

The Interactive Effect of Multimedia and Formative Assessment on Promoting Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners' Pragmatic Fluency

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ABSTRACT

This study aimed to examine the interactive effect of multimedia and formative assessment on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learners' pragmatic fluency. To this aim, 80 male high school students in grade eleventh from Andimeshk, Khuzestan, Iran were selected. Then, the selected participants were divided into four equal groups of 20 and a pre-test of pragmatic fluency was administered to them. After that, the control group was taught via traditional method. The first experimental group was exposed to presenting the instructional materials b using multimedia with summative assessment, the second experimental group was exposed to multimedia using formative assessment and the third experimental group received the treatment through conventional approach with formative assessment. At the end of the treatment, the participants were given a teacher-made post-test of pragmatic fluency. The analysis of the results showed that the experimental groups outperformed the control group on the post-test. The results suggest that teachers should be aware of their suitable methods for teaching their learners and they should teach their students based on methods and strategies to enhance their learning and motivation.

Keywords: Formative Assessment, Multimedia Assessment, Pragmatic Fluency

1. Introduction

Education is a crucial instrument that contributes to the overall aspects of the national progress. It has a great effect on the students' life in establishing their sense of citizenship and preparing them for the world of work. However, realizing the potential of the students depends on the quality of education, particularly the quality of the curriculum (Airasian, 1994).

To put a given curriculum, assessment is one of the elements of instructional process that plays an important role to improve learning in educational institution as part and parcel of instructional process. It is a basic tool of education to check the awareness of learning on the part of the learners. Without assessment, it is difficult for educators to get refined information about the educational practices (Muluken, 2006). Airasian (1994) cited in that assessment is the process of collecting, interpreting and synthesizing information to help teachers to understand their pupils, plan and monitor instruction and establish a conducive classroom atmosphere. Reece and Walker (2003) also defined assessment as the process of obtaining information about how many students know the importance of assessment. In addition, Madaus and Kallaghan (1993) cited in the ICDR (2004) contend that assessment in the classroom is highly based on teachers' observation of students as they go about their normal learning activities. For them, assessment is beyond testing and it involves observational techniques other than testing to collect information on overall students' performance.

The trend of using tests and examinations at the end of a semester or a year as a mere mode of assessment does not by itself prove the learners' excellence in different aspects. In this respect, Mulu (2005) suggested that a onetime final examination or test does not bring a complete or true picture of students' performance including the higher order thinking skills. That is to say, examination or test cannot measure all that the students learn because their effectiveness is limited

to assessing the entire complex learning outcomes. To overcome this, it will be much more helpful if the assessment is employed on a continuous basis using different strategies.

The ultimate goal of learning a language is to be able to successfully communicate with other people. In order to reach this goal, one needs various skills in different aspects of language. Communication involves two active processes of production and reception of the message. In other words, it includes processes of creation of meaningful messages in the two channels. Learners are concerned about how they could learn another language and what they could do to make this learning easier (Bialystok, 2001). It is of great importance to consider all skills and also pay attention to the factors inside the classroom that have an impact on teachers and students' performance in speaking skill.

As an international language, English is spoken, learnt and understood even in those countries where it is not a native's language. It is playing a major role in all walks of life including many sectors including medicine, engineering, education, advanced studies, business, technology, banking, computing, tourism etc. (Benjamin, 1971). All our software developments today, the communication facilities available to us through internet, our access to a variety of websites are all being carried out in English. Most of the research works are conducted and compiled in English. As a result, English is being taught and learned around the world as a second/foreign language today (Bialystok, 2001).

Among the four language skills, speaking is probably the most important skill for students learning English as a Second Language (ESL) or English as a Foreign Language (EFL) in academic contexts (Carrell, 1988). The importance of speaking skills, hence is enormous for the learners of any language. The use of language is an activity which takes place within the confines of our community.

In an education system centered in teaching and learning, assessment should promote learning, but it has been noted by (Zessoultes & Gardner, 1991) that some assessments often oppose the emergence of learning and there is a great lack of congruence among the objectives pursued various learning and classroom strategies chosen by teachers to assess these learning. Bloom and Madaus (1971) in several studies divided the evaluation into three functions: a prevention learning difficulties or “diagnostic assessment“, function for regulating learning or “formative assessment“, and a function certificate or social recognition “summative assessment“.

