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Students' Perceptions towards PowerPoint in Language Classrooms: Voices from the Inside

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ARTICLE INFO	ABSTRACT
	This study employs a quantitative research design to investigate the attitudes and perceptions of Bangladeshi English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners towards the use of PowerPoint in language classroom as opposed to traditional chalk-walk and talk-lecture. A total of 100 first-year tertiary students from a renowned private university-Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna—voluntarily participate in the study by completing a questionnaire. The collected data are analyzed in association with Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS) 24.0 software. The findings reveal that students prefer classrooms with PowerPoint presentations to traditional classrooms and have positive attitudes towards PowerPoint presentations (PPP). The results also indicate that students enjoy classes when PowerPoint is used and they become more lesson-oriented in these classes, and they consider that instructors who use PPP are smarter than others. Further, the findings show that PPP classes are more effective in comparison to traditional lecture based classrooms. The study concludes with a recommendation that considering a number of issues the administrators and the instructors should ensure PowerPoint assisted language classrooms, and it welcomes future researches to be conducted on the efficacy of using PowerPoint in English language classrooms in Bangladesh addressing the limitations that this study could not explore.

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1. INTRODUCTION

Teaching strategies have been changing with the course of time. One of the tenets of the change is that of using technology in classrooms. Technology has been used in language classrooms "for more than two decades" (Murray, 2008). Among several educational technologies Microsoft PowerPoint is perhaps the most user friendly one. It enables an instructor to present the study materials more efficiently highlighting the main idea in conjunction with the supporting details. Moreover, an instructor can easily import graphics, audios, quotes, music, web pages, and links to "create an enriching learning experience" (Oommen, 2012). From a pragmatic point of view, the use of PowerPoint can make a fruitful contribution to every subject area in a language classroom. However, the employability of PowerPoint in language classroom from the learners' perspective is not beyond debate. To be specific, in Bangladeshi context the question still remains whether PowerPoint in language classroom plays an effective role in teaching and learning a second language "as opposed to traditional chalk-walk and talk-lecture" (Oommen, 2012). In

the existing scholarship, this issue is only inadequately addressed. To meet the insufficiency, this paper attempts to delve into this matter more satisfactorily. Accordingly, we conducted a survey to know about the effectiveness of PowerPoint from the learners. As already mentioned, the focus of our study is the context of Bangladesh and we tried to hear the voices of the students of a well-established regional private university - Northern University of Business and Technology Khulna. The following sections of this paper would showcase a detailed analysis of this matter demonstrating the findings of the survey. We think that the findings of our research would add to the current knowledge. We also believe that the suggestions of this work would contribute to bringing about a spectacular development in teaching and learning a second language—English in this case.

Research questions

This study attempts to answer the questions addressed below:
  a) How do students take PowerPoint use in English language classrooms?
  b) How much is it effective in comparison to traditional lecture based classrooms?

Objectives of the study

Many of the language teachers believe that students prefer PowerPoint presentation classes to traditional chalk-walk and talk-lecture classes and PPP also enhances English language teaching and learning experiences. This study tries to determine whether those beliefs are true or not from learners' perspective. More specifically, the aims of this study are: to know the attitudes of students towards PowerPoint use in English language classrooms; to know about the effectiveness of PowerPoint in comparison to traditional lectures; and to bring about a remarkable change in and to extend the current knowledge on using PPP in language classrooms in Bangladeshi context.

Literature review

The use of technology in classrooms is received positively in most of the cases. Instructing students with the help of PowerPoint presentations, though ostensibly, indicates the advancement in teaching and learning process. However, one cannot claim an indubitable applicability of PowerPoint presentation in classrooms. The existing scholarships showcase variegated opinions regarding the use of this technology.

