Study on the Discourse Analysis in Teaching English Speaking Competence Through the Use of Digital Games

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Abstract: *The present study was conducted to compare the effects of discourse analysis through the use of Catchphrase as a mobile game on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill. To conduct the research, a Solutions Placement Test was run among 90 EFL learners of Shokouh English Institute, Rasht Branch, Guilan, Iran, and 40 intermediate language learners who scored 47 and beyond were selected as the main participants of the study. Then, they were divided into two equivalent groups of experimental and control through simple random sampling method. Each group was then divided into two subgroups with an equal number of male and female students, that is, the experimental group comprised 10 male and 10 female students and the control group, too, consisted of 10 male and 10 female participants. After that, the pretest of speaking was administered to the participants. Next, the students in the experimental group received a mobile game instruction, while the control group received the conventional method of teaching speaking. Finally, another speaking test was administered to both groups at the end of the study to assess possible difference of performance of these two groups. The collected data were then processed through statistical analysis by the use of a two-way ANOVA through SPSS22 software. Statistical analysis of the results provided evidence in support of the positive effects of modality of instruction and participants' gender on the development of speaking competence among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Although, the interaction between gender and instructional modality did not produce a differential impact and the last hypothesis was rejected.*

Keywords: *Discourse Analysis, Teaching English Speaking, Digital Games*

INTRODUCTION

As an international language, English is widely used in every aspect of life such as science, technology and trade. This condition encourages people to be able to communicate in English because they consider that English is an important language in the globalization era. Speaking is one of the English skills that play an important role in language studies because it is related to the development of communication skill. Despite its importance, teaching sounds to have been depreciated and speaking has been continued just as a repetition of drills or memorization of dialogues.

Researches on teaching and learning English as a foreign language (EFL) suggested that speaking is core element of interaction and facilitates language acquisition (Cohen, 2012; Ghoneim, 2013). However, there are

limited opportunities to speak English in countries where the native language is not English (Shadiev et al., 2015). Some factors that lead to the lack of verbal practice are the absence of an English context, deficiency of good spoken English examples, and excessive dependence upon traditional teaching techniques (Cheon, 2003; Shadiev et al., 2015).

To address this issue, related literature suggests constructing surroundings or environments in which students have an opportunity to use the foreign language by communicating and practicing their EFL speaking skills (Hwang and Chen, 2013). Furthermore, it is suggested that students' EFL learning experiences can be extended through the use of mobile (Crescente and Lee, 2011) and digital game-based applications (Prensky, 2001). For example, mobile technology and games provide opportunities for real communication, encourage student interaction and feedback, and engage students in collaborative learning (Griva et al., 2010; Kinzie and Joseph, 2008).

Actually, a number of researchers have shown that games can also enhance learners' problem solving skills and increase players' self-esteem and self-confidence. Games can also promote genuine collaboration between users (Liu et al., 2011; Sánchez and Olivares, 2011). Thus, it can be concluded that digital games provide a competitive learning environment in which learners cooperate with each other and can work together (Derakhshan and Khatir, 2015).

According to Reinders and Wattana (2014), digital games provide engaging context; therefore, they enhance learning engagement that have recently been explored for their educational potentials. As Ilter (2015) points out, children can improve their language and cultural awareness by using technology in different social and cultural contexts, and language awareness can be faster through intercultural communication; in fact, technology gives unlimited resources.

Another important factor which can be affected EFL learners' language competence is the teacher's discourse analysis. Schiffrin (1987, p. 87) defined discourse as "a meaningful series of utterances used in specific context or stretches of language perceived to be meaningful, unified and purposive". According to McCarthy (1991), discourse analysis is concerned with the study of the relation between language and the context in which it is used.

Different studies have found that teacher's speech act like elicitations and acknowledgments, influence the quality and quantity of students' responses (Shintani, 2013; Shintani and Ellis, 2014). Most of these studies are based on an implicit assumption that classroom discourse affects learning (Molinari et al., 2013; Vaish, 2008). Shintani (2013) found that teacher's elicitations (either requested or optional) influenced the types of students' replies (borrowed or self-initiated).

Since Iranian people have difficulties to accomplish those components in their speaking, they feel reluctant to practice their speaking skill. Moreover, they have limited English exposure in their environment because Iran is not an English speaking country. From the stated problem, it can be seen that limited English exposure makes students rarely practice their English. It makes students get difficulties in pronouncing words, recognizing new vocabulary and producing grammatical sentences. To overcome the problems, teachers need to facilitate their students to practice their English inside and outside the classroom by using discourse analysis techniques and also providing a tool which can provide them with enough English exposure.

