

Cognitive linguistics, with its attention to conceptualization, symbolism, and metaphor, provides rich opportunities for application to second-language pedagogy (Achard & Niemeier, 2004). One promising area for application is the teaching of English phrasal verbs, the opacity and polysemy of which present a profound challenge for second-language learners. These learners often view verb+particle combinations as random. This is not surprising when traditional ESL textbooks present definition-matching exercises that privilege memorization over conceptual analysis. Given Bolinger's (1971) description of phrasal verbs as "a floodgate of metaphor" (p. xii), conceptual analysis is precisely what is necessary to alter the pervasive student view that verbs and particles are combined in arbitrary and senseless ways.

This paper proposes a novel method for phrasal-verb instruction and reports on its implementation within two ESL courses. The method builds on previous cognitive approaches to pedagogy that draw learners' attention to metaphor in these lexical items (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996; Boers, 2000; Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003). To help learners make better sense of phrasal verbs, the proposed method spotlights interaction between verb and particle components.

In a classroom study, 35 learners from seven countries were introduced to the *zone of activity*. This is an image schema based on Lindner's (1981) region of interactive focus, a conceptual space for "shared experience, existence, action, function, conscious interaction and awareness" (p. 171). Students were presented sketches of phrasal verbs to illustrate how a particle – in combination with the literal or figurative sense of the verb component – locates action or activity in a physical or metaphoric place. Outside the classroom, students searched for phrasal verbs in newspaper articles and collected extracts from these sources. Inside the classroom, students attempted to build *conceptual motivation* (Kövecses & Szabó, 1996) for some of the collected phrasal verbs by making sketches that included zones of activity and by sharing their drawings in small groups.

To examine potential changes in how students tackled comprehension of phrasal verbs, pre-instruction and post-instruction reading tasks were administered and analyzed. The tasks consisted of 16 written dialogues, each dialogue containing one target item. Eight targeted phrasal verbs were recycled from the pre- to the post-task. Students were asked to write explanations for "what the underlined phrasal verb means in each specific context." None of the task's phrasal verbs were collected by students or considered in class during the instruction phase.

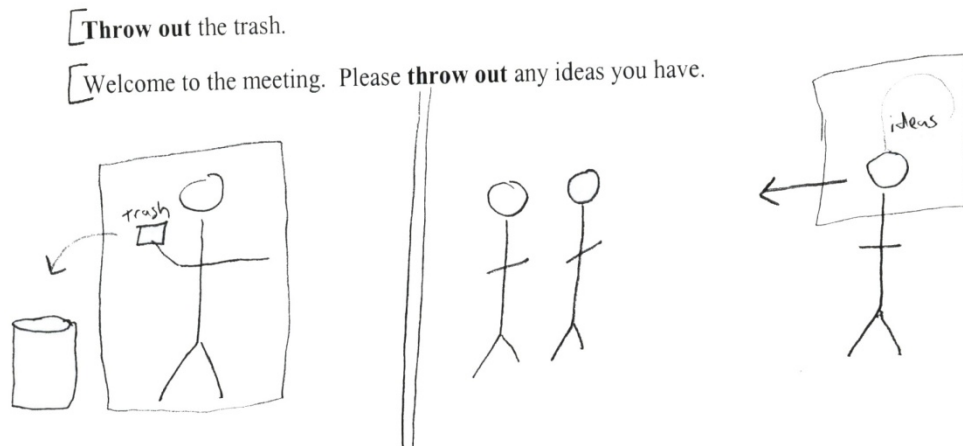
A significant increase in the total number of accurate explanations for the repeated phