

Using Pictures, Music and Movies for Teaching Phrasal Verbs to Improve the Communicative
Competence for Community College ESL Students

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Abstract

This literature review explored effective multimedia methods of instruction for teaching ESL students phrasal verbs at public community colleges and to improve students speaking skills. Due to more and more non-English speaking people who have come to United States in recent years, people prefer to go to community college to take ESL classes and improve their English proficiency. With the high enrollment in community college ESL courses across the United States, issues of understanding phrasal verbs become a major concern, especially how to use phrasal verbs in daily conversation, and given the concepts of phrasal verbs are not common in most foreign language and for ESL student populations. Recommendations from this literature review include implementing multimedia methods of instructional techniques, including using pictures, music and videos. Although not much empirical data is provided to support these recommendations, the rationale in doing so is in response to the diverse ESL student population and the observed difficulty and avoidance of current phrasal verb teaching practices. Future studies should focus on providing insight on the effectiveness of these techniques and why they might work.

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Introduction

According to Bohn, Hill and Brooks (2019) noted that “Due in large part to their accessibility and affordability, California’s community colleges play a central role in educating students who are not fully proficient in English. There is a high population of ESL in California. Community college ESL programs serve a large and diverse mix of students, including young adults who attended California’s K–12 schools, immigrants with high school, college, or graduate degrees from their home countries, and working-age immigrants in California’s labor force.” In the 2016–17 academic year alone, more than 68,000 students enrolled in one or more English as a Second Language (ESL) courses at community colleges across the state (Rodriguez, Bohn, Hill, & Brooks, n.d.,2019).

Phrasal verbs are crucial in oral forms. Teaching and learning phrasal verbs is a difficult area in ESL classes (Chen, 2007). Issues of avoiding and understanding phrasal verbs education become a major concern, especially using phrasal verbs in daily conversation as well as teaching and learning phrasal verbs in ESL classes. Many studies have proved that contextualization and multimedia methods are influential in helping ESL students understand phrasal verb. The purpose of this literature review is to explore the appropriate methods of phrasal verb instruction that can be used to increase student speaking skills in community college ESL courses. First, relevant definitions and background information regarding difficulty and avoidance of phrasal verb education is provided. Next, an overview of helpful multimedia methods for teaching phrasal verbs through context to is given, followed by a summary of the current teaching

practices and their effectiveness. Lastly, recommendations for new instructional strategies based on current research are discussed including recommendations for future study.

Definitions and Background

According to Koprowski (2005), “A phrasal verb is a phrase which consists of a verb in combination with a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts: ‘look after’, ‘work out’ and ‘make up for’ are all phrasal verbs.” According to Trask (2000), “a phrasal verb is lexical verb “which consists of a simple verb combined with one or more particles and whose meaning is typically unpredictable”(as cited in Koprowski, 2005). Furthermore, “phrasal verbs are two-or three-word idiomatic expressions, consisting of a verb and a particle or a combination of a particle and a preposition” (Lewis, 1993; Darwin & Gray, 1999, as cited in Koprowski, 2005). It is common sense phrasal verbs come naturally to native speakers. They use them unconsciously and frequently in daily conversation, keeping one-word verbs for more formal situations (i.e., ‘submit’ instead of ‘turn in’).

Gardner and Davies (2007) found that “each of the most frequent English phrasal verbs had 5.6 meaning senses on average. These meaning senses often cannot be conveyed by a single word equivalent, or may carry connotations that their single word equivalent does not have.” Particularly, phrasal verbs are popularly used in relaxed communication. It seems to be unnatural and non-idiomatic if fail to use phrasal verbs in similar communicative circumstances. (Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007). In particular, native speakers of English, like Chinese learners of English, tend to avoid using phrasal verbs when communicating in the foreign language (Liao & Fukuya, 2003).

Difficulty and Avoidance

Phrasal verbs are unusual for some ESL learners whose first language (L1) have no phrasal verbs part of speech. It is very difficult for those students to understand phrasal verbs in syntactic structure (i.e., some phrasal verbs can go for particle movement, some cannot). These types of words have semantic complexity, which means some phrasal verbs are idiomatic and it is even more difficult to learn and prone to avoidance (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993). Phrasal verbs are two or more orthographic words, which means some ESL students study phrasal verbs as single semantic units. It is a connect for unknowing students to translate the phrasal verbs as individual components and it is challenging not to misinterpret phrasal verbs. In other words, phrasal verbs are very difficult to learn (Garnier & Schmitt, 2019).