2. Review of the Literature

There are different researches that investigate the formative assessment, and all of them to find the importance of formative assessment, from the pre-school to undergraduates. Pritchard (2005) focuses more on children with mild handicaps and on the use of the assessment information by teachers. Via applying the experimental and control groups with assessment activities, the results found that the handicapped children presented the larger learning outcomes in comparison with the normal children in this study. Furthermore, Isa Cox, and Killingsworth (1999) stress that formative assessment motivated children to learn via continuous evaluation, it is proved in their work, they have done in six different regions in the united states. The researchers concluded that “Teachers had enhanced confidence in their powers to make referral decisions wisely” (p. 9).

Moreover, Levinson (1979) thought that the frequent testing is the cause of mastery of learning. So they did an experiment in which they divided students in four groups, two groups were given to the experienced teachers, and the other two groups were given to the novice teachers for a period of eighteen weeks the researchers by the end discover that the frequent testing is beneficial for learning. However, Sadler (1989) emphasizes that the effective and experienced teachers can provide corrective and effective feedback.

Black and William (1998) show that from all the works above, in different ages, several subjects and several countries, formative assessment is successful and effective, in order to have successful formative assessment there are some guide points:

- All such work involves new ways to enhance feedback from students to their teacher that require new methods of pedagogy so involving significant changes in classroom practice.
- Underlying the various approaches are assumptions about what makes for effective learning, in particular that pupils have to be actively involved.
- For assessment to function formatively, the results have to be used to adjust teaching and learning.
- Several of these studies show that improved formative assessment, so reduces the spread of attainment while also raising it over all
- The ways in which assessment can affect the motivation and self-esteem of pupils, and the benefits of engaging pupils in self-assessment, both deserves careful attention.

Formative assessment is intended to have a specific and positive impact on learning, whereas routine classroom assessment maybe as much to do with modifying behavior as improving understanding, so this form of assessment faces a lot of challenges, they are listed below, and briefly described:

Purpose: the most important challenge, when we implement formative assessment in the classroom, we have to identify clear purpose for the assessment, and its focus is on the learners and the appropriate feedback provided to them (Andraide & Cizek, 2010, p. 8).

Resources: is the second challenge that faces the formative assessment. This latter requires: teachers with great deal of experience, time for planning, feedback, and the important role of the administration. All those resources and others, in order to get effective assessment program.

Preparation: training is a significant challenge. Popham (2009), and other researchers stressed training for teachers in order to have well implemented formative assessment in classrooms. Teachers must go through pre-service and in-service training.

Validity: according to Cizek (2009) validity refers to the degree to which evidence supports the interpretations or inferences that are intended to be drawn from assessment information.

Accommodation: it is an important challenge for the future of formative assessment, because it is provided to enable all test takers, to evaluate the students with special needs to know their level that means what they know, and what they do not know.

Compliance: legislations and many state laws are concerned with the summative assessment, and there are numerous questions that should be answered about formative assessment, this represents an unclear challenge for implementing formative assessment in a more systematic way.

Time: is from the successful keys of formative assessment is the good division or allocation of time for both teachers and students.

All those challenges, the aim is to create a better balance between “assessment of learning” and “assessment for learning” in the classroom situation.

Black and William (1998) did a study about this fact that whether formative assessment develops academic standards in the classroom, presents that efforts to improve formative assessment can cause significant learning results and the analysis of findings has presented that feedback has positive benefits on learning and achievement across all content areas, knowledge, skill types and levels of education (Black & William, 1998).

A study by Struyven, Dochy, and Jansen (2005) was conducted to investigate the correlation between assessment and students’ approaches towards learning. This study showed a comprehensive review of students’ perceptions about assessment making a considerable

contribution in understanding the effect of assessment in higher education. The study was performed via reviewing web and education databases, such as ERIC, the Web of Science and Psycinfo from the years 1980 to 2002. The results presents that the mentioned studies were empirical in content and the findings. The study identified that “assessment has an important influence on students’ learning” (Struven et al, 2005, p. 326). Moreover, the researchers discussed, “learner’s experience of evaluation and assessment determines the way in which the students approach learning” by the same token, the way “a student thinks about learning, determines the way he tackles evaluation task” (Struyven et al, 2005, p. 326).

3. Research Question and Null Hypothesis

The following research questions were answered in this study:

RQ1. Does exploiting multimedia and summative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic fluency in speaking?

RQ2. Does exploiting multimedia and formative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic fluency in speaking?

RQ3. Does exploiting conventional approach and formative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learners’ pragmatic fluency in speaking?

In order to conduct the current study, the following hypotheses had been formulated:

HO1. Exploiting multimedia and summative assessment do not have any impacts on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner’s pragmatic fluency in speaking?

