturers' use of PowerPoint presentations during online live lectures.

Universe and Sampling

The universe of this research consists of the MA students who took MA courses from the Department of Human resources at the Near East University during the second term of the academic year 2019 - 2020 (Pandemic).

The Sample of the study was composed of 16 MA students. The participants attended this survey voluntarily. In the following table, the participants' demographic variables are given:

Table 1.
The Participants' Demographic Variables

Demographic variables	N	%
Gender		
Female	2	12.0
Male	14	88.0
Age		
25 - 40	14	88.0
41 - 60	2	12.0
Educational Level		
M.A.	16	100.0

According to the participants' demographic variables, the majority of the students who participated in the study are male, 14 of the students were between the age of 25 and all of them were doing their MA studies during the time of the study.

Data Collection Tools

In this research qualitative method was used. The first part of the interview form included questions to determine the demographic characteristics of the participants. The second part of the form included four open-ended questions designed to get the MA students' views on the lecturers' use of PowerPoint presentations during the online live lectures. Expert opinion was sought during the design of the questions.

Data Collection Methods

After the literature review, the researchers developed the open-ended interview questions. After receiving the opinions of two specialists in the Faculty of Education, the items in the interview form were finalized. The data was obtained between the dates 20th -30th of May 2020. The participants' opinions towardsusing PowerPoint presentations during live lectures were received through semi-structured interviews.

Data Analysis

The data was written and analysed using the descriptive analysis technique which is one of the methods of qualitative data analysis. The statements of the interviews were used directly while using the descriptive analysis method. Each question in the interview form was divided into specific themes and the participants' views were coded into related themes. Yıldırım and Şimşek (2013) stated that results should be achieved by both evaluating data within the specified theme and considering the cause and effect relationship. The responses were transcribed verbatim and the researchers reached a consensus on the themes that can be derived based on the participants' responses.

Findings and Comments

Frequencies and percentage values for each theme are given in this part of the study.

Table 2.
MA Students' Views on the Positive Aspects of PowerPoint Presentations in online live lectures during Pandemic

Positive Aspects of PowerPoint Presentations	f	%
Possibility to discuss the topic in a short time	11	18.6
Include visual elements	9	15.3
Provide efficient monitoring and evaluation	9	15.3
Support inclusion of students in the lessons	8	13.6
Make learning meaningful and easy	7	11.9
Interesting and attractive	7	11.9
Encourage active student participation	5	8.4
Develop technological skills	3	5.0
Total	59	100.0

When Table 2 is examined, the majority of the answers to the first open – ended question emphasize that the main topic can be discussed in a short period of time. In addition, they believe that PowerPoint presentations encourages them to attend classes making learning meaningful, interesting and visually-supported.

"I think one of the positive aspects of using PowerPoint is that a lecturer can discuss about the main topics in a limited time. In other words, the lecturer by using PowerPoint can transfer key points, and sometimes by using, showing some questions, some pictures and some videos, can enable students to participate students in problem-solving processes. It means that students are involved in the learning process". (1)

"The PowerPoint Presentations in online live lectures really meet my expectations regarding knowledge, skills and change of attitudes. Learning objectives were set to contribute to the achievement of the training program objectives, at the same time providing efficient monitoring and evaluation". (3)

"In my point of view, there are many positive aspects such as activities, the explanation of the topic, and making it easy to remember the points about a topic. That's why it encourages the students to participate in the lessons". (7)

Table 3.
MA Students' Views on the Negative Aspects of PowerPoint Presentations in online live lectures during online live lessons

Negative Aspects of PowerPoint Presentations	f	%
Crowded classes cause too much noise	7	29.2
Technical troubles	6	25.0
Require more time to understand the lesson	5	20.8
Excessive loading of information makes it difficult to understand the subject	3	12.5
Cause disconnections between the lecturer and the students	2	8.3
The font size	1	4.2
Total	24	100.0

According to Table 3, the negative aspects stated for the use of PowerPoint presentations included facing technical troubles with the use of the tool, the fact that it might require more time to understand the lesson due to the lack of face-to-face interaction, the confusion created by the excessive inclusion of information on the slides and the lack of connection between the lecturer and the students. The font size used was another negative aspect mentioned since it affected the easiness of which a text can be read.

