# EFFECTIVENESS OF LEARNERS' INTEGRATION OF TECHNOLOGY IN LERANING: A PHENOMENOLOGICAL STUDY INVESTIGATING LEARNER AUTONOMY AND PERSONALIZED LEARNING

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#### ABSTRACT

This phenomenological study explores the lived experiences of adult English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners integrating PowerPoint presentations into their classroom oral presentations. Data was collected from undergraduate students from Bangladesh and USA from semi-structured interviews. Following Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis, data were analyzed. The findings showed that the use of PowerPoint presentations was found to foster learners' autonomy and personalized learning. In addition, adult EFL learners employed various strategies to navigate the challenges. The study offers a detailed perspective on how PowerPoint supports the presentation of oral content, the obstacles learners encounter, and their strategic solutions to optimize learning, thereby promoting autonomy and personalized education. This research will contribute to a more comprehensive understanding of EFL learning and offers practical implications for utilizing PowerPoint effectively in EFL classrooms. Further research is recommended to extend this exploration into diverse EFL contexts and demographic groups.

Keywords: Learners technology, PowerPoint, oral presentation, EFL learners.

#### **INTRODUCTION**

In the 21st century, and especially in a post-pandemic world, integrating technology into education has become a common practice worldwide. Teachers and learners are now integrating technology into their teaching and learning process. Furthermore, most learners belong to the Gen Z generation, known for their tech-savvy nature, and technology has become an integral part of every aspect of their lives, including classroom learning. Learners have successfully integrated technology into the classroom, making it an essential part of education, especially for language learning. One of the various technological tools used in language classrooms is PowerPoint presentation software, which has gained popularity among learners. A growing body of research supports using PowerPoint presentations by learners, citing several benefits. Prior research has extensively explored the use of PowerPoint presentations in the EFL classroom, examining various facets such as their impact on student's performance and attitudes (Jalali & Talebi, 2014), students' attitudes towards the use of computer-mediated PowerPoint presentations (Tabatabaei & Bandari, 2012), and the effect of PowerPoint-supported lectures on immediate comprehension and longerterm retention of content by foreign language students (Gordani & Khajavi, 2020). Moreover, researchers have delved into how PowerPoint presentations can enhance students' use of cohesive devices in academic writing (Rajabi & Ketabi, 2012), how it can be utilized in developing multimedia-based teaching and learning materials (Osman et al., 2022), and how it can impact students' achievement and information retention (Mansour, 2019). Even in a non-EFL setting, it has been demonstrated that presentation-based learning could enhance active learning and selfconfidence (Sugeng & Suryani, 2018). However, despite these findings, gaps in the research have been observed. The previous studies primarily focused on the effects of PowerPoint presentations on learner outcomes without adequately investigating the learners' experiences and perceptions of integrating PowerPoint presentations into their classroom oral presentations. As EFL learners' perceptions can significantly impact their engagement and learning, a study that explores this perspective from a phenomenological lens is both novel and necessary.

Furthermore, prior research has focused on younger learners, while adult EFL learners remain under-explored. Given adult learners' unique learning styles and needs, it is crucial to understand how they perceive and navigate the use of PowerPoint presentations in their EFL learning process. Thus, this study aims to addresses these research gaps by providing a comprehensive understanding of adult EFL learners' experiences and perceptions of integrating PowerPoint presentations into their oral presentations in the classroom, and how integration of PowerPoint foster their leaners' autonomy and personalized learning, thereby contributing to the growing body of knowledge in this area.

This study will make a significant contribution to knowledge in terms of filling the research gap and providing practical insights. A growing body of research has investigated the effectiveness of PowerPoint integration in language classrooms, but most of them have focused on younger learners. This study fills the gap in the literature by examining the experiences of PowerPoint presentations of adult EFL learners. In addition, by exploring the experience, the study outcome

can help improve EFL learners' speaking and presentation skills. The study outcome will provide practical insights for EFL teachers, policymakers, and curriculum designers in Bangladesh and other similar contexts.