HO2. Exploiting multimedia and formative assessment do not have any impacts on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner’s pragmatic fluency in speaking?

HO3. Does exploiting conventional approach and formative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner’s pragmatic fluency in speaking?

4. Method

4.1 Participants

In this study, the researcher used the 80 male students in grade eleventh in Imam Sadegh high school in Andimeshk, Khuzestan, Iran. Their age ranged between 16 and 17. This high school had students in fields of mathematics, science and literature. But, for this study the researcher chose literature students to instruct them. This high school was chosen because it is equipped with many technological developments and facilities as well as with spacious classrooms. To examine the effect of formative assessment and multimedia, a homogenized sample was needed. So, the researcher applied Solutions placement test to select homogenize learners, then the sample was randomly divided into four equal groups. One group was assigned to the control group and three groups were assigned to the experimental groups. The control group was taught through traditional method using summative assessment. The first experimental group was instructed via multimedia using summative assessment, the second experimental group was taught through multimedia using formative assessment and the third experimental group received conventional approach with formative assessment. The materials for all groups were Vision Book 2. They came from the same city and all of them were male, so it can be assumed that they had the same EFL background.

4.2 Instruments

Solutions placement test (Appendix A) was intended to help the researcher to decide which level of *Solutions* (elementary, pre intermediate and intermediate) was the most suitable for the participants. The researcher in this study selected the intermediate students. This test contained 50 multiple choice questions which assessed students' knowledge of key grammar and vocabulary from different levels. Furthermore, it had a reading text with graded comprehension questions and an optional writing task that assessed student's ability to produce the language. The 50 multiple

choice questions and the reading task were designed to be done together in a 45 minutes' time. The writing task was done in the following lesson and should take approximately 20 minutes.

As a teacher-made test, the pre- test was made by the researcher for measuring the speaking fluency of the learners. It was made by using of Vision Book 2. A pilot study was carried out with one class (22 students) before the main phase of the study for the selection of reliability of speaking test which was employed during the main research. The inter-rater reliability, was estimated by two interviewers in a pilot study at the same school ($r=.82$). Validity of the test was checked by two expert judges with at least 5 years of experience in teaching EFL learners and they were asked to review the table of specification and content of the test. It contained twenty questions. At the beginning of the study, a pre-test containing 30 questions was administered to the three experimental groups. The pre-test that was in oral form was administered without any previous awareness. The aim was to tap the present status of the participants' knowledge of the speaking fluency and speaking accuracy before the beginning of the treatments. The pre-test was given to the participants one week prior to the learning session. Pragmatic fluency was oral, so three raters scored the test-takers' performances. Learners' fluency was assessed by considering these factors: speech rate (number of syllables produced per second or per minutes on questions), number of pauses (the total number of filled and unfilled pauses for each speaker), pause length, length of run (mean number of syllables between two pauses of a pre-determined length), false starts, repetitions, reformulations, replacements. They elicited their utterances and then the researcher reported the average of the three raters as their performances on the pre-test.

To measure the pragmatic fluency improvement of the students in the control and the experimental groups, the post-test of pragmatic fluency was administered. The researcher utilized posttest as pretest with some trivial changes in the posttest.

4.3 Procedure

To do this research, 80 Iranian young EFL male learners were selected and divided into four equal groups of 20. One group was considered as the control group and was taught via traditional method and summative assessment. As for the three experimental groups, one experimental group was taught through multimedia and summative assessment, the other group was instructed via multimedia and formative assessment and the third group was instructed via conventional approach and formative assessment. Initially, the participants were explained about the study procedures. The data were collected within four phases. At first session, the researcher administered the Solution test as a placement test to homogenize the participants for the study. Eighty male students who got intermediate level, in terms of their scores on proficiency test falling within the scope of one standard deviation above and one standard below the mean, in this test were selected from among 120 for this study. Following the administration of the Solution test, the participants were interviewed on the pretest by two interviewers and their inter-rater reliability was ($r=0.82$). This test contained thirty questions and reviewed by two experts for the sake validity. Two raters judged their utterances and then the researcher reported the average of the two as their performances on the pre-test. It should be noted that the same pretest was administered as the posttest again after two months and delay post-test for ranking groups after one month. Indeed, this study lasted during three months of the first educational year 2018-2019. All groups received instruction two sessions a week and each session lasted 90 minutes.