"One of the negetive aspects is about font size in some PowerPoint presentations. It is not clear to see the words and it makes understanding difficult. In my point of view, the teacher should inform the students about how they should prepare their PowerPoint presentations. And also, some of the PowerPoint presentations are very simple. They are designed without any interesting pictures, diagrams, shapes and videos. So, it causes their classmates to get bored during the lecture". (13)

"It takes more time to understand a topic. The online courses lead the students to get lazy and ignore doing duties as there is no direct interaction and following up by the lecturers. Also, online lectures need good skills for time arrangements. On the other hand, it needs equipment and facilities such as internet connection, laptop, tables, and also online learning software. Some of these need licenses which will lead to being costly for both students and lecturers. As there is no direct face-to-face communication between students and lecturers some of the topics will be hard to be understood by the students especially those who need to be in labs". (9)

"In my opinion, the negative aspects may include a lack of relationship between the teacher and the students. Students get lazy to participate in the lessons and they are not as active as facing each other in a real classroom, it also sometimes makes students irresponsible. Not all students have laptops or computers to communicate and poor connection might be a problem. Besides, some departments require hard copies of materials in their lessons because they don't want to have online live lectures". (12)

Table 4.
MA Students' Views on the Problems Faced with PowerPoint Presentations during online live lectures

Problems Faced During PowerPoint Presentations	f	%
Lack of technical knowledge on how to share slides	6	37.5
Technical Troubles	4	25.0
Network failure	3	18.7
Did not face any problems	3	18.7
Total	16	100.0

Table 4 illustrated the percentage distribution of the problems faced in online live lectures. It is clear from the table that over a third of the participants stated that the problems caused because of the lack of technical knowledge on how to share slides and a quarter of them indicated that it was caused because of the technical troubles. On the other hand, 3 of them emphasized that they didn't face any problems.

"I thought there were two problems. The first was lack of technical knowledge on how to share our slides and the second was we could not see the body language of our classmates to have an idea of their reactions.'' (2)

"Yes, there are. For example, not all the students' computers are well working. Also, sometimes the writings are not clear on the screen for the other participants. Also, losing connection during the lectures is another problem". (15)

"The first one was lack of technical knowledge on how to share your slides. The second was you could not get feedback from the class. We could not see them". (9)

Table 5.
MA Students' Suggestions on increasing the Effectiveness of Powerpoint Presentations in Online Live Lectures

Suggestions on increasing the Effectiveness of Powerpoint Presentations	f	%
Training should be given on how to prepare Powerpoint slides	8	30.8
The font size should be taken into consideration	7	26.9
The given information should be summarized	4	15.4
The number of slides and information added on the slides should be adjusted according to the topic	4	15.4
The instruction should be recorded	3	11.5
Total	26	100.0

As it can be seen in table 5, it has been mentioned that the students should be trained on how to prepare PowerPoint slides, the font size should be considered during the preparation of the presentations, and the information given should be summarized on a separate slide at the end of the presentation. The number of slides, the amount of text added on each slide and recording the presentation made to be shared with the students were also among the suggestions. The responses are mainly about the way the slides are created and the way the information is presented.

"For increasing the effectiveness of Powerpoint presentations, I suggest that the slides don`t have too much information. Having key points are enough. And using interesting pictures, shapes and videos can work well on attention and learning of students during the lecture as it is used in our live lectures."(7)

"Students should be trained on how to prepare PowerPoint slides and also how to share them with their classmates before given the chance to present." (14)

"My suggestion is to have an option onto the system which asks either to download it onto your Laptop or to view it without downloading it because some students might face a lack of space in the telephone or some in their computers then if so, they won't be able to get to the same point of understanding. Lastly, adding some links related to the course topic onto the PowerPoint would be helpful for the students to do more research on their own in terms of practicing the topic more." (16)

Discussion

The study aimed at revealing the MA students' view on the lecturers' use of PowerPoint presentations during online live lectures. As well as being advantageous and having benefits, PowerPoint presentations are claimed to have some drawbacks at the same time (Hill et al., 2012; Hopper & Waugh, 2014). Both have been reflected in MA students' views in this study.

The findings indicated that there are conflicting opinions about the use of PowerPoint presentations for instruction. While some MA students consider PowerPoint presentations as an opportunity to get familiar with the content in a shorter time, other MA students stated that it might make it harder to understand the topic by following the slides. Considering that the content should be presented briefly in a more organized way through PowerPoint presentations, it might really support learning in terms of delivering the highlights of the topic and prevent wasting too much time on every single detail. However, the way the slides are arranged, how much information each slide contains and how the information placed on the slides have an effect on the ease with which the lesson content is understood. Adding visual elements support the info on the slides is another reinforcing factor for understanding the content. This is also stated in the findings of the studies done by Tangen, Constable, Durran, Teeter, Beston and Kim (2011); Gambari, Taiwo and Balogun (2015) and Kahraman, Kodan and Çevik (2011). Supporting this even further, as it was stated in the results of Jaleli and Talebi's (2014) and Bektas' (2014) study, MA students' also stated that the content presented through slides makes learning interesting, meaningful and motivates them to participate more. Receiving information through PowerPoint slides, according to the participants, allows them to monitor their understanding on the basis, we presume, the information is presented in an organized way with a proper summary as well.

On the other hand, adding too much information or lacking to organize them in relation to each other might result in exposing students to redundant information. This will in return creates frustration and distraction since the students are not able to select the information they need. This consequence might be linked to one of the responses that PowerPoint presentations make it more difficult to understand the content. Considering that the main purpose of slides is to arrange the content in meaningful chunks, including too much information on the slides make it no different than presenting an article or a coursebook (Uzun & Kilis, 2019).

Further analyzing the negative aspects and problems faced with the use of PowerPoint presentations, lecturers' handling the technical difficulties is claimed to be the major problem. Considering the need for the integration of technological tools into the online live

lessons, this becomes a serious hindrance to the effectiveness of the way the content is delivered. The results of Jaleli and Talebi (2014) which indicated that the design and format of the slides helped the students understand the content better makes this a problem that should be overcomed by the lecturers. Lecturers' ability to use the features of an educational tool effectively and properly contributes positively to the experience of learning and teaching. Another issue mentioned among the negative aspects was the lack of connection between the lecturer and the students. This is in line with the studies which reported that low performance of students who were exposed to instruction through PowerPoint slides can be attributed to the lack of interaction and limited opportunities to exchange opinions between the lecturer and the students (Ögeyik, 2017; Norvig, 2003).

Moreover, because this study was done during the Covid-19 lockdown, some additional comments to the use of PowerPoint presentations were also made. For some of them, studying during a lockdown time made it even more challenging due to the lack of equipment in good condition or network problems. That's why they asked for the recording of the presentations. Therefore, we tend to conclude that in normal times what it would not be a problem about the use of PowerPoint presentations has been regarded as a problem because of the challenges the students had to face during lockdown. Another issue raised by the participants was the importance of the body language. It was demotivating for them not to see the reactions of their classmates and/or their lecturer since their cameras were turned off. This was stated as a problem by the students as it is a big part of maintaining communication.

Conclusion

The study examined the views of the MA students on how the use of PowerPoint presentations was managed during the online live lessons concluding that although there are obvious benefits, they are not free from obstacles. The MA students' suggestions on providing more training on the use of PowerPoint presentations including the correct choice of font size, adding right amount of slides and information according to the amount of content that should be delivered and recording the presentations for later reference should be taken into consideration.

As it was also noted by Craig and Amernic (2006) some course content might not be appropriate to be simplified and oversimplification can cause the content to be inadequately delivered (Uzun & Kilis, 2019), a great care should be given to the what extent the length of the content on the slides should be adjusted. Likewise, the lecturers should be trained on creating and successfully using the PowerPoint presentations as participants stated that some lecturers were going through difficulties while presenting. This, causing distractions for the students, affects the way how the content is presented. Having frequent stops during the delivery not only causes the students to be distracted but also breaks the coherence of the delivery.

What should also be noted here is the use of PowerPoint presentations cannot be evaluated separately from a lecturer's teaching methodology. A lecturer should acknowledge that PowerPoint presentations cannot replace all the other teaching techniques that should be implemented but can be used as a complementary for them. Delivering the content through a PowerPoint presentation does not imply that learning has taken place. Interaction between the lecturers and the students and/or between the students, creativity, critical thinking should be maintained with the integration of discussions and a variety of practices (Uzun & Kilis, 2019).

The study is not without limitations. First of all, it is limited to the context it was conducted and the opinions of the participants included in the study. This limitation can

clearly be seen in the conflicting responses of the participants as well. So the study was limited to a single university. Secondly, due to the time constraints, the responses given for the interview questions might be inadequate to explain certain points made.

Therefore, in order to enhance learning through the use of PowerPoint presentations and increase their positive effects on learning, more research is needed to be conducted with a larger number of students and lecturers with an aim to better understand what exact modifications are required to better cater for students' needs and adapt to the changing face of education.

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