An Empirical Classroom-Based Study of English Phrasal Verbs

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1 AIMS OF THIS STUDY
The aim of this study is to prove the effectiveness of teaching English phrasal verbs from the cognitive linguistics perspective. Although English phrasal verbs are attracting interest in the field of Cognitive Linguistics, empirical studies in the classroom setting are very few (see Lindner 1983 and Rydzka-Ostyn 2003). Through the use of moving pictures and sound stimulus in the classroom setting, we will show that the images of frequently used verbs, which include ‘go,’ ‘come,’ ‘take,’ ‘bring,’ ‘put,’ and ‘break,’ and particles ‘in’ and ‘out,’ motivate Japanese university students to acquire English phrasal verbs directly without their L1, Japanese. The details of our model lessons and the statistical results are as follows:

2 METHODOLOGIES
2.1 Experimental Design
Period of Experiments: April - July 2012
Participants: 24 university students (experimental group), 23 university students (control group)
Procedures:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Experimental group</th>
<th>Control group</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>TOEIC Part 5 Style Proficiency Check test (full scores: 40 points)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Pre-test (full scores: 30 points) phrasal verbs recognition test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1) model lessons</td>
<td>(1) model lessons with reading materials (‘in’ and ‘out,’ ‘go/come’ with ‘in/out’, ‘bring/take’ with ‘in/out’, ‘put/break’ with ‘in’ and ‘out’)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(2) homework</td>
<td>(2) homework after each lesson</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Post-test (full scores: 30 points) phrasal verbs recognition test</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

2.2 Results
<Table 1. Mean scores of each test and the difference>

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOEIC test</th>
<th>pre-test</th>
<th>post-test</th>
<th>post-pre test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Control Group</td>
<td>21.48</td>
<td>6.826</td>
<td>8.261</td>
<td>1.435</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Experimental Group</td>
<td>23.54</td>
<td>8.375</td>
<td>12.167</td>
<td>3.792</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
### Table 2. Score comparison based on the proficiency levels

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>TOEIC scores</th>
<th>Mean scores of post-test minus pre-test</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Proficiency</td>
<td>number</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Control Group</strong></td>
<td>Basic-level</td>
<td>9</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>11</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experimental Group</strong></td>
<td>Basic-level</td>
<td>6</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Intermediate</td>
<td>15</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Advanced</td>
<td>3</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

#### 2.3 Error Analysis on Homework
- Confusion between stative and active verbs
  - e.g. She *is in despair* because of her father’s death.
    - → translated as ‘get in despair.’
  - e.g. The light in John’s bedroom *goes out* at 10 p.m.
    - → translated as ‘extinguish.’
- Interpretation only with the images of verbs of the targeted phrasal verbs
  - e.g. The new book *came out* last Monday.
    - → translated as ‘arrive.’
  - e.g. The government *has brought in* a law to increase tax.
    - → translated as ‘enact.’
- Interpretation only with the images of particles of the targeted phrasal verbs
  - e.g. The war *broke out*.
    - → translated as ‘terminated.’
  - e.g. This class *takes in* both Eastern and Western histories.
    - → translated as ‘contains.’
- Misunderstanding with other phrasal verbs
  - e.g. The school *put in* a new internet system last year.
    - misunderstood as ‘put on (= add).’
  - e.g. I hope our great service will *bring in* a lot of customers.
    - misunderstood as ‘bring out (= create).’

#### 3 DISCUSSION

Overall, students’ scores under the experimental condition were better than the control group peers. The difference was proved to be statistically significant. This may mean that visual and audio aids can effectively facilitate learners’ retention. Paivio (1986) proposes the ‘dual-coding theory.’ Namely, upon listening to a word, the two-memory system, verbal and visual, emerges automatically. Therefore, visualization accelerates the retention of the word. Second, we compared the test results correlating with the students’ English levels. First, the audio-visual aids seem to fascinate the less proficient learners and motivate them to learn English through the images of each particle, verb, and phrasal verb. On the other hand, the advanced learners showed a great interest in analysing various senses of each phrasal verb from its core meaning.
4 CONCLUSION

We have shown that moving pictures and sound stimulus which represent both the core and extended meanings of each particle, verb, and phrasal verb will be effective in teaching English phrasal verbs to Japanese college students. Especially, both the novice and the advanced learners benefit this device for different reasons: Our audio-visual aids attracted the basic-level students because of their clear and interesting images; while the advanced learners fascinated with the metaphorical extensions of each meaning. We believe that the methodology we advocate is also beneficial in terms of L1 transfer issues. Since we limited our use of L1, Japanese, in our experiment, the students in the both group learned several English phrasal verbs directly in English without the interference of their L1.

NOTES

1. This study is supported by JSPS (Grant No. C23520713). The primary investigator is Chikako Takahashi.

2. Before this experiment, we conducted a pilot study: we asked 13 English learners of various English competences to answer the pre-test and the post-test. Based on this result, we modified these two tests.

3. All sentences in our teaching materials went through grammatical judgement tests by native English speakers.

APPENDICES

1. Video (In & Out)

   Image ‘In’

   It’s raining heavily. Let’s eat kebabs rather than go to the restaurant.

   You need to lower your head to get in this small car.
2. **Video (Go & Come)**

**GO INのイメージ**

Let's go in and have some coffee.

**OUT のイメージ**

**IN のイメージ**

**GO のイメージ**

**GO OUTのイメージ**
My parents wouldn’t let me go out with boys.

What came in first in the Tokyo Marathon?

It stopped raining and the sun came out.

3. Video (Take & Bring)

Whale takes in the water through the mouth.
Emma opened her bag and took out her cell phone.

We need to bring in an outsider to evaluate the thesis fairly.

4. Video (Put & Break)
5. Homework

**HOMEWORK 1 (English Phrasal Verb)**

[FILL IN THE BLANKS]

1. She is in despair because of her father’s death. (Grief)
2. He was dressed in a black suit. (Appearance)
3. The secret was out. (Disclosure)
4. Our supply of food will be out soon. (Exhaustion)
5. I called my mother but she was out. (Reach)
6. They danced in a circle. (Movement)

**HOMEWORK 2 (English Phrasal Verb)**

[FILL IN THE BLANKS]

1. John came in with many qualifications. (Meet)
2. According to the TV news, another financial problem is going to come in five years. (Discuss)
3. He will go in and turn on the emergency project at the beginning of next week. (Install)
4. When Peggy’s husband talks to her about money, she lets his words go in one ear and out the other. (Interact)
5. My computer suddenly went out and I lost all of my work. (Fail)
6. The light in John’s bedroom went out at 10 p.m. (Fail)
7. My new book came out last Wednesday. (Publish)
8. This black suit will come out with bleach. (Wash)

The thief broke in through the window.

A fire broke out on the third floor.
REFERENCES