## **Research Questions:**

The study will investigate the following research questions:

- 1. What are the experiences of the EFL learners while integrating PowerPoint in their oral classroom presentations regarding learner autonomy and personalized learning experience?
- 2. How do EFL learners navigate the challenges in integrating PowerPoint in their oral classroom presentations?

## LITERATURE REVIEW

In recent years, there has been growing interest in integrating PowerPoint presentations in EFL (English as a Foreign Language) learning environments, highlighting a shift from traditional teaching methods towards the incorporation of technology-assisted learning (Gordani & Khajavi, 2020). Many studies have focused on the effectiveness of using PowerPoint presentations for instructional purposes, often emphasizing their positive effects on students' performance and attitudes toward learning (Jalali & Talebi, 2014; Tabatabaei & Bandari, 2012). Further, research suggests that PowerPoint presentations can enhance EFL learners' content knowledge attainment and retention over time (Gordani & Khajavi, 2020).

However, these studies have predominantly emphasized the pedagogical use of PowerPoint, that is, teachers using PowerPoint to facilitate instruction, as opposed to its use by learners for classroom oral presentations. There is less attention given to the preparation of PowerPoint presentations by EFL learners for their own learning and presentation purposes. Moreover, while the benefits of PowerPoint have been observed in terms of improving the appropriate use of cohesive devices in EFL academic writing (Rajabi & Ketabi, 2012), a comprehensive exploration of the impact of PowerPoint presentations on EFL learners' oral presentation skills seem to be missing from the literature.

Another methodological gap lies in the lack of phenomenological studies, which would provide a deeper understanding of learners' experiences and perspectives on integrating PowerPoint presentations into their learning process. Osman et al. (2022) highlighted the potential of PowerPoint to enhance learner understanding by developing multimedia-based teaching and learning materials. While this finding is valuable, it primarily focuses on Arabic language learning, not EFL contexts. The study by Mansour (2019) explored the impact of PowerPoint on student achievement and retention of information but failed to incorporate learners' perspectives or experiences in the research.

Therefore, this paper aims to address these gaps by investigating adult EFL learners' experiences of integrating PowerPoint presentations into their classroom oral presentations using a phenomenological approach. The research focuses on adult learners, and how integrating

PowerPoint foster their learner autonomy and personalized learning, an area less examined in previous studies, providing fresh insights into their unique interaction with technology in EFL learning contexts. This study's findings will potentially enhance the understanding of PowerPoint integration in EFL learning and could offer practical implications for EFL instruction.

#### METHODOLOGY

#### Research Approach

I selected a phenomenological approach as phenomenological research is an approach that seeks to understand the lived experiences of individuals about a particular phenomenon or concept. In this case, a phenomenological approach is beneficial for this study. The phenomenon of interest is the integration of PowerPoint presentations by adult EFL learners in their classroom oral presentations. Phenomenology allows researchers to obtain rich, in-depth insights into participants' experiences. Given the focus of this study on learners' experiences and perceptions of using PowerPoint in their presentations, phenomenology would offer a more nuanced and comprehensive understanding than other research approaches. In addition, phenomenological research emphasizes the first-person perspective. It seeks to understand the participants' viewpoints and how they make sense of their experiences. This is valuable in an educational context where learners' perspectives and interpretations can significantly impact their learning process and outcomes.

## Description of Site

I conducted the research on the Zoom platform with students currently studying at an undergraduate level in Bangladesh and USA. The interviews were conducted on the Zoom platform due to different locations. I selected my research participants from Bangladesh and USA because selecting research participants from Bangladesh and the USA allows for a diverse representation of cultural backgrounds. By including participants from different countries, the study captures a wider range of perspectives and experiences related to classroom oral presentations and the integration of PowerPoint.

## Participants

For this phenomenological study research, my criterion for selecting participants depends on the research questions and the nature of the phenomenological study, such as relevance, information richness, diversity, availability, and ethical consideration. My poll of potential participants were current first-year undergraduate students in Bangladesh and USA. I selected my participants from here for the following reasons: firstly, these students have not prepared any PowerPoint classroom oral presentations before. As a result, I was able to collect genuine data on learners' first-time experiences regarding integrating PowerPoint presentations into classroom oral presentations. It helped me to have more relevant and rich data. Secondly, to ensure gender and country diversity, I selected one male and one female student from different backgrounds. This variety helped me gather more enriching data to explore. I selected the participants based on their availability. The participants who fulfilled the above criteria and were willing to participate in my research, I chose among them.

