

# PREZI VERSUS POWERPOINT IN THE EFL CLASSROOM

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**Abstract-** The purpose of this paper is to determine if Prezi or PowerPoint is a better tool for English as a foreign language (EFL) students to use for classroom projects. 159 students at an international college were required to use Prezi for their final projects in all the author's classes. 148 of the students were Thai. Five of the students were Chinese. There was one Russian student. Four students did not put down their nationality. The students were surveyed and asked to compare Prezi, a newer presentation tool, and PowerPoint, an older presentation tool, in the areas of ease of use, text versus graphics, fun to use, and likelihood of future use. Overall students preferred Prezi to PowerPoint in all the areas measured.

**Keywords-** Prezi, PowerPoint, English as a second language, student presentations, higher education, presentation skills, multimedia presentations

## I. INTRODUCTION

The authors of this study work at an international college in Thailand. All classes are conducted totally in English. However, the vast majority of the students are English as a foreign language (EFL) students. Students are required to do presentations in English and this can often be difficult for the students both for motivational and academic reasons. One of the authors introduced Prezi as an alternative to PowerPoint for classroom presentations and noticed that the students seemed to be more enthusiastic about using Prezi than PowerPoint and decided to do some follow up research to see if students do prefer Prezi over PowerPoint and if so then why.

## II. REVIEW OF THE LITERATURE

When comparing Prezi and PowerPoint, the focus of most literature is a comparison of the two applications from a technological point of view. The user should from this point of view pick the application that is superior technologically. From a technological point of view PowerPoint has advantages when it comes to customization due to the huge number of templates, add-ons and plug-ins that have evolved over the decades. Since Prezi is online, group collaboration is easier with Prezi. Prezi uses a map layout visual metaphor. PowerPoint uses a slide stack layout as its visual metaphor. PowerPoint is easier to print out and therefore easier to make hand-outs with. When it comes to storage Prezi uses a web based default while PowerPoint uses a computer based default. Daniels (1999) points out that PowerPoint offers a huge number of choices when it comes to slide design and allows for "visual differentiation". PowerPoint can be uploaded to the web using third party online resources such as SlideShare. However, most users store their files on a flash drive or hard disk drive rather than on the internet and this can lead to bulky files if audio and video is added (Miltenoff and Rodgers, 2003). You can insert video into PowerPoint but the author's own

experience with both applications is that this procedure is marginally easier with Prezi. The table below summarizes the technical differences between Prezi and PowerPoint.

	Prezi	PowerPoint
1) Customization	Less	More
2) Group Collaboration	Easy	Harder
3) Layout	Map Layout	Slide Stack Layout
4) Navigation	Non-Linear	Linear
5) Printing	Limited Options	Multiple Options
6) Storage	Web Based Default	Computer Based Default

However, applications are not just technologies that exist in a vacuum but part of a social, communication process. Criticism of PowerPoint as a process has increased over time. Craig (2006) has argued that PowerPoint leads to presentations that are both vacuous and monotonous.

Tufte (2003) has argued that PowerPoint inherently leads to a speaker centered presentation style at the expense of audience participation. Paradi (2003) did a survey of what people found annoying about PowerPoint. Those surveyed complained about overly small text, full text instead of bullet points, speaker reading from the slide, and awkward use of the technology overall. The phrase "Death by PowerPoint" has become a common phrase to describe how PowerPoint can bore audiences to the point that the audience becomes disconnected from the presentation experience (WhatIs.com, 2015).

There are some studies that show PowerPoint can be a good teaching tool in the classroom and in the EFL classroom in particular. Aly, Elen, and Willems (2004) stated that PowerPoint based lectures focus attention and reduce distraction. Catherina (2006) found that students think PowerPoint based lectures are more interesting than traditional lectures. Fisher (1998) found that student scores on tests are improved with PowerPoint lectures as opposed to

traditional lectures in the EFL classroom. Szaboa and Hastings (2000) found that EFL seventy-two percent of EFL students surveyed said that they want PowerPoint presentations in their classes.