One of the traditional ways to teach phrasal verbs is memorization by alphabetical lists. According to Dainty (1992), “One big advantage of this method is that it is thorough and comprehensive. But, the problem with a long list is that it is one thing to memorize a phrasal verb and its meaning, but quite another to bring the phrasal verb into your active, everyday speaking and listening.” Through this method, many ESL students learn the phrasal verb from a list, but it is not helpful in using phrasal verbs communicate with native speakers. Alphabetical lists can be convenient, but it is harder for ESL students to interpret from the lists and shift them to their own active knowledge when they speak phrasal verbs (Dainty, 1992). Many students may avoid learning phrasal verbs because they don’t like memorization or repetition. And it may have a negative effect for teachers teaching phrasal verbs in ESL education.

According to Chen (2007), “societal factors, institutional factors, teacher and learner factors as well as ineffective curriculum documents are related to the avoidance of English

phrasal verbs.” Chen (2007) also analyzed different factors why Chinese English learners avoid to learn English phrasal verbs. First, Chinese learners study English without a continued English language environment to practice effective oral skills. Most students have limited chances to practice English phrasal verbs in class and they are lack of opportunities to practice phrasal verbs in everyday conversation situations. As for Chen (2007) stated that “The words the English learners have learnt at school can rarely be put into immediate use and practice outside the classroom. Lack of practice and individually spaced repetition, that is the opposite of massed repetition, on topics related to everyday life is likely to result in ineffective or less confident communication even though the relevant language knowledge has been taught in the classroom.” For an effective English teaching and learning environment, practicing communicative phrasal verbs and builds up students’ confidence in using phrasal verbs in speaking and should not be avoided.

Second, there are not enough appropriate educational resources for both English teachers and students. Professionally and well-designed curriculum and comprehensive reading materials play an essential role in English education, especially for phrasal verbs. Chinese English students may not understand written English material (i.e., an English textbook, an English workbook) because they have limited vocabulary knowledge and background to recognize and understand phrasal verbs in it (Chen, 2007). Students may avoid reading the material and ignore learning the phrasal verbs in it. Therefore, it is painful for students to practice phrasal verbs in oral forms. Phrasal verbs, according to Wethrell, Taylor & Yates (2002) stated that, “are widely used because of their characteristics of flexibility, practicality, adaptability and efficiency for oral communication...[and] should be given a greater emphasis than before with the goal of achieving effective and efficient communication in the English speech community rather than the

use of those much more academic words”(as cited in Chen, 2007). Without an appropriate curriculum and learning material practice phrasal verbs, it is impossible to accomplish effective teaching in the ESL classroom. What’s more importantly is it is hard to guarantee students’ efficient learning for phrasal verbs.

Lastly, Chinese English learners are affected by their first language (L1). When Chinese learners learn English, they unconsciously compare English with Chinese. The negative impact of doing this comparison is that the structure of phrasal verbs in L1 and English phrasal verbs is completely different: “In the Chinese context, the learners are more likely to translate consciously or transfer unconsciously every single Chinese word (e.g. ‘renshou’) into corresponding English expression (e.g. ‘tolerate’) instead of a phrasal verb (e.g. ‘put up with’), even on the occasions when phrasal verbs are more idiomatic or authentic than one-word equivalents”(Chen, 2007, p.351).

The issue of avoidance of English phrasal verbs among Chinese English learners is problematic because it involves many factors, for example, lack of existing foreign language environment, lack of practice, lack of professional curriculum design, lack of appropriate educational resources for oral communication and lack of knowledge in the process of learning the phrasal verb influenced by mother language. They are not only happening to Chinese language learners but also to other English language learners. If it is obvious to understand why Chinese English learners avoid learning English phrasal verbs, then it is overall the same for other ESL students at community colleges.

There is some debate whether ESL teachers should teach phrasal verbs. It is questionable on the idea of how perfect for ESL teachers to teach phrasal verbs. Although teachers are being discouraged in phrasal verbs education, and ESL learners are facing the difficulties in learning

phrasal verbs, improving students' intelligence in mastering phrasal verbs is very important (Norman, 2010). Since native English speakers use phrasal verbs frequently in everyday life conversational English, it is necessary for ESL students to become proficient in phrasal verbs. In order to help solve this problem, some suggestions are provided below.

Cognitive Load Theory in Multimedia Learning Method

Mayer (2009, 2014) proposed "the cognitive theory of multimedia learning (CTML) as a theoretical framework for the design of cueing in multimedia lessons." According to Mayer's dual channel assumption of CTML (2009, 2014),

learners have two information processing channels—a visual/pictorial channel and an auditory/verbal channel. According to the limited capacity assumption of CTML, learners can process only a limited amount of material in each channel at any one time, so if they are focusing on extraneous material they will have less capacity for learning the essential material.(p.77)

In the active processing assumption of CTML, any learners must actively participate in relevant cognitive processing in working memory (WM) to complete meaningful learning in a multimedia environment. First, in WM, the learner chooses useful conversation in in the verbal channel, and chooses pictures in the visual channel. Next, the learner forms the chosen conversation into a verbal model and form chosen pictures into a pictorial model. Then, the learner combines verbal with pictorial relevant knowledge to recall long-term memory (LTM) (Mayer, 2009, 2014).