#### Sampling

In this phenomenological study, convenience sampling was used to select participants. The criteria for selection were based on the study's relevance, richness of information, diversity, and availability. Participants included first-year undergraduate students from Bangladesh and the USA, chosen for their lack of experience in preparing PowerPoint presentations for classroom oral presentations, ensuring authentic data on their initial experiences. The selection also aimed to ensure gender and country diversity, contributing to a more enriching and varied data set for the research.

#### Ethical Consideration and/or My Positionality

My position in this research was as an external researcher. My prior experience with one of the participants' institutions helped me understand the educational and classroom setting and courses. However, it might also introduce potential biases and assumptions about the students and their language learning abilities. Regarding ethical considerations, I obtained informed consent from the adult learners participating in the study, clearly explaining the purpose and scope of the research, potential benefits and risks, and their right to withdraw from the study at any time.

In addition, I considered potential power dynamics between one of the participants and me, as I was a former teacher at one of the participants' institutions. As an external researcher, I strived to maintain a neutral and unbiased position and avoid influencing the participants' behavior or responses. I followed proper research protocols, including obtaining ethical clearance and adhering to appropriate data collection and analysis procedures. After the data analysis, I verified the analysis from the participants whether their data was explained correctly or not misinterpreted in the research work.

#### Data Collection

The data collection process involved interviews with a Bangladeshi and a US adult EFL learners to explore their experiences with integrating PowerPoint presentations into their classroom oral presentations. The interview questions aimed to gain insights into their experiences of integrating PowerPoint in their EFL classroom oral presentations. I collected data using semi-structured interviews. According to Patten (2018), semi-structured interviews are a valuable research tool that can produce in-depth and meaningful responses from interviewees. Patten explains that using open-ended questions in semi-structured interviews allows the interviewer to explore topics in detail while also giving the interviewee the freedom to express their thoughts and opinions more fully. In this research, I used semi-structured interviews as they were an effective tool for data collection. Semi-structured interviews helped me explore topics in detail and to gain an in-depth understanding of the experience under investigation. I used open-ended questions based on "how" and "why", I encouraged interviewees to express their thoughts and opinions more fully, which can provide rich and detailed information about the case. In addition, this form of the interview allowed me to follow any new lead or direction with follow-up questions that arose from

participants' sharing experiences. I asked the participants about their experiences with using PowerPoint technology in their EFL class oral presentations. I asked them about their preparation process for presentations that involve technology and how they believe technology can enhance their presentations.

To gather the data, I utilized an AI-based software tool called Otter Speaker for recording purposes. Additionally, to capture both verbal and non-verbal data, I conducted video interviews on the Zoom platform and recorded them. To ensure comprehensive data collection, I manually transcribed the interviews, employing transcription signs for non-verbal cues. For instance, pauses or interruptions in speech were denoted using ellipses (...), breaks in speech were indicated with a dash (-), non-verbal cues like laughter or sighs were enclosed in parentheses (), overlapping or simultaneous speech was marked with braces {}, important points or clarifications were denoted with an asterisk (\*), and emphasis on specific words or phrases was represented with an underline (\_). These transcription signs were used to facilitate the gathering of detailed and nuanced data for analysis.

## Data Analysis

I utilized Braun and Clarke's (2006) thematic analysis approach, the data was systematically analyzed as it is an effective method for identifying, analyzing, and interpreting patterns of meaning ('themes') within qualitative data. This methodology provided the flexibility and accessibility needed for this research context. The data was processed following the six stages outlined below:

**Familiarizing with the Data:** The initial step involved meticulously examining the collected data. This thorough exploration facilitated the recognition of relevant points and concepts, laying the foundation for the development of initial codes.