Therefore, a study on the digital game-based learning' issues can influence how teachers interact with this educational method and create a positive atmosphere in the use of digital technologies to improve the quality of teaching. On the other hand, the examination of such issues can determine the strengths and weaknesses of educational games and help designers of such games to change their ideas in designing and making such games.

In this study, the researcher used Catchphrase as a mobile game on improving Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking skill. It was a fun and hilarious guessing game that Jimmy Fallon played on the Tonight Show with Jimmy Fallon and now students can play it with their friends too. This game can be played in groups of 4, 6 or 8. The goal of the game Catchphrase is to get your partner to guess the word by giving

him/her verbal and physical clues. Teachers can engage students in a classroom vocabulary or communicative competence, especially by using discourse. It is suitable for intermediate and advanced EFL learners. So, teachers and students are the main beneficiaries of this game, because they could have enjoyable time with each other and teaching and learning speaking skill as a piece of cake.

The present study aimed to compare the effects, if any, of mobile games such as "Catchphrase" with an emphasis on the teachers' discourse analysis techniques on learning English and eventually developing speaking ability among Iranian male and female intermediate EFL learners. Thus, the following null hypotheses are commensurate with the objectives outlined above:

$H_01.$ The modality of instruction (i.e. game-based and teacher's use of discourse analysis), regardless of the participants' gender, does not produce a statistically significant effect on improving Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking competence.

$H_02.$ The participants' gender, regardless of the modality of instruction, does not produce a statistically significant effect on improving Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking competence.

$H_03.$ Gender does not interact with instructional modality in such a way as to produce a differential impact, considered to be statistically significant, on improving Iranian intermediate EFL learners' speaking competence.

Methodology

The present study employed a 2x2 factorial design. First, the researcher administered a sample copy of Solutions Placement Test (SPT). Then, 40 students who scored 47 and beyond were selected as the participants of the study. Next, the researcher invited them to her private institute and randomly assigned them to two equivalent groups of experimental and control. Each group was then divided into two subgroups with an equal number of male and female students, that is, the experimental group comprised 10 male and 10 female students and the control group, too, consisted of 10 male and 10 female participants.

Thus, the participants in the main study were 40 Iranian EFL learners who were selected from 90 participants after the administration of a proficiency test. The learners who participated in the study were 20 male and 20 female participants who ranged in age from 12 to 15 years old. The selected participants were assigned to two groups of experimental and control, with each consisting of a balanced mixed of male and female subgroups of participants through simple random sampling method. All the participants were native speakers of Persian who were studying EFL at Shokouh English Institute, Rasht Branch, Guilan, Iran. Most of them worked on Family & Friends book series and for several years (at least two years) were learning English language at this institute.

The first material which was used by the researcher was a placement test. It consisted of 50 multiple choice questions and the reading task which were designed to be done together in a 45-minute session and students whose scores were more than 47 selected for the main study. The second material of the present study was a speaking test that was taken in order to measure learners' knowledge of speaking ability at the beginning and end of the study. The researcher used Cambridge speaking test criteria to assess subjects' answers to eight interview questions. This criterion consisted of four factors (fluency and coherence; vocabulary range and control; grammatical range and accuracy; pronunciation, intonation, and intelligibility) which were the most important elements in analyzing speaking ability. Ten points are considered in order to evaluate each factor.

The last research tool of the present study was the Catchphrase game. It was a unique word game that plays a lot like Charades where the goal of the game was to get player teammates to correctly guess a word by providing clues. Using a specialized game unit, two teams play head to head to be the first to reach 7 points by correctly guessing words. According to Catchphrase rules, players must have two teams. The teams do not need to be the same size, but it is easiest if a player arrange seating so that each player is sitting next to a member of the other team to allow the game unit to be passed quickly from one team to the other. There were 11 categories, including the "Everything" category, which uses all 10,000 words in the game. To start the

game, one of the members should press the "Timer" button. Once the Timer button has been pressed, players cannot select another category, nor see the scores. Once a word was displayed, the goal was to give clues that allowed one of the teams to guess the word. The experimental group of the study used this game as a practice of learning English vocabularies in their speaking in the treatment procedure.