Voss (2004) questions the suitability of PowerPoint in classrooms. In his opinion, the practices of this technique foreground the teachers and background the learners, where the learners should be in the fore. PowerPoint slides, additionally, hamper the building of a compact teacher-student interaction. What more makes him a critique of this technology is that the instructors, in most of the cases, emphasize the technical perfection of the presentation rather than prioritizing the subject matter. Oommen (2012) states a liberal attitude towards this technology, however. This can be a pedagogical tool only for bringing a significant change in teaching process. The instructor should use it to add variation in teaching, and this may remove monotony of the learners. Contrary to this, Tufte (2003) points out that PowerPoint presentations make the learners bored. He focuses on the aptness of content and relevancy of the information. In his opinion, PowerPoint slides convey only superficial knowledge. Rather, traditional lecture is the most suitable mode of instruction. Unlike the above mentioned criticisms, Shyamlee (2012) demonstrates a mixed attitude towards PowerPoint assisted class lectures. In spite of having some positive aspects, this technique "lacks real-time effect and cannot give feedback". In the traditional class lectures, on the other hand, "teachers raise impromptu and real-time questions and guide the students to think". This "thinking" is important for the learners which does not get priority in PowerPoint classes. In the same way, Norvig (2003) opines that the use of PowerPoint presentation makes the collaboration between the instructors and the students harder. Rather they can exchange their ideas more fluidly in traditional classes. He then posits himself in favor of traditional class lectures. Lanius' (2004) observation, however, differs from Norvig's (2003) interpretation. She finds that a PowerPoint presentation manages a face to face, and therefore direct communication among the instructors and the learners. During a traditional class lecture, on the other hand, a teacher has to face towards the white board most of the time. In our view, this is one of the positive sides of this technology. A similar opinion is that of Catherina (2006). She thinks that the overall study materials and the classroom environment become more interesting and learner-friendly when PowerPoint slides are used. She sees it from a positive point of view. The same point exists, arguably to a much greater extent, when Mantei (2000) mentions that the use of PowerPoint enables a teacher to manage his/her time appropriately and thus contributes to the progression of the learning process. In a general sense, managing study time is one of the main tools in the development of teaching and learning process.

Elliott and Gordon (2006) obscure that PowerPoint presentations are helpful for "teacher-centered instruction[s]", and through it a big amount of information is transmitted in minimum time. They furthered this idea by mentioning that most of the students cannot absorb those ideas. However, we do not agree with this and our paper attempts to see to this claim by investigating the participants. Alternative findings also exist for Elliott and Gordon's observation. Clark (2008) perceives through her survey that the use of PowerPoint can make a "notoriously boring" class lecture lively by "stimulating interest" among the students. She opines that PowerPoint has the ability to bring variety in the learning environment, and she finds that such variations make this educational software an effective pedagogical tool. Rankin and Hoaas (2001), however, offered a counterpoint to Clark's (2008) opinion earlier. They found that the use of PowerPoint did not affect the student performances; rather it

is simply another version of traditional chalk-and-talk teaching. In our opinion, their findings are, though arguably, cumbersome and need further investigation.

The findings of the above mentioned literatures are not well suited to the context of the tertiary education in Bangladesh and we think that the suitability of using PowerPoint in classrooms in our context is open to contestation. This very idea led us to call into question the condition of PPP in Bangladesh.

2. METHODOLOGY

Research design
A quantitative research approach has been adopted to conduct this study. The Quantitative method saves time; that is to say it can elicit information from a larger number of respondents in a very short period of time and it is also less expensive (Sekaran, 2003). A survey is conducted in order to answer the research questions of the study.

Research instrument
The only instrument used in this study is a written questionnaire consisting of 20 closed-ended questions. The questionnaire is constructed after reading related literatures in order to make it sure that relevant items are included. And, before preparing the final questionnaire, a pilot study was also done to determine the validity and reliability of the questions asked to the participants. After collecting data, the researchers analyzed them using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS, version 24.0). The results are presented in percentage using pie charts.

Sampling/participants
A total of 100 first-year students from three departments (English, Business, and Computer Science and Engineering) are recruited to participate in this study following simple random sampling technique from the total students of nearly 320. The participants were around 31.25 percent of the total students. Creswell (2009) recommends this random sampling procedure since it provides a generalized result. Creswell (2009) states, "with randomization, a representative sample from a population provides the ability to generalize to a population".

The participants are taught ENG1100, a foundation English grammar course, using PowerPoint presentations regularly during their first semester of study by the researchers. For this reason, these learners are chosen for this study as their perceptions about the effect of PowerPoint presentations would give a more generalized result to the study.

Variables and Measures
As it is mentioned above, a total of twenty variables are selected to fulfill the objectives of this study. And, a five-point Likert scale is assigned in each variable as a technique to examine learner attitudes towards the pedagogical implication of PowerPoint presentations in English language

classroom instructions. The scale contains five categories including strongly agree, agree, neutral, disagree, and strongly disagree. Categories are coded as 5= strongly agree, 4= agree, 3= neutral, 2= disagree and 1= strongly disagree..

3. RESULTS

This section uses tables and demonstrates the percentage of responses to each statement. It also provides a description of individual question in conjunction with a surface analysis, albeit an in-depth analysis is given in the later section.