**Generating Initial Codes**: With a comprehensive understanding of the data, initial codes were developed. These codes were organized into various levels. The coding process yielded numerous codes, such as use of technology in education, self-learning resources, teacher guidance and support, student experiences and feelings, and the effectiveness of specific courses.

**Searching for Themes:** The subsequent stage involved grouping the derived codes into potential themes and compiling all related coded data within these themes. Several themes emerged from these codes, including the role of technological integration in education, self-directed learning and external resources, the teacher's role and pedagogical support, learning experiences and emotional response, and the impact of specific educational courses.

**Reviewing Themes:** At this stage, the relevance of the themes to the coded extracts and the complete data set was assessed. This step often necessitates a refining process where themes may be combined, separated, or discarded based on their relevance and contribution to the understanding of the data.

**Defining and Naming Themes:** Once the five main themes were identified, each was defined and refined. The 'core essence' of each theme was determined, and each theme was appropriately

named to reflect which aspect of the data it represented. This stage involved crafting clear definitions and assigning meaningful names to each theme.

Producing the Report: In the final phase, a coherent and engaging narrative was developed to tell the 'story' of the data as seen through the themes. This step entailed integrating the analytic narrative with data extracts and situating the analysis within the context of the existing literature. The themes that emerged – 'Digital Literacy in Education', 'Autonomous Learning through Online Resources', 'Pedagogical Guidance and Mentorship', 'Emotional Experience and Engagement', and 'Influence of Specialized Coursework' – provide a holistic understanding of the integration of PowerPoint presentations by adult EFL learners for their classroom oral presentations. These themes shed light on the roles of technology, self-directed learning, teacher guidance, emotional experiences, and specialized courses in this process, offering valuable insights for future pedagogical approaches and strategies.

#### **Ensuring Trustworthiness**

The importance of transparency, rigor, and trustworthiness is important in qualitative research, and the researchers should be reflective, ethical, and self-aware in their research practices (Tracy, 2010; Trainor & Graue, 2014; Merriam & Tisdell, 2016). In this research, I was transparent in my methods, processes, and interpretations to enhance my research's trustworthiness. For example, I used different elements of transparency, such as methodological transparency, interpretive transparency, and narrative transparency, to ensure trustworthiness (Trainor & Graue, 2014). I ensured methodological transparency, focusing on providing readers with a clear understanding of the technical aspects of the research design, data collection, and analysis. I ensured interpretive transparency, emphasizing the importance of providing information on the logic of inquiry and how I arrived at their conclusions. Additionally, I implemented member checking as a method to ensure the trustworthiness of the findings. After collecting and analyzing the data, I shared the results, including the transcriptions and interpretations, with the participants. This enabled them to review and validate the accuracy and authenticity of the findings based on their own experiences.

#### RESULTS

#### **Experiences of EFL learners integrating PowerPoint**

The findings of the phenomenological study on adult EFL learners' integration of PowerPoint in their classroom oral presentations revealed a range of experiences and perceptions. The use of PowerPoint presentations was found to boost learners' confidence and enhance their comprehension of the content. However, participants also faced challenges such as information overload and dependence on visuals. Despite these challenges, learners reported that PowerPoint facilitated effective communication and expressed a need for more training in presentation creation. Strategies to navigate the challenges included simplifying content, balancing verbal and visual communication, seeking technical help, and emphasizing the importance of training and practice. From the participant responses, several codes emerged that highlight the various experiences of EFL learners while integrating PowerPoint in their oral classroom presentations. These codes range from 'confidence boost', 'enhanced comprehension', 'foster learner autonomy,' 'personalized learning opportunity,' and 'effective communication' to 'technical issues', 'information overload', and 'dependence on visuals'.

A key theme that emerged from these codes was 'Boosted Confidence'. Participants acknowledged that using PowerPoint presentations in their classroom oral presentations helped them feel more prepared and confident. This was complemented by the theme of 'Enhanced Comprehension', where learners reported that the visual elements in PowerPoint helped them understand the content better.

However, learners also expressed some challenges in the use of PowerPoint, giving rise to themes such as 'Information Overload' and 'Dependence on Visuals'. Some participants felt overwhelmed by the amount of information they had to include in the presentations, while others realized they became too reliant on the visuals and struggled to present without them.

