

An Empirical Classroom-Based Study of English Phrasal Verbs

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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:

For the experimental group, eight classes were divided into four sessions, with two classes for each session. The introductory session focused on 'in' and 'out', and the other three sessions dealt with combinations of 'in/out' and 'go/come,' 'take /bring,' and 'put/break.' Following each introductory session with moving pictures, the next class was spent studying assigned printed material of phrasal verbs. After all of the lessons above, we compared the scores of the post-pre tests for experimental and control groups. The t-value of 1.86, namely the mean of the experimental group, is significantly different from that of the control group by a five percent level. Thus, the effectiveness of our approach was statistically proved. Next, we analyzed the performance score of each experimental-group student in terms of their English proficiency levels, finding that the advanced level and the basic level students performed better than the intermediate level students.

In conclusion, we demonstrated that the less proficient students might acquire the basic (core) meaning of the targeted phrasal verbs with their clear visual images and sound stimulus and that the more proficient students could acquire a deeper understanding of the metaphorical meanings of those phrasal verbs.