The use of PPP helps/encourages me take note
The findings in Table 1 demonstrate that more than three quarters (77%) of the participants feel the use of PPP helps or encourages them to take note where 6% of them remain neutral in their answer and rest of them (17%) believe that it does not do so to them.

I think that PPP should be used in every classroom
More than one third (35%) of the participants feel the inevitability of PPP in every classroom. There are almost a similar number of contributors (32%) who realize the necessity of it—albeit not as strongly as the previous group. However, one fifth of the total participants (20%) do not have any absolute decision regarding this question, and therefore they remain neutral. On the other hand, the rest 13% students think that PPP does not have any effective usage in every classroom (Table 1).

PPP in every classroom is monotonous
Only 8% participants strongly become bored if PPP is used in every classroom. An additional 31% participant has the same opinion though not with that much extremity. Another 22% students do not support any pole regarding this question. In contrast, a good number of participants (39% in total) do not find any monotony in PPP in every classroom. They are, rather, in favor of its use in every classroom (Table 1).

PPP makes the lessons interesting
Based on the findings of the fourth table, one can easily understand that PPP makes the lessons interesting. Though the level of support varies, 80% of the participants acknowledge the role of PPP in making the lessons interesting. Contrary to this, only 08% of the respondents do not think that PPP does it. The rest of the participants (12%) remain neutral in answering this question (Table 1).

The instructors who use PPP are smarter than those who do not use it
A handsome number of participants (38% in total) find the PPP using instructors more smart than the other. Interestingly, the learners who possess the opposite opinion are almost the same in number (36%) as the previous group. There are more 26% participants who do not support any of the opinions (Table 1).

The use of PPP makes me more lesson-orientated
The findings of the Table 1 demonstrate the participants' strong support for PPP, because more than two thirds of them (73% in total) opine that "[t]he use of PPP makes me more lesson-orientated". On the other hand, only 9% of them think the reverse. However, the remaining 18% students do not find any suitable answer to this question, and therefore remain impartial.

In PPP aided classrooms I can participate in class discussion more actively than those of the traditional classes
One notices that 15% students inflexibly opine that PPP enables them in the active participation in the class discussion. Another 32% follow the same path though not that much strongly. However, 29% participants remain neutral while answering this question. The rest 24%

Table 1. Demonstration of the percentage for responses to statement.

Statements	Strongly Agree (%)	Agree (%)	Neutral (%)	Disagree (%)	Strongly Disagree (%)
The use of PPP helps/encourages me take note	36	41	6	12	5
I think that PPP should be used in every classroom	35	32	20	10	3
PPP in every classroom is monotonous	31	22	27	12	8
PPP makes the lessons interesting	28	52	12	5	3
The instructors who use PPP are smarter than those who do not use it	14	24	26	15	21
The use of PPP makes me more lesson-orientated	20	53	18	7	2
PPP activates my thinking process	21	41	18	17	3
The use of PPP in classrooms is merely a sign of modernization in teaching and learning process	16	30	22	23	9
In PPP aided classrooms I can participate in class discussion more actively than those of the traditional classes	15	32	29	21	3
PPP increases the gap between students and teachers	19	22	21	28	10
Lectures using white board and PPP should be used simultaneously	46	28	15	5	6
The absence of PPP makes the study/lecture monotonous	6	41	16	27	10
In PPP classrooms I can take more notes in comparison to traditional classes	19	43	16	13	9
In PPP classrooms I can take more notes in comparison to traditional classes	7	46	22	18	7
The use of PPP makes the classroom smart	32	48	13	7	0

PPP activates my thinking process
The 21% participants strongly believe that PPP activates their thinking process. Following them, 41% students possess the same opinion, albeit a bit differently. On the contrary, 20% students think this issue in the opposite direction. Finally, 18% participants remain neutral as for this question (Table 1).

The use of PPP in classrooms is merely a sign of modernization in teaching and learning process
The findings of the eighth table are quite interesting in response to the previous tables' findings. Here total 46% respondents think that the use of PPP in classrooms is simply a sign of modernization. On the other hand, only 25% students think in the negative way, therefore, to them, the applicability of PPP in classrooms goes beyond simple modernization. However, 23% participants do not support any end of this issue, as in the Table 1.

students do not think that the use of PPP has any role in enabling them to participate in class discussion (Table 1).

PPP increases the gap between students and teachers
Quite a dominating portion of respondents (41%) think that the use of PPP in classrooms intensifies the gap between the instructor and the learners. Yet, what makes the findings more interesting is that the number of the participants who hold the opposite opinion is approximately the same (38%) as the previous group. The rest samples (21%) hold a neutral take (Table 1).

