

Effects of a Graphic Organizer on the Seductive Details Effect

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ABSTRACT

Inserting interesting but irrelevant information in order to secure students' attention often hinders learning (known as seductive details effect). The current study examined a potential interaction between seductive details and a graphic organizer. Students read a passage that included seductive details, a graphic organizer, both, or neither and then took a quiz. Results suggest that the graphic organizer may have mitigated but did not reverse the seductive details effect, supporting both the diversion and the distraction hypothesis.

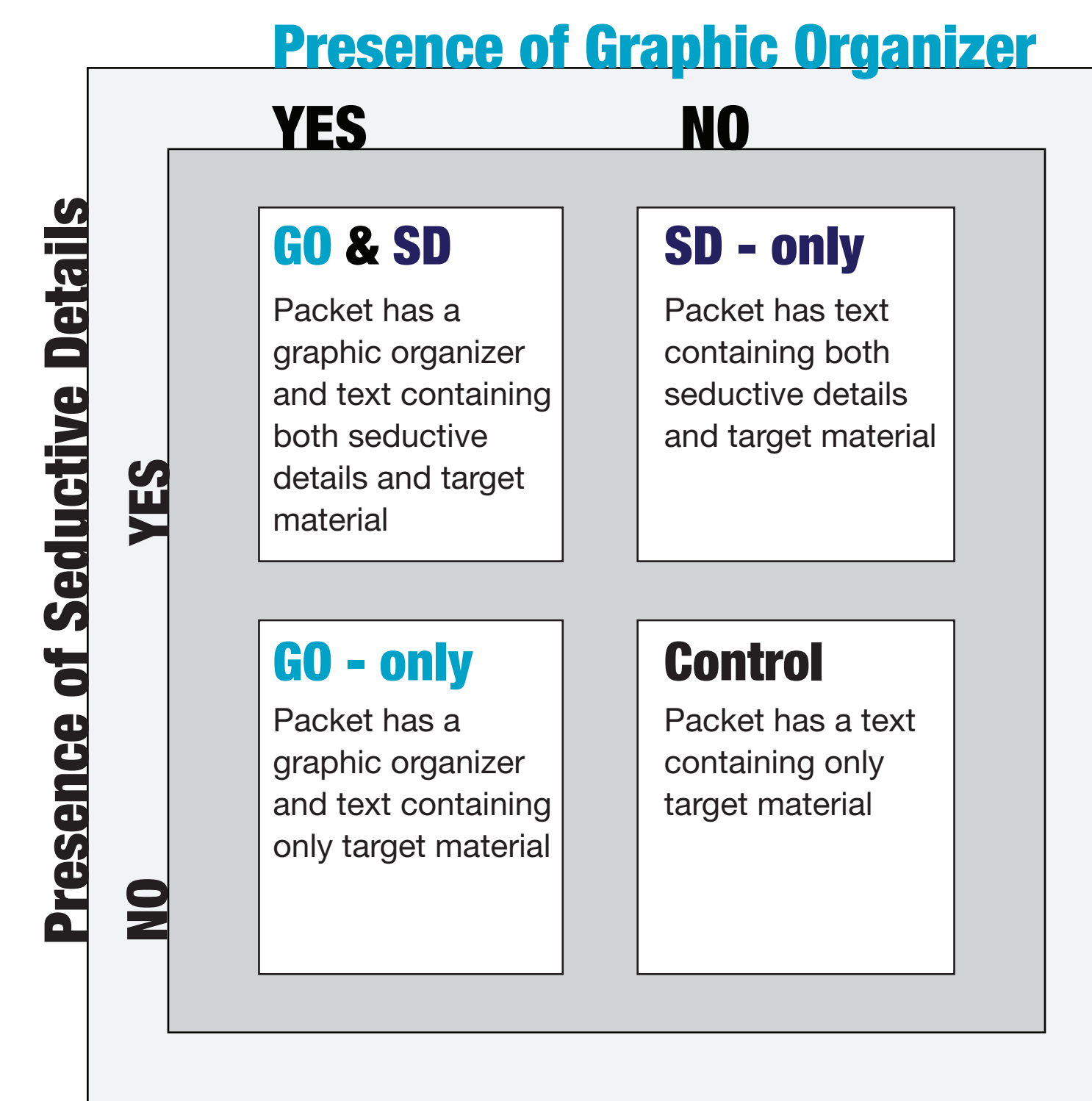
INTRODUCTION

The current study was designed to examine the interaction between seductive details and graphic organizers. Graphic organizers may help learners make connections among the ideas in the text by visually representing the concepts to be learned. When connected to the target text, seductive details should facilitate the assimilation of target material to conceptual anchors already in long-term memory. This graphic organizer was designed to make the connection between the seductive details and the target material clearer. It was predicted that presenting a graphic organizer prior to seductive details would facilitate the assimilation of target material to conceptual anchors already in long-term memory and thus improve learning.

METHOD & MATERIALS

Participants were 207 undergraduates. Four different packets were prepared according to condition: 1) graphic organizer and seductive details (GO+SD); 2) graphic organizer only (GO-only); 3) seductive details only (SD-only); and 4) Control. The target material consisted of a description of Freud's five psychosexual stages. The seductive details were interesting, but irrelevant, information about Freud's personal life. These seductive details were context-dependent (i.e., related to the target content about the psychosexual stages). The graphic organizer was designed to connect the seductive details with target material in the text passage. After reviewing the packet, participants completed a quiz measuring both target material and seductive details information.

EXPERIMENTAL CONDITIONS



RESULTS

Average recall accuracy on quiz items across groups

Condition	n	M	SD
GO-only	51	9.75	2.38
Control	50	9.20	2.64
GO+SD	52	8.83	2.32
SD-only	54	7.80	3.08

Significant differences:

GO-only > SD-only; and Control > SD-only.

DISCUSSION

Results from this study indicate that a graphic organizer designed to link seductive details with the corresponding target material did not reverse the seductive details effect and enhance target-material learning. Rather, results suggest that the graphic organizer may have moderated the negative impact of including seductive details prior to target material in text. These results do not endorse the presentation of seductive details prior to target material, even when graphic organizers designed to link the seductive details and target material are provided before the

seductive details and target material. However, if authors insist on including seductive details before the target material text, then they should also include a graphic organizer. Although the current results suggest that including the seductive details in a graphic organizer, but not in the text, could enhance target-material learning, additional studies that can explain these findings are needed before any applied recommendation can be made.