In general, the study was conducted over a ten session period and during normal class time. In the first session, for the purpose of homogeneity, QPT was administered. The learners randomly were divided into two groups. One of them sat as a control group and another as an experimental group. Both groups sat for a pretest of speaking. Next, the control group received conventional method of teaching speaking, but the experimental group received the treatment on the basis of Catchphrase tool. For this group, the researcher taught the procedure of the games in the second session and after playing games in subsequent sessions, the researcher explained the vocabulary presented in the games' questions and discussed how to use these vocabulary forms via discourse analysis. At the end, the posttest of speaking fluency was administered in which the subjects' ability in both groups on the specific treatment program was assessed.
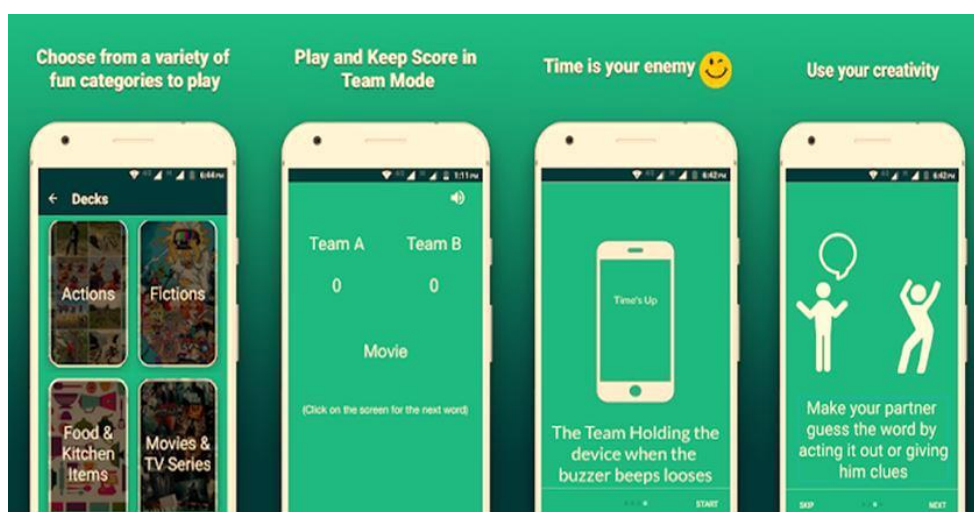

Figure 1. Overview of the Catchphrase game

Results

Version 25 of the Statistical Package for Social Sciences (SPSS) was used to analyze the scores following the treatment. The time lapse between the pretest and the posttest was 8 weeks (each week consisted of one session). A two-way analysis of variance was employed to examine both the main and interaction effects of the independent variables in the study.

As it was mentioned before, an SPT was held to get a homogenized set of learners. Then, once all the scores of 40 participants were obtained, the data of pre- and post-treatment tests' scores were entered into SPSS-25. Since most of the data were automatically transferred into SPSS, the main data collection tool for the study was manual data entering. The statistical technique assumed normality of the data and homogeneity of the variances of the groups. Table 1 demonstrates the results of SPT to choose 40 participants among 90.

Table 1. Statistics for QPT

N	Valid	90
	Missing	**0**
Mean		47.03
Median		45.50
Mode		38

Std. Deviation	10.715
Variance	114.819
Range	48
Minimum	28
Maximum	76

Table 1 showed the results of group statistics and numerical information for the SPT scores which was administered for selecting homogeneous sample out of 90 EFL students. Then, 40 EFL learners who gained the appropriate score in SPT were assigned to the two groups (control and experimental) that divided into two subgroups with an equal number of male and female students. After that, both groups sat for a pretest to check the possible initial differences between their initial ability of speaking and finally, and after both groups received their treatment procedure, the participants sat for the posttest. The differences in mean of the pretest and the posttest scores in the experimental and control groups (and two subgroups of male and female) are exhibited in Figure 2 and 3.
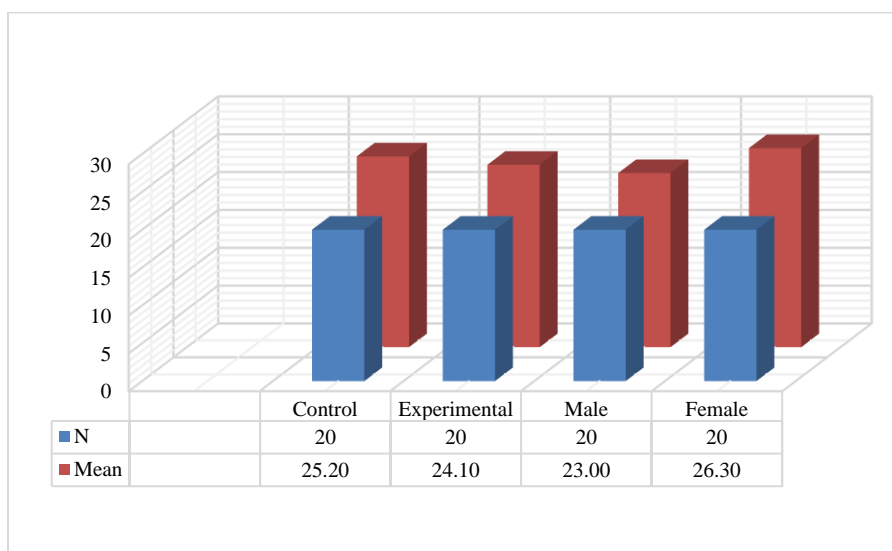

