

TEACHING PHRASAL VERBS TO L2 STUDENTS

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Annotation: This article illustrates what is phrasal verb, its background history, using it in the lesson and the ways of teaching them. From this article young teachers learn teaching methods of phrasal verbs.

Key words: verbs, particles, go out, eat out, put on, words, phrasal verbs, construction.

Introduction: English has a number of verbs used with particles. Examples are get up, take off, sit down, go out. These phrasal verbs are extremely common in everyday usage and are made with some of the most frequently used verbs and particles in English. The verbs include get, go, come, take, make, do, and the particles include words such as up, in, out, on, off, down. Here are some examples in sentences

A phrasal verb is a combination of a verb and preposition that has a different meaning than the words individually. For example, “going out” has a different meaning than “going” and “out” do by themselves. Because of this, teaching phrasal verbs can be tricky for grammar or English teachers, especially those with ESL students. Start by introducing phrasal verbs slowly. Define their construction and give examples of phrasal verbs for your students to memorize. Then teach the students how to use context clues to pick out phrasal verbs for themselves. Test the class with a variety of activities to see how well they are learning the concept

Phrasal, prepositional and phrasal-prepositional verbs

English has a number of verbs used with particles. Examples are get up, take off, sit down, go out. These phrasal verbs are extremely common in everyday usage and are made with some of the most frequently used verbs and particles in English. The verbs include get, go, come, take, make, do, and the particles include words such as up, in, out, on, off, down. Here are some examples in sentences:

Are you going out tonight?

I got up early this morning.

My flight takes off at 9am.

He put his coat on.

Phrasal verbs are closely related to prepositional verbs, which consist of a verb, a preposition and an object, for example, It depends on the weather; She looked at me. Sometimes, the two types are combined in phrasal-prepositional verbs, as in You have to face up to your responsibilities; I must get on with my essay.

A challenge to learner

Phrasal verbs present a difficult challenge for most students who study English as a second language. Phrasal verbs are often confusing for students, due to their idiomatic nature. Unfortunately, there is no quick formula for students to learn and understand them. There is no one rule for determining which preposition to use after the verb. Each phrase has to be learned and understood individually. So what is the best way for students to learn phrasal verbs? First, students need to understand that phrasal verbs cannot be accurately translated because of their idiomatic nature and the fact that they are compound phrases. Phrasal verbs sound quite strange to non-native speakers of English. However, once the student can understand the nature of phrasal verbs, they usually have an easier time using them.

The Cambridge Phrasal Verbs Dictionary covers around 6,000 phrasal verbs and their meanings, which gives us some idea of how common they are and how big a challenge they present to learners of English. As well as the large number of verbs, another problem for learners is that phrasal and prepositional verbs often have more than one meaning. So, The plane took off (left the ground) is different from He took off his coat (removed), which is different again from They took £10 off the price (deducted). What's more, it is often not easy to guess the meaning unless we have a lot of context.

Another problem is that, with some types of verbs, we can separate the verb and the particle, while with others, we cannot. Here are some right (/) and wrong (x) sentences:

She put on her coat /

She put her coat on /

She put it on /

She put on it x

What we see from these examples is some phrasal verbs can take an object (e.g. put on) and the object may come before or after the particle, but not if it is a pronoun (e.g. it). Other phrasal verbs take no object (e.g. eat out) but can be used with adverbial phrases (e.g. at a local restaurant). Phrasal verbs often function as informal versions of more formal expressions. For example, I really messed up is more informal than I made some serious mistakes. Prices have shot up is more informal than prices have soared. Being aware of formality is also important. All this means that phrasal verbs present a considerable challenge to teachers and learners.

Meeting the challenge

The first thing we need to do is to establish realistic targets for learning these types of verbs. To do this, a large corpus (computerized database of spoken and written texts) is essential. The Cambridge Phrasal Verbs Dictionary and English Phrasal Verbs in Use were both written using a database of phrasal verbs from the multi-billion-word Cambridge English Corpus. We cannot possibly teach 6,000 phrasal verbs, but the corpus enables us to extract the most common ones to offer to learners. The advanced level of English Phrasal Verbs in Use, for example, covers 1,000 items, which for an advanced level learner is a realistic target for learning.

Teaching and learning phrasal verbs

A syllabus or list of phrasal verbs is not enough. We need interesting and engaging ways of presenting and practicing them, and this means presentation and practice in typical, meaningful contexts. We also need to help learners understand the basic grammar of phrasal verbs, even though phrasal verbs are normally thought of as part of the vocabulary lesson.

In this example from English Phrasal Verbs in Use (Intermediate level), students are presented with phrasal verbs they will probably hear the teacher use frequently in class, along with an explanation of their meanings.

The teacher says:

Hand/Turn in your worksheets at the end of the lesson, please.

The teacher wants:

The students to give her their work at the end of the lesson.

The students' task is then to match a series of pictures (e.g. a picture of someone crossing something out) with each phrasal verb. The matching of pictures and words helps students to remember things better. Students also learn things more effectively if they can personalize the language in some way, for example, by choosing those verbs from a unit which mean something personally to them or which are relevant in some way to their daily life. Good materials for learning phrasal verbs offer learners opportunities to personalize the verbs they are presented with and record them in their notebooks. As with all aspects of vocabulary learning, we can never teach enough items, so, along with learning new phrasal verbs, it is

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important to train learners in an awareness of what phrasal verbs are and how they operate in context. In that way, we help to create learners for life.

Reference:

1. The ultimate Phrasal verb book. Carl. W Hart.
2. English for everyone. Ben France.
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