4.4 Data Analysis

After collecting the needed data, the researchers analyzed them to get the final findings. Before conducting any analysis on the pretest and the posttest, the Kolmogorov-Smirnov test was run to check the normality distribution of the data. The results indicated that the distribution of the data was normal since the Sig. values were greater than 0.05. After assuring that the data were normal, the parametric statistics like Independent Samples T-Test, was used to get the final results. The details of the results are presented in the following tables:

5. Results of the Study

5.1 Research Results for Responding the First Research Question

Does exploiting multimedia and summative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner's pragmatic fluency in speaking?

Table 1:

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Speaking Fluency via Multimedia and Summative Assessment

	Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Pre-test	Control	20	11.20	2.06
Fluency	Experimental	20	10.45	1.73

Table 1 shows that the mean score of the control group is 11.20 in the pre-tests and the mean score of the experimental group is 10.45.

Table 2:*Descriptive Statistics for Post-test Speaking Fluency via Multimedia and Summative Assessment*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	20	14.00	2.24
Experimental	20	16.95	0.94

As this table shows, mean and standard deviation of the experimental group are 16.95 and 0.94, respectively. But mean and standard deviation of the control group are 14.00 and 2.24, respectively.

Table 3:*Independent Samples T-test of Speaking Fluency via Multimedia and Summative Assessment*

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	T	P
Control	20	14.00	2.24	38	-5.41	.003
Experimental	20	16.95	0.94			

As this table shows the amount of t -observed ($t = -5.41$) is significant at the probability level of $p = .003$ which is smaller than $.05$. So, it is clear that the experimental group using multimedia with summative assessment outperformed in the post-test and it can be inferred that using multimedia and summative assessment as the treatment worked well. So, it can be inferred that the first

hypothesis as *exploiting multimedia and summative assessment do not have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner's pragmatic fluency in speaking* can be rejected.

5.2 Research Results for Responding the Second Research Question:

Does exploiting multimedia and formative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner's pragmatic fluency in speaking?

Table 4:

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Speaking Fluency via Multimedia and Formative Assessment

Group	<i>N</i>	Mean	<i>Std. Deviation</i>
Control	20	11.20	2.06
Experimental	20	10.90	1.65

To compare the mean scores of the experimental and the control groups in terms of multimedia and formative assessment, it can be inferred that there is no difference between learners in the control and the experimental groups before applying the treatment (multimedia and formative assessment). Table 5 shows the descriptive statistics of each group in the posttest.

Table 5:*Descriptive Statistics for Post-test Speaking Fluency via Multimedia and Formative Assessment*

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	20	14.00	2.24
Experimental	20	19.80	0.41

As it is clear from the above-shown table or the table shown above, mean and standard deviation of the experimental group are 19.80 and 0.41. But mean and standard deviation of the control group are 14.00 and 2.24, respectively. So, it can be concluded that learners in the experimental group did better on the speaking fluency posttest

Table 6:*Independent Samples T-test of Speaking Post-test via Multimedia and Formative Assessment*

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Control	20	14.00	2.24	38	-11.35	.000
Experimental	20	19.80	0.41			

As this table shows the amount of *t*-observed ($t = -11.35$) is significant at the probability level of $p = .000$ which is smaller than $.05$. It can be inferred that the experimental group did better in the post-test, so applying multimedia and formative assessment as the treatment worked well. In this way, the second hypothesis was rejected.

5.3 Research Results for Responding the Third Research Question

Does exploiting conventional approach and formative assessment have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner's pragmatic fluency in speaking?

Table 7:

Descriptive Statistics for Pre-test Speaking Fluency via Conventional Approach and Formative Assessment

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	20	11.20	2.06
Experimental	20	10.95	1.63

As the table above shows, there was no significant difference between learners in the experimental and the control groups receiving conventional approach with formative assessment in pretest.

Table 8:

Descriptive Statistics for Post-test Speaking Fluency via Conventional Approach and Formative Assessment

Group	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
Control	20	14.00	2.24
Experimental	20	18.60	1.09

As it was presented in the table above, mean and standard deviation of the experimental group are 18.60 and 1.09. The mean and standard deviation of the control group are 14.00 and 2.24, respectively. It is clear that learners in the experimental group outperformed than learners in the control group on the posttest.

Table 9:

Independent Samples T-test of Speaking Post-test via Conventional Approach and Formative Assessment

Group	N	Mean	SD	df	t	P
Control	20	14.00	2.24	38	-8.22	0.03
Experimental	20	18.60	1.09			

As this table shows the amount of t -observed ($t=-8.22$) is significant at the probability level of $p= 0.03$ which is smaller than the set value ($P<.05$). So, it can be inferred that applying conventional approach and formative assessment as the treatment worked well. In this way, the third hypothesis, exploiting conventional approach with formative assessment do not have any impact on promoting Iranian intermediate EFL learner's pragmatic fluency in speaking, is rejected.