	Control	Experimental	Male	Female
N	20	20	20	20
Mean	25.20	24.10	23.00	26.30

Figure 2. Pretest scores in all four groups

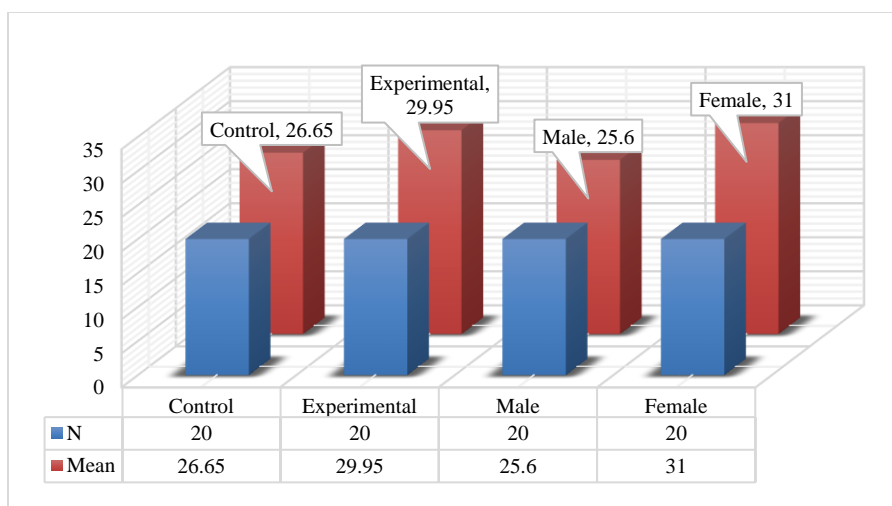|	Control	Experimental	Male	Female
N	20	20	20	20
Mean	26.65	29.95	25.6	31

Figure 3. Posttest scores in all four groups

As it was exhibited in above figures, the mean score of the experimental and female groups were higher than the control and male groups. It means that learners who used mobile game in their treatment procedure have better practice and could gain better scores in the posttest. Also, female learners had better performance in their posttest scores which shows their ability to concentrate on the procedure of learning and better capability in speaking.

For the inferential analysis of the data, the researcher used two-way ANOVA. The two-way ANOVA compared the mean differences between groups that have been split on two independent variables (called factors). The primary purpose of a two-way ANOVA was to understand if there is an interaction between the two independent variables on the dependent variable. The interaction term in a two-way ANOVA informed you whether the effect of one of independent variables on the dependent variable is the same for all values of other independent variable (and vice versa). After checking the data for the three assumptions required to carry out a two-way ANOVA, the result of the two-way ANOVA is shown in Table 2.

Table 2. Tests of Between-Subjects Effects

Source	Dependent Variable	Type III Sum of Squares	df	Mean Square	F	Sig.
Corrected Model	pretest	143.500a	3	47.833	1.962	.137
	posttest	423.000b	3	141.000	7.651	.000
Intercept	pretest	24304.900	1	24304.900	997.010	.000
	posttest	32035.600	1	32035.600	1738.441	.000
gender	pretest	108.900	1	108.900	4.467	.042
	posttest	291.600	1	291.600	15.824	.000
modality of instruction	pretest	12.100	1	12.100	.496	.486
	posttest	108.900	1	108.900	5.910	.020
gender * modality of instruction	pretest	22.500	1	22.500	.923	.343
	posttest	22.500	1	22.500	1.221	.276
Error	pretest	877.600	36	24.378		
	posttest	663.400	36	18.428		
Total	pretest	25326.000	40			
	posttest	33122.000	40			
Corrected Total	pretest	1021.100	39			
	posttest	1086.400	39			

a. R Squared = .141 (Adjusted R Squared = .069)
b. R Squared = .389 (Adjusted R Squared = .338)

The particular rows we interested in are the "gender", "modality of instruction" and "gender*modality of instruction" rows, and these were highlighted above. These rows informed us whether our independent variables (the "Gender" and "modality of instruction" rows) and their interaction (the "Gender*modality of instruction" row) had a statistically significant effect on the dependent variables, "pretest and posttest scores". It was important to first look at the "Gender*modality of instruction" interaction as it was determined how the results can be interpreted. It can be seen from the "Sig." column that there is a statistically significant interaction at the p = .276 level. So, it can be concluded that there was no statistically significant difference in mean interest in posttest scores between males and females (p = .207). It means that, gender did not interact with instructional modality in such a way as to produce a differential impact, considered to be

statistically significant, on the development of speaking competence among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Based on the results of the study, the first and the second null hypotheses of this study were rejected, but the third null hypothesis was accepted.