Prezi is a newer flash based presentation tool that uses a single large canvas. The user zooms and in and out of the canvas. Prezi does present all the information at the same time versus the analytical approach to information that is inherent in the slide by slide approach to information sharing. Swan wick (2009) suggests that Prezi is better for brain storming. Leimbach (2010) suggests that the small text boxes force students to use more bullet points rather than paragraphs, the sharing capabilities make collaboration easier and the ability to zoom in and out has pedagogical advantages. There are some complaints about the zooming causing dizziness (Leberecht, 2009). Chicioreanu (2010) has pointed out that Prezi is an educational tool that allows the teacher to present a vast array of content including animation, graphics and video. In a follow up study, Chicioreanu and Oproiu (2012) specifically pointed to the advantages of Prezi presentation software include the ability to make a presentation that is interesting, innovative, dynamic, attractive, easy to use, and allows for creativity on the part of the presenter. Perron and Stearns (2010) that Prezi allows for the easy integration of images, texts, audio, video, and animations. Virtanen, Myllärniemi and Wallander (2013) claimed that Prezi is an especially appropriate tool for visual and kinesthetic learners.

Overall research focuses on how these two applications are used by teachers rather than students and this paper attempts to address this gap in the literature.

### III. RESEARCH

#### Method

159 students took a survey with ten questions that asked them to rank Prezi versus PowerPoint. The students were asked about the ease of use of the applications, whether they are fun applications, whether they would use the applications in future presentations, and whether they are good for presenting text and graphics. The answers were ranked using a 7-point Likert-scale. The survey also included questions about their nationality, gender and age; and it concluded with four open ended questions about what they like and dislike about Prezi and PowerPoint.

Of the 159 students who answered the questionnaire, 148 were Thai, 5 were Chinese, and only 1 had a different nationality. However, there were 4 students who did not answer this question. Regarding gender, 111 of the respondents were females, 42 males, and 5 did not answer the question. Finally, all the students who answered the question (18 did not do it) were between 18 to 24 years of age. 34 of them were 18 years old, 45 were 19 years old, 36 of them were 20 years old, then 17 of the students were 21 years old, only 2 were 22 years old, and finally 3 were 23 years old and the other 3 were 24 years old.

	<b>Frequency</b>	<b>%</b>
<b>Nationality</b>		
Thai	148	93.7
Chinese	5	3.2
Other	1	.6
Total	154	97.5
<b>Gender</b>		
Female	111	70.3
Male	42	26.6
Total	153	96.8
<b>Age</b>		
18 years old	34	21.5
19 years old	45	28.5
20 years old	36	22.8
21 years old	17	10.8
22 years old	2	1.3
23 years old	3	1.9
24 years old	3	1.9
Total	140	88.6

In terms of ease of use, 72% of the students agreed that Prezi is easy to use, while 23.4% of the students were neutral, and the rest (7 students) disagreed with the statement. Similarly, 70.9% of the students agreed that PowerPoint is easy to use, while 20.3% were neutral, and the rest (13 students) disagreed. Results show that, in general, both programs are easy to use for the students. Nevertheless, Prezi seems to be considered as a bit

easier to use than PowerPoint. Both programs present a lot of options to design the presentations but the display of the options on the screen can be the reason why students consider Prezi easier to use than PowerPoint.

		Strongly disagree			Neither	Strongly agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Prezi</b>	Freq.	1	4	2	37	41	38	35
	%	.6	2.5	1.3	23.4	25.9	24.1	22.2
<b>PowerPoint</b>	Freq.	2	4	7	32	38	44	30
	%	1.3	2.5	4.4	20.3	24.1	27.8	19.0

In terms of fun to use, 78.5% of the students agreed that Prezi is fun to use, while 13.9% of the students were neutral, and the rest (11 students) disagreed with the statement. Regarding the PowerPoint, 50% of the students agreed that it is fun to use, while 32.3% were neutral. The neutral answer has exactly the same frequency of answers as the strongly agree (5), with 51 answers. The percentage of the students that disagreed that PowerPoint is fun to use is equal to 15.9%. According to the results, it appears that Prezi is more fun to use than PowerPoint in the opinion of the students. The reason can be because it has new options and/or improved options using Flash technology that PowerPoint does not have, such as the possibilities to personalize the presentations, zoom in and out, etc.

		Strongly disagree			Neither	Strongly agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Prezi</b>	Freq.	1	2	8	22	42	39	43
	%	.6	1.3	5.1	13.9	26.6	21.7	27.2
<b>PowerPoint</b>	Freq.	2	6	17	51	51	21	7
	%	1.3	3.8	10.8	32.3	32.3	13.3	4.4

In terms of text usage, 77.8% of the students agreed that Prezi is good for presenting text, while 11.4% of the students were neutral, and the rest (15 students) disagreed with the statement. Regarding the PowerPoint, 67.7% of the students agreed that it is good for presenting text, while 21.5% were neutral. 16 students disagreed with the statement but none of them answered the highest level of disagreement (strongly disagree (1)). The results show that a larger number of students think that Prezi is good for presenting text; however, a larger number of students are neutral. The reason for this can be the possibilities of adding more text in the presentations. In the PowerPoint the space is more limited and if you need to include more text, then you may need to add a new slide. However, in Prezi the user can “play” with the orientation of the presentation, the zoom, the shape, etc. providing more options in the case that you need to add more text.

		Strongly disagree			Neither	Strongly agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Prezi</b>	Freq.	2	6	7	18	34	56	33
	%	1.3	3.8	4.4	1.4	21.5	35.4	20.9
<b>PowerPoint</b>	Freq.	0	3	13	34	47	42	18
	%	.0	1.9	8.2	21.5	29.7	26.6	11.4

In terms of graphics usage, 82.9% of the students agreed that Prezi is good for presenting graphics, while 11.4% were neutral, and the rest (8 students) disagreed with the statement. Regarding the PowerPoint, 55% of the students agreed that it is good for presenting graphics, while 31.6% were neutral. The neutral answer has exactly the same frequency of answers as the strongly agree (5), with 50 answers. The percentage of students that disagreed that PowerPoint is good for presenting graphics is equal to 12.7%. According to the results, Prezi appeared for the students as better than PowerPoint for presenting graphics. The reason can be the number of possibilities for personalizing and displaying graphics and the information with Prezi. PowerPoint may offer more limited options.

		Strongly disagree			Neither	Strongly agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Prezi</b>	Freq.	1	3	4	18	24	48	59
	%	.6	1.9	2.5	11.4	15.2	30.4	37.3
<b>PowerPoint</b>	Freq.	1	5	14	50	50	25	12
	%	.6	3.2	8.9	31.6	31.6	15.8	7.6

Finally, the most important choice is of course future usage. In terms of likelihood to use one or another application again, 70.9% stated that they would use Prezi in future presentations, while 22.2% were neutral. The neutral answer has exactly the same frequency of answers as the strongly agree (5), with 35 answers. The percentage of students that would not use Prezi in future presentations is equal to 6.3%. On the other hand, 67.8% of the students stated that they would use PowerPoint in future presentations, while 20.9% were neutral, and the rest (18 students) would not use PowerPoint in future presentations. The results show that Prezi is more likely to be used in future presentations than PowerPoint. This can be influenced by the ease to use it, the display on the screen, the possibilities of adding, editing and personalizing text, graphics and images, and the options available for the presentations including the rotation of the screen and zoom. As a newer application, Prezi can provide more innovative choices to students to create their own presentations compared to PowerPoint.

		Strongly disagree			Neither	Strongly agree		
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7
<b>Prezi</b>	Freq.	3	1	6	35	35	36	41
	%	1.9	.6	3.8	22.2	22.2	22.8	25.9
<b>PowerPoint</b>	Freq.	1	4	13	33	57	33	17
	%	.6	2.5	8.2	20.9	36.1	20.9	10.8

Including the demographic characteristics of the students in the results, males agree more than females with the possibility of using Prezi for future presentations, with an average of 5.46 for males against 5.37 for females; while the mean is the same for the possibility of using PowerPoint for future presentations (4.95 in both cases). Also, in both cases, females present a higher standard deviation, that shows that the level of agreement has higher variation in females than in males.

	Prezi		PowerPoint	
	Mean	SD	Mean	SD
<b>Female</b>	5.37	1.394	4.95	1.231
<b>Male</b>	5.46	1.247	4.95	1.103
<b>Total</b>	5.39	1.353	4.95	1.191

## DISCUSSION

The students preferred Prezi as a presentation tool in the areas of ease of use, fun to use, text, graphics, and usage in future presentations. As the results of all the previous statements show, Prezi appears to lead to more positive responses, while the responses to PowerPoint was more neutral. The positive response to Prezi suggests that teachers would be well advised to let students use Prezi as a presentation tool due to motivational reasons. Students clearly prefer Prezi due to technological considerations.

Students might not just prefer Prezi due to technological considerations but because of the novelty of Prezi. This could be because PowerPoint is an older technology and therefore, students are more used to utilizing this application and they may associate it to homework from the school or university. On the other hand, Prezi is a newer application and it may stir their curiosity during the first stages of their use, without the association of Prezi and homework. A content analysis in a future study of open ended responses, and a follow up focus group based on the content analysis, may provide a