Lectures using white board and PPP should be used simultaneously
Nearly three fourths of the participants (74%) feel the necessity of simultaneous use of traditional white board and PPP, while only 11% respondents think it in the opposite way. Additionally, the number of the neutral participants is 15% (Table 1).
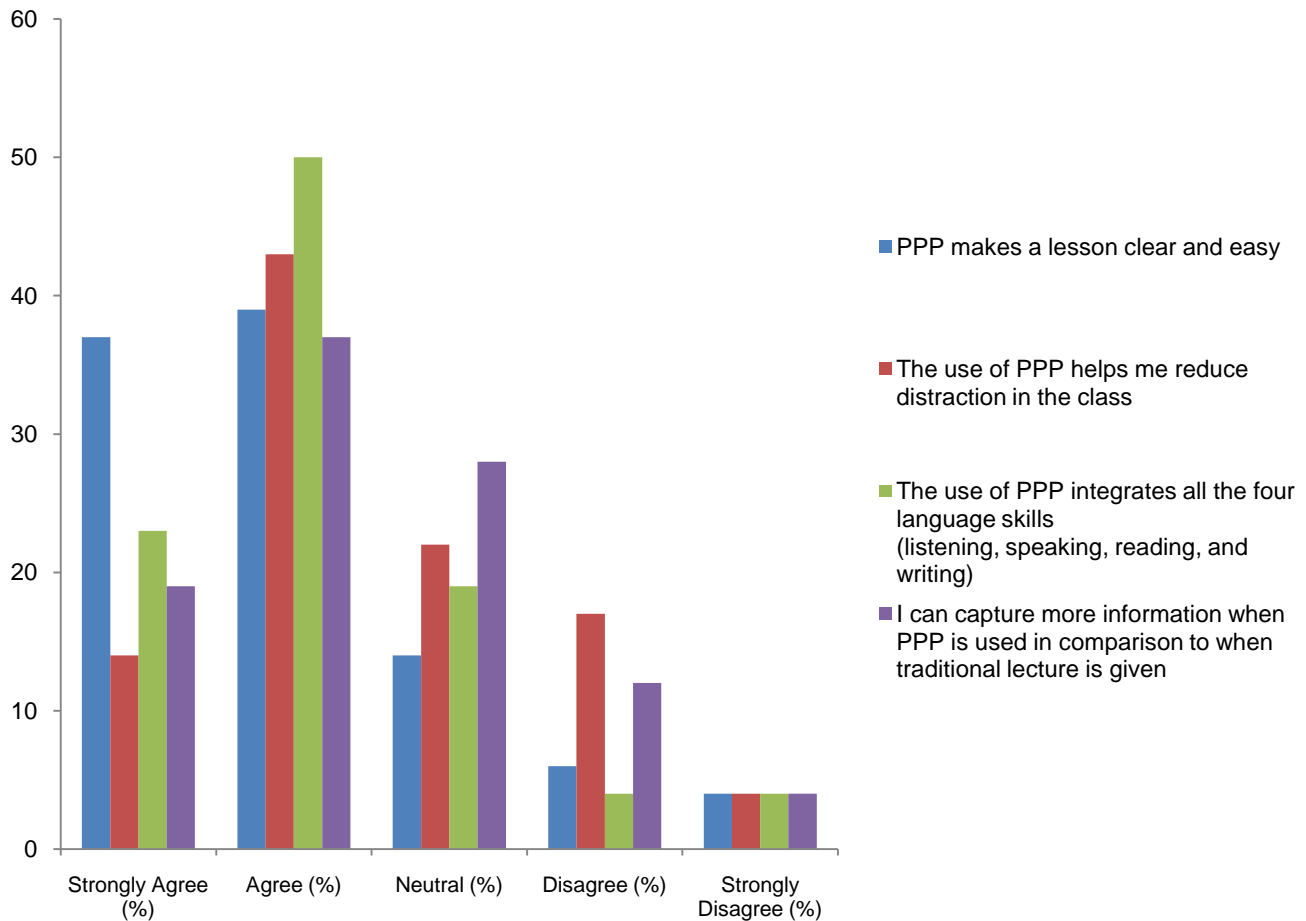
Fig. 1 Demonstration of the percentage for responses to statement.

