Using Ugly Fonts in Educational Materials?

In school or college, we frequently spotted a improper use of fonts in education materials, mostly the slideshow. A rainbow colored text and a very small text is just a few case that make us suffers. Although many of those mistake is unforgivable, in some case, the improper use of fonts can increase our understanding

Diemand-Yauman et al. (2011) concluded that: "information in hard-to-read fonts was better remembered than easier to read information in a controlled laboratory settings". Twenty eight participants were asked to study the anatomy of fictional aliens, some get a study material in a easy-to-read fonts (fluent materials), while the others get a hard-to-read fonts (influent materials). After they read the material for 90 s and do some meaningless things for 15 minutes, the participants is tested. The result is participants with a fluent materials can answer 72.8% of the questions, while the participants with a disfluent materials can answer 86.5%.

To prove the hypothesis in uncontrolled condition, Diemand-Yauman et al. (2011) change the font of reading materials in high school - the power points, the handouts, and the worksheets - into Monotype Corsiva, Comic Sans Italicized, and Haettenschweiler. And the result is the students in the disfluent condition is performed better than the students in the fluent condition. As the researchers says:

This study demonstrated that student retention of material across a wide range of subjects (science and humanities classes) and difficulty levels (regular, Honors and Advanced Placement) can be significantly improved in naturalistic settings by presenting reading material in a format that is slightly harder to read (Diemand-Yauman et al. 2011).

Also...
The potential for improving educational practices through cognitive interventions is immense. If a simple change of font can significantly increase student performance, one can only imagine the number of beneficial cognitive interventions waiting to be discovered. Fluency demonstrates how we have the potential to make big improvements in the performance of our students and education system as a whole (Diemand-Yauman et al. 2011).

Wingdings... Let's use Wingdings...[/caption]

Sadly, Diemand-Yauman et al. (2011) also stated that: "It is important to ascertain the point at which material is no longer disfluent, but instead illegible, or otherwise unnecessarily difficult to the point that it hinders learning." So, I cannot use Wingdings in my materials :(. 

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Anyway, I will try to discuss this in the next HCI class.

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