Discussion

According to the results of the first hypothesis of the study, the modality of instruction (i.e. game-based and teacher-fronted), regardless of the participants' gender, produced a statistically significant effect on the development of speaking competence among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Generally, these results seem to be consistent with other researches (Huizenga et al., 2019; Yukselturk et al., 2018) which found that game-based learning might extend understanding of content, provide diverse learning experiences, encourage collaboration and interaction across groups, and create acceptable academic team atmosphere. Moreover, these results are consistent with results obtained by other existing research (Chen and Law, 2016; Saleh et al., 2019) which clearly reported the effect of using educational games to enhance language learning in different areas such as vocabulary learning.

More specifically, the students' levels of learning motivation were high during the learning activities due to elements of a game and surrounding context; thus, students kept practicing their speaking skills (Hwang et al., 2016). Such a learning process leads to more frequent practicing of speaking skills, learning with meaningful contextual material, producing comprehensive output, and surely to enhancing students' speaking abilities.

Actually, based on the cooperation of students in playing game, it was clear that each member of the group believed in his responsibility not only for learning but also for supporting other members. This interpretation is related with that of Reese (2009) and Aslanabadi and Rasouli (2013). Furthermore, the students who used game-based learning were encouraged to use peer-correction. They were very enthusiastic about tackling their parts and showed individual and group responsibility to transform their experiences and knowledge to the other members of the group.

Regarding to the second hypothesis of the study, the findings revealed that the participants' gender, regardless of the modality of instruction, produced a statistically significant effect on the development of speaking competence among Iranian intermediate EFL learners. Actually, Females were more eager in using their attention and abilities to solve different questions. However, males were more eager to participate in games and pay enough attention to structures of the game.

It is worth mentioning here that, the result of the current study was quite interesting as the female participants reported that they used more make effort to learn the language. Salehi (2017) found that when students were given bilingual multiple-choice tests, there were no significant differences between males and females on their short-term and long-term retention scores. Moreover, there were no significant differences in the amount of time males and females spent looking up translations. It was also reported that the findings of the survey suggested that males and females could equally benefit from a CALL environment. Jafarian and Shoari (2017) also reported that the number and kind of strategies used by females were similar to those used by males.

According to the third research hypothesis, it can be claimed that gender did not interact with instructional modality in such a way as to produce a differential impact, considered to be statistically significant, on the development of speaking competence among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

Conclusion

This study concludes that game-based learning activities, supported by discourse analysis, effectively facilitated students speaking skills in the following ways: Students practiced EFL speaking frequently and reflected on their speaking; Students created meaningful sentences and spoke them aloud more correctly and

comprehensibly; and Students practiced their speaking skills in surrounding contexts. Finally, students' learning motivation levels were high and most students demonstrated positive perceptions toward the novel approach.

There are several important considerations for teachers who desire to use mobile game-based learning in their classrooms. First and foremost, teachers must evaluate whether the game truly requires learners to exchange information in order to improve their knowledge. Teachers will need to determine whether the task is appropriate for their learners' proficiency level and whether learners would be able to complete the game in the time available.

Teachers must also consider the goals of the digital game-based learning. The emphasis may be on developing learners' fluency or accuracy. Either way, the teacher should communicate the purpose of the game to learners and evaluate the game based on those goals. Actually, If the teacher wants his/her students' speaking skill to get better, he/she needs to provide more English exposure in the teaching and learning activates.

According to Sevillano-García and Vázquez-Cano (2015), the mobile devices can be used as socialized tool where the students can communicate and interact with each other, and Sung et al. (2015) mentioned that the mobile devices are personalized and customized for an individual use where you can use it for different learning needs, styles and interests.

Students need support from their environment which includes friends and teachers to practice their English inside and outside the classroom with enjoyable facilities and appropriate learning technique. It will be good if they have English club handled by teachers or students who are good in English to facilitate students to improve their English. With English routine interaction inside and outside the classroom, hopefully students can use their English and they finally speak English fluently.

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