Based on effective CTML cueing design, multimedia lessons should integrate verbal and visual materials to develop a guidance of the chosen conversation and pictures, and also encourage learners build up relation between interrelated conversation and pictures. (Xie, Mayer, Wang & Zhou (2019) emphasized that "To achieve integration, a potentially effective cueing

technique is to coordinate both visual and auditory cues in a multimedia lesson, which can be called coordinated dual-modality cues (or coordinated dual cues for short).” This is a huge inspiration for ESL educators to become skillful in developing multimedia lessons in teaching English phrasal verbs effectively.

Considering the importance of phrasal verbs education and the difficulty of acquiring them, it is indispensable to offer ESL learners more attractive media materials: for example, popular magazines, books, radio, video games, movies, social networking applications/websites and music (Maryam, Hesamoddin & Azar, 2018). Using multimedia methods to teach community college students could reduce students’ cognitive load and could be helpful with the learning process of coordinating both visual and auditory cues in ESL phrasal verb lessons.

Teaching Phrasal Verbs Methods and Suggestions Based on Multimedia Principles Using Pictures in ESL Phrasal Verb Education

Teaching phrasal verbs through pictures is important and helpful in improving English speaking skills. Marashi and Maherinia (2011) stated that “individuals memorized text-picture stimuli in four different versions that differed in the specificity of information contained in either text or pictures: general pictures/general sentences, general pictures/specific sentences, specific pictures/general sentences, and specific pictures/specific sentences. Individuals integrate the specific picture information with the general sentence information into a single mental representation”(p.38). Teachers should use particular graphics with “the general sentence information” to teach students phrasal verbs (Arndt, Schüler & Scheiter, 2019). Using specific picture information with the general sentence information teaching methods may reduce students learning phrasal verbs cognitive load.

Arndt (2019) found a much higher degree of joy among the students in the experimental group while guessing the meaning of phrasal verbs from the pictures on the board. Teaching phrasal verbs with pictures can be a reasonable substitution for, or at least an addition to, language learning activities. More engagement with the management level is required to promote pictorial teaching and to encourage management to support its advantageous application in teaching phrasal verbs and improving speaking skills (Hamid & Elaheh, 2011).

Teaching phrasal verbs through pictures has a significant impact on EFL students' continued practice of phrasal verbs in conversational speaking. The multimedia method of using pictures in the teaching of phrasal verbs significantly increased learners' achievement. Pictorial teaching is an attainable and adaptable multimedia teaching technique with the trend of educational technology, especially with respect to the aim of fostering basic competencies of students. There is a significant difference between teaching phrasal verbs with pictures and without pictures.

There are research studies that prove pictorial multimedia learning methods can be used effectively in ESL reading, writing and vocabulary education. Therefore, if pictorial multimedia learning methods can be used effectively in ESL reading, writing and vocabulary education, these techniques should be used in teaching phrasal verbs effectively.

Using Music in ESL Phrasal Verb Education

Xie (2019) addressed that audio materials should be integrated with the graphical materials at the same time to achieve effective CTML audio-visual integration when semantically coordinated words with both visual and auditory modalities are attended to. Karen (2016) found that with engaging in supplemented lessons with singing and song-related activities can support foreign language learning (p.3).

The findings of Beukes (2019)'s study indicated that teaching through music with lyrics as one of the multimedia methods is beneficial for ESL student's explicit and implicit learning of phrasal verbs (p.120). Schmitt (2019) conducted a study investigating the relationship between learners' knowledge of English phrasal verbs and different types of media they got after class (p.263). They concluded that learners who listened to music more frequently had a better knowledge of phrasal verbs. The authors highlighted that listening to music and understanding and singing the lyrics implies less focus compared to other media like TV programs (Schmitt & Redwood, 2011). Therefore, it is noticeable that ESL educators should find more proper music for learners to improve their phrasal verb knowledge and practice pronunciation and speaking at the same time.

Beukes (2019) also suggested, since media like YouTube is much easier to for people to access recently, and a large amount of ESL learners listened to English songs through it more frequently (p.119). It is encouraging for ESL educators to think about bringing music in to phrasal verb class. Using music and music lyrics to teach phrasal verbs is a verb effective method in ESL education. Based on Mayer (2014, 2017)'s CTML theory, teachers need to develop well-organized multimedia instructional lessons and lead learners to target the main points in the lesson plans (i.e., provide auditory cueing), provide instructional support to guide learners' visual attention during instruction (i.e., provide visual cueing), and help them build up connections between the words and pictures (i.e., coordinate auditory and visual cueing). If using music to teach English can improve students speaking skills, it should be effectively used in teaching phrasal verbs to improve students speaking skills.