6. Discussion

The current study through quasi-experimental pretest, posttest research design, aimed to evaluate the effect of formative and multimedia assessment on promoting intermediate learners' pragmatic fluency in speaking. To estimate the null hypotheses, statistical procedures were used to analyze the collected data. The results from data analysis are discussed in the following part.

The analysis of the first research question presented those learners who were given multimedia and summative assessment did better in delay posttest in comparison with the posttest, so it can be concluded that this treatment had a positive effect on learners' speaking fluency. According to Bloxham and Boyd (2007), type of assessment can have an effect on learners' learning and the findings of this study support that.

In the current study, it was indicated that learners in the experimental group taught through multimedia and formative assessment outperformed than learners in the control group. The results of this study are in line with the findings of Brown (2003) who found the positive effect of formative assessment on learners writing skill. But in another study by Butt (2010), it was found that there was no difference in learners' promotion via applying a special method of assessment. So, Butt's results are not in line with the results of the current study.

As for the third research question, it was indicated that learners in the experimental group, receiving conventional approach and formative assessment, outperformed than learners in the control group ($p < 0.05$). The findings of this study are consistent with the findings by Douglas and Wren (2008). Learners in the third experimental group taught via conventional approach with formative assessment did better than learners in control group taught by using traditional methods assessed in a summative manner. Chang, Tseng, and Lou (2012) asserted the same results in line with the present study. However, this finding contrast sharply with that by Harmer (2001) who stated that there was not a statistically significant difference in learners' speaking fluency via applying traditional method or formative and multimedia assessment.

In another study carried out by Butler and Lee (2010), it was reported that improving learners' speaking fluency was associated with the method of assessment. It was reported that learners obtained higher scores in speaking test via applying special type of assessment. Likewise, this

finding is in contrast with that of Borg and Al-Busaidi (2012), who found no difference between learners.

Najeeb (2013) examined the speaking skill of 200 learners at six language institutes. His findings supported higher level of ability for learners through applying multimedia assessment. In addition, it was stated that these learners had higher level of motivation. In contrast to the result of this study, Sanprasert (2010) demonstrated that, in posttest, there is no significant difference in applying special type assessment or traditional method.

Struyven et al. (2005) conducted another study to find the effect of different type of assessment on students' learning. It was conducted that assessment had a positive effect on students' learning. Moreover, Crosby and Stelovsky (1995) measured the effect of technology-mediated teaching on students' learning and knowledge in contrast to traditional type of instruction. The findings showed that students performed better through applying the technology such as multimedia. Isa et al. (1999) found the same findings and it was found that students' knowledge improved through applying multimedia-based CD-ROM not via using the traditional methodology.

In another study, Feinstein and Stefanelli (2005) concluded that learners outperformed in posttest after applying technology-based instructional methods. It was found that the learners outperformed in posttest and their performance was improved significantly. Erwin and Rieppi (2000) assessed students' performance in undergraduate psychology courses that students were enrolled in a particular section without knowing the instructional style, multimedia or traditional, they would receive and it was found that students through multimedia did better in their final examination than learners via traditional methods. The findings of the current study are in line with the results of these studies.

7. Conclusion

This study wanted to examine the effect of multimedia, formative and summative assessment on learners' pragmatic fluency. The results of the current study showed that learners' fluency was better through multimedia and formative assessment and the experimental groups showed greater mean in pragmatic fluency than the control group. The findings imply that application of multimedia and formative assessment resulted better learners' performance and the interaction of the learners and teachers must be taken into account.

In sum, multimedia with formative assessment was as an effective tool to help learners to improve their pragmatic fluency. As it was illuminated in the preceding section of the study, findings of the study revealed that, there was a significant effect of formative, summative and multimedia assessment differed significantly and had higher scores on fluency of learners. Thus, based on the results obtained from the statistical analysis, it can be claimed that there was a significant difference between the pragmatic fluency of those learners who had multimedia and formative assessment. The study shows that multimedia and formative assessment has a positive effect on most students in this class and the researchers would continue to incorporate this learning tool in more of the lessons along with the reading curriculum.

Generally, the findings of this study suggested the applying of multimedia and formative assessment over a traditional method for improving pragmatic fluency. The usefulness of multimedia and formative assessment depends on several factors such as text and process modeling of how to assess, teachers monitoring and judgment of the assessment procedure and feedback from the teacher and peers.

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