The absence of PPP makes the study/lecture monotonous
Almost the half (47%) of the respondents find the class uninteresting when PPP is not used. The opposite picture is also worth mentioning, because a handsome number of participants (37%) do not think this point in the same way as the previous group think. However, in every table some students do not support any of the options, and in table 12 the percentage is 16 (Table 1).

In PPP classrooms I can take more notes in comparison to traditional classes
The discoveries regarding an important issue—note taking. In response to this question, 62% participants opine that they can adequately take notes in a PPP aided class room. On the other hand, only 22% participants respond in the opposite way. The remaining 16% respondents abstain from supporting any end (Table 1).

In PPP classrooms I can take more notes in comparison to traditional classes
More than half of the participants (53%) respond in favor of

the question- "[t]he use of PPP lessens my toil in decoding meaning". Contrary to this, one fourth of the respondents (25%) choose the opposite answer. The remaining 22% students are neutral as for this point (Table 1).

The use of PPP makes the classroom smart
The 80% participants think that the use of PPP creates a smart class room environment. Contrarily, only 7% participants react in the reverse way. However, 13% respondents cannot reach any compact decision, as for this question (Table 1).

PPP makes a lesson clear and easy
Based on the findings of the sixteenth table one can easily argue that the students are satisfactorily benefitted from PPP. In response to-whether "PPP makes a lesson clear and easy" or not, 76% participants support the use of PPP. On the other hand, only 10% respond negatively. The remaining 14% respondents do not support any end (Fig. 1).
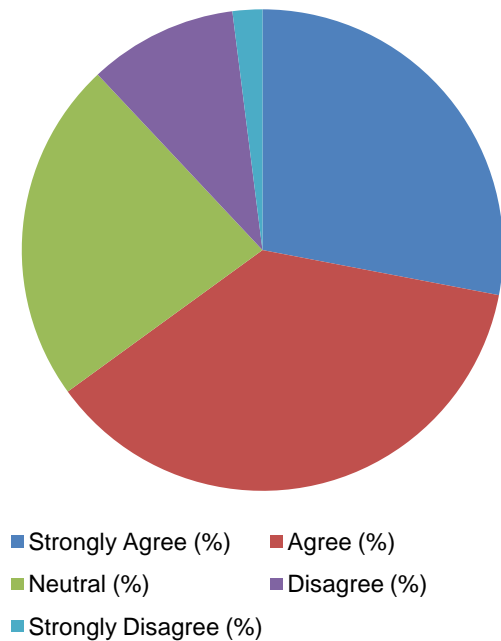
Strongly Agree (%) ■ Agree (%)
Neutral (%) ■ Disagree (%)
■ Strongly Disagree (%)

Fig. 2 Demonstration of the percentage for responses to statement of "The use of PPP keeps me focused on the specific study topic".

The use of PPP helps me reduce distraction in the class
More than half of the respondents (57%) opine that PPP helps them decrease distraction in the class, yet 21% participants do not think this matter in the same way. However, there are 22% participants who remain neutral (Fig. 1).

The use of PPP integrates all the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)
The 73% participants "[t]he use of PPP integrates all the four language skills (listening, speaking, reading, and writing)". Only 8% partakers respond negatively, on the other hand. Finally, 19% respondents remain neutral regarding this issue (Fig. 1).

I can capture more information when PPP is used in comparison to when traditional lecture is given
The 56% participants feel that it is possible to capture additional information during a PPP aided class lecture. On the other hand, only 16% partakers think that they can collect more information during a traditional lecture. The remaining 28% respondents do not support any opinion (Fig. 1).

The use of PPP keeps me focused on the specific study topic
The last figure of the spectrum, i.e., 20 demonstrates that 28% respondents strongly opine that the use of PPP keeps them focused on the exact topic. The next 37% participants

also think it in this way, albeit with a less strength comparatively. However, merely 12% partakers reject this point, including a 2% of respondents who reject it sturdily. Finally, 23% respondents remain neutral regarding this question (Fig. 2).

4. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

The findings of this study clearly indicate that students prefer classrooms with PowerPoint presentations to traditional classrooms. That is to say, students take PowerPoint presentation classrooms more positively than the traditional ones. Findings of this study replicate those of some other studies (Cockburn & Matthew, 2006; Corbeil, 2007; Apperson, Laws & Scepansky, 2008; Savoy, Proctor & Salvendy, 2009; Oommen, 2012).

Majority of the participants believe that PowerPoint makes their lessons interesting and it encourages them to take notes, and thus it enhances students' language learning experience. Oommen (2012) is of the same opinion that learners warmly welcome PowerPoint as it holds their attention throughout the lessons. The participants claim that they enjoy classes when PowerPoint is used and they become more lesson-oriented in these classes. As Susskind (2005) finds, "the students perceived the classes with PowerPoint as more interesting and entertaining".

At another point our survey finds that the use of technology-PPP in this very case—makes the classroom smart. Additionally, we find that the instructors who use PPP are smarter than others. There is a logical association between these two findings, because only a smart teacher can make the entire classroom atmosphere smart. Some previous studies also show the same point. For example, Cockburn and Matthew, 2006; Apperson et al., 2006; Corbeil, G., 2007; Savoy et al., 2009 find that the students prefer PowerPoint classrooms because they help them in multidimensional ways.

Our findings show that PPP activates students' thinking process and thus contributes to their study spectacularly. Oommen (2012) is of the same opinion who thinks that the use of PPP not only stimulates students' thinking but also motivates them towards a better understanding.

The findings of our survey further indicate that the students participate actively in class discussion when the instructor uses PPP. This technology opens scope for the students to participate in class argument. The opposite picture is also noticed when the teacher delivers his / her lecture traditionally. Of the same opinion is Oommen (2012) who opines that the students understand the lesson "with enough class participation".

The findings of the study further reveal that according to most of the participants the use of PowerPoint in classrooms reduces the distractions during lectures. Therefore, it helps them keep focused on the specific study topic. Definitely, this is one of the strengths of using this particular technology in language classrooms. However, to associate these findings to those of the existing scholarships

we happen to notice that Oommen's (2012) findings conform to those of ours. He declares that "the lesson with PowerPoint was interesting" and at the same time it holds the students' attention throughout the lesson (p. 59).

This study also asserts that both traditional lectures and PowerPoint aided lectures should go hand in hand. The combined use of these two would have a positive impact on the academic performance of the students. Interestingly, a good number of other studies (Kask, 2000; Lowery, 1999; Mantei, 2000; Szabo and Hastings, 2000) reveal the same opinion that "accompanying lectures with PowerPoint presentations improved students' performance" (as cited in Susskind, 2005, p. 212). In the same line of thinking, one of the findings of our study demonstrates that the use of PPP in classrooms lessens students' toil in decoding the underlying meaning of a lecture. To contextualize this, we would like to associate this to that of Susskind (2005) who finds that it is "easier to follow and understand the lectures accompanied by PowerPoint". Therefore, it makes the lesson easier for them. Accordingly, our survey further claims that PPP makes a lesson clear and easy and this again conforms to that of Susskind (2005).

Another important finding is that there is a mixed opinion regarding the question "[t]he absence of PPP makes the study / lecture monotonous". Almost half of the respondents find the class uninteresting in the absence of PPP. While, the other half thinks that the absence of PPP does not make the classroom boring. This very finding underpins our study to a certain extent.

5. CONCLUSION

In this paper we have tried to hear the voices from the students of a Bangladeshi private university regarding the use of Microsoft PowerPoint in language classrooms. Among the participants, the majority consider PPP an effective, user-friendly, and motivating pedagogical tool, though they do not enjoy it in full swing till date. In many of the cases, even in universities in Bangladesh, the instructors depend on traditional talk-lecture. Our findings, though arguably, reveal that considering a number of issues the instructors should ensure PowerPoint assisted language classrooms. However, the process of transition from traditional lecture to PPP supported lecture has already been started and on that basis most of our participants responded in favor of PowerPoint in language classrooms. In their opinion, PPP not only makes the lecture interesting but also makes it effective. Further, the students are furnished with all the main ideas along with the supporting details and are kept focused on the specific study area. Additionally, a PowerPoint assisted class lecture makes the classroom smart confirming maximum participation from the learners' end. However, we think that our findings would contribute to bringing about a remarkable change in using PPP in language classrooms in Bangladesh. The aim of our paper is, primarily, to extend the current knowledge on the above mentioned issue in Bangladeshi context. What attracted us to conduct this survey is that only a few researchers have addressed this problem satisfactorily in Bangladesh, albeit there is a considerable amount of literature on the issue which lacks the scenario of Bangladesh in particular. In comparison, our findings appear to be well substantiated by a handsome number of samples regarding the discussed issue. However, it is plausible that a number of limitations could have influenced the results obtained. Despite this we believe our work would be a springboard for accelerating researches on the issue. Our work has led us to conclude that our study would serve as a base for future researches on using PowerPoint in language classrooms in Bangladesh.

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