Despite these challenges, another theme that emerged was 'Effective Communication'. Learners reported that PowerPoint allowed them to present their ideas more clearly and engage their audience more effectively. However, they also acknowledged the need for more training in creating effective presentations, bringing up the theme 'Need for Training'.

Overall, the findings provide valuable insights for improving pedagogical strategies related to enhancing classroom oral presentations through the integration of PowerPoint.

RQ	Theme	Definition	Quote
RQ 1: Experiences	Fostering learner	This theme reflects how	"Preparing and using
of EFL learners	autonomy and	using PowerPoint	PowerPoint by myself
integrating	personalized	presentations in oral	made me feel more
PowerPoint.	learning	presentations boosts	prepared, responsible for
		learners' confidence.	my own learning and
			confident in my
			presentations
			(Participant 1)."
		This theme captures how	"The visuals in
		visual elements in	PowerPoint
		PowerPoint presentations	presentations helped me
	Enhanced	help enhance learners'	understand the content
	Comprehension	comprehension.	better (Participant 2)."
		This theme reflects how	"PowerPoint helped me
	Effective	PowerPoint presentations	present my ideas more
	Communication	enable learners to	clearly and engage my

## Table 1. Emerging themes for RQ1

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	communicate their ideas			leas	audie	ence	e effecti	vely
	more effectively.			(Participant 1)."				
	This	theme re	eflects	the	"I	so	metimes	felt
	challenge of dealing with an overwhelming amount		overv	whe	lmed by	the		
			unt	amount of information I				
	of	informat	tion	in	had	to	include in	the
Information	PowerPoint		presentations					
Overload	presentations.		(Participant 2)."					

#### Navigating the challenges:

When it came to navigating the challenges in integrating PowerPoint in their oral presentations, learners reported several strategies. Some focused on 'Simplifying Content', avoiding information overload by sticking to key points. Others learned to 'Balance Verbal and Visual Communication' to not become overly reliant on the visual elements of the presentation. To overcome technical issues, learners reported 'Seeking Technical Help', showing resilience in the face of difficulties. Additionally, to improve their presentation skills, they expressed a desire for 'More Training and Practice', highlighting the importance of continuous learning in using technology effectively.

The themes that emerged from the data offer valuable insights into the experiences of adult EFL learners in integrating PowerPoint into their oral classroom presentations. They shed light on both the positive impacts and the challenges of this approach, providing guidance for future pedagogical strategies.

Table 2. Emerging th	nemes for RQ 2		
RQ	Theme	Definition	Quote
	Simplifying		
RQ 2: Navigating	Content		"To avoid overwhelming
challenges in			my audience, I learned to
integrating		This theme reflects how	focus on key points and
PowerPoint.		learners simplify their	present only the most
		content to avoid	crucial information
		information overload.	(Participant 1)."
	Balance Verbal		"I had to learn to present
	and Visual	This theme reflects how	without relying too
	Communication	learners practice	heavily on my slides.
		balancing verbal and	This improved my oral
		visual elements to reduce	communication skills
		dependence on slides.	(Participant 2)."
	Seeking	This theme reflects	"Whenever I faced a
	Technical Help	learners' resilience in	technical issue, I would

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	seeking technical help to	ask for help from			
	resolve issues related to	classmates or look up			
	PowerPoint use.	solutions online			
		(Participant 1)."			
		"I believe we could			
	This theme underscores	benefit from more			
Need for Training	the learners' desire for	training sessions on how			
	more extensive training in	to create effective			
	creating and delivering	PowerPoint			
	PowerPoint	presentations			
	presentations.	(Participant 2)."			

#### DISCUSSIONS

The first research question focused on learners' perceptions of using PowerPoint for their oral presentations. Analysis of the data revealed several themes, each highlighting different facets of this experience. One prominent theme, "Fostering learner autonomy and personalized learning," indicated that learners felt empowered in their learning process by preparing PowerPoint presentations for their speaking tasks. This practice was seen as enhancing their autonomy and facilitating personalized learning skills. This outcome aligns with Noor's (2021) findings, where Bangladeshi tertiary level ESL students expressed a positive attitude towards learner autonomy. They believed that effectively implementing this approach in English-speaking classrooms would be advantageous. This connection suggests a broader relevance of the study's findings, echoing similar sentiments and experiences in varied educational contexts. In addition, learners found PowerPoint helpful for organizing and visually presenting their ideas. The theme of "Enhancing Communication Skills" suggested that PowerPoint improves learners' verbal delivery by providing visual support. Rajabi & Ketabi (2012) also found similar results, emphasizing PowerPoint's impact on verbal presentations. On the other hand, the theme of "Increased Confidence" revealed that learners felt more confident when using PowerPoint, which hasn't been extensively explored in previous studies. However, challenges were also identified, such as the "Information Overload" theme, where learners struggled to condense vast amounts of data into concise slides, as discussed in Mansour's (2019) research. In response to the second research question, the "Simplifying Content" theme emerged as a key strategy, aligning with Sugeng & Survani's (2018) findings. Learners focused on essential points to address information overload. The "Dependence on Visuals" theme highlighted a challenge of over-reliance on slides, which learners managed by adopting a balanced approach between verbal and visual communication, as suggested by Jalali & Talebi (2014). Learners showed resilience by seeking technical help to overcome "Technical Issues," displaying a problem-solving attitude observed in adult learners more broadly. Lastly, the

"Need for Training" theme emphasized the importance of structured instruction and practice to improve PowerPoint skills, echoing Osman et al.'s (2022) study. Overall, these findings provide valuable insights into adult EFL learners' experiences with PowerPoint in oral presentations and suggest the need for training and pedagogical adjustments to optimize its use. Further research could explore specific training interventions to enhance learners' integration of PowerPoint into their oral presentations.

#### LIMITATIONS

One limitation of this study is the sample selection. The research participants were undergraduate students from Bangladesh and the USA, which may not be representative of all adult EFL learners. The findings may be specific to the cultural and educational contexts of these countries and may not generalize to other populations. To enhance the generalizability of the findings, future research could include a more diverse and larger sample of participants from various cultural backgrounds and educational levels. Another limitation is the reliance on selfreported data. The study primarily gathered data through interviews and participant reflections, which are subjective in nature and may be influenced by social desirability or recall bias. To mitigate this limitation, future research could consider incorporating additional methods, such as observations or peer evaluations, to provide a more comprehensive and objective understanding of learners' experiences with integrating PowerPoint in oral presentations.

#### IMPLICATION AND FURTHER RESEARCH

These findings have implications for educators and institutions, emphasizing the importance of incorporating PowerPoint training into curricula and providing clear guidelines on content curation. By considering these insights, educators can design more effective teaching and learning strategies that utilize PowerPoint as a valuable learning tool. Further research can delve into specific training interventions that can enhance learners' proficiency in integrating PowerPoint into their oral presentations. Overall, this study contributes to the existing literature and provides valuable guidance for improving pedagogical practices in enhancing classroom oral presentations through the integration of PowerPoint.

## CONCLUSION

In conclusion, the phenomenological study delved into adult EFL learners' experiences of integrating PowerPoint in their oral presentations. The investigation's primary focus was on learners' perceptions of using PowerPoint, with analysis uncovering several themes that illuminated various aspects of this experience. A key finding was the theme of "Fostering learner autonomy and personalized learning," highlighting how learners felt empowered by preparing PowerPoint presentations for their speaking activities. This approach was perceived as not only enhancing their autonomy but also aiding in the development of personalized learning skills. The study's findings emphasized the multifaceted impact of PowerPoint integration, showcasing both its strengths in improving organization, visual appeal, and communication effectiveness, and its

role in boosting learners' confidence, a topic not extensively probed in previous research. The challenges identified, such as information overload and reliance on visuals, prompted learners to adopt strategies like simplifying content and achieving a balance between verbal and visual communication. Demonstrating resilience in resolving technical problems, the learners also indicated a need for structured training to refine their PowerPoint capabilities.

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