Using Movies/Videos in ESL Phrasal Verb Education

As reviewed above, visual and auditory integration instructional strategies are very helpful and effective in education. Using visual methods and using auditory methods in multimedia learning is effective. What's more, using the integration of visual and auditory methods in CTML is more effective than using visual or auditory methods alone. Movies (videos, video games, films) are perfect examples for an integration of visual and auditory methods in CTML principle. Maryam (2018) did a quasi-experiment to explore the principle and explained that watching English language movies is certainly associated with the ESL learners' proficiency of phrasal verbs.

In recent years, people spend much more time in watching movies, YouTube videos and playing video games than before. Many educators find that it would be useful if educators to use videos in the education field. Ramezanali and Faez_(2019) found that it was helpful for pre-service teachers using videos to teach ESL reading classes. In his article, participants showed more interests in observing videos than traditional reading exposure (p.107). Schmitt, Cobb, Horst and Schmitt (2017) reviewed that using video games in ESL classroom provided safe spots for ELL students to use phrasal verbs in conversational context. In their article, the statistical test results indicated that established a relationship between English learning and video game playing can increase confidence and lower anxiety in using English among second-language learners (p.214). Therefore, in a less pressured environment compared to traditional memorization classroom setting, movies and video games help students reduce learning anxiety about using a second language and helpful in boosting students' speaking confidence.

Fu (2015) demonstrated how to use music, American sitcoms and movie clips in ESL phrasal verb education. She said that ESL students have more interests and passion in learning

English phrasal verbs with authentic materials related to their daily life experience. And for teachers, she also provided a teaching handbook on how to use multimedia materials in ESL phrasal verb class. It is very important for teachers to design an organized instructional curriculum to teach effectively.

There are not enough empirical articles about using movies, video clips for ESL education. We may assume if using CTML to teach other subjects effectively and can improve students learning interest, it should be effectively used in teaching language on phrasal verbs to improve students speaking skills.

Challenges

Changes in instruction need to be made. The visual picture teaching approach should be applied to phrasal verb education. Authentic conversational speaking practice can be based on appropriate pictures. There are a few challenges we should consider after this literature review. First, ESL teachers lack of access to technology. There might budget issues and classroom environmental factors. Second, many educators are not familiar with CTML, which makes multimedia methods strange and meaningless. It may result in teachers who are defensive and not willing to accept the effectiveness of multimedia techniques. The other challenge is teachers' lack of knowledge on how to use technology with training. Some teachers are anti-technology. It might be difficult to encourage a CTML professional development training in an anti-technology culture. Another challenge is teachers' lack of resources, for example, if there is no existing CTML ESL phrasal verbs curriculum. It takes time to design a powerful curriculum and evaluate how practical and efficient should it be. Last but not the least, all of these challenges take a lot of time. Educational practitioners should consider CTML as in integrating visual and auditory cueing in multimedia learning. Importantly, educators should be positive and active in the

distribution of learners' acceptance in visual and auditory integration thought, advancing students' learning outcomes. ESL professional development should promote multimedia training to help teachers better apply the techniques and the related technology application. It is not simple to arrange multimedia training for teachers and also, the budget for tools is another changes for schools.

Conclusion

As stated above, there is need in developing better phrasal verb instruction plan in community college ESL classes. ESL students at community college can benefit from phrasal verb education and improve their speaking skills. ESL teachers can improve their lesson plans with multimedia learning methods. More authentic materials are better for their phrasal verb teaching. There are challenges in using multimedia methods to teach phrasal verbs and help ESL students improve speaking skills. However, using pictures, music and videos in phrasal verb education benefits both ESL teachers and ESL learners.

Implication/Future Study

There are three gaps after reviewing all the literature, first, the effectiveness of using pictures, movies and music to improve speaking skills in ESL phrasal verb instruction. Much of the literature concludes that multimedia learning strategies should be implemented in general education of many other subjects, but hardly any of them attempted to address how well and effective the multimedia methods would be in ESL education, especially in phrasal verb instruction and of course how it would be related in improving ESL students speaking skills, second, using multimedia techniques that is effective in teaching phrasal verbs in ESL courses for community college ESL students, third, using multimedia techniques to improve ESL students speaking skills. Also, the relationship of phrasal verb knowledge and speaking skills. No

data support or an introductory literature review on this topic. Future study may need to focus on the measurement in do students understand phrasal verbs better can improve both speaking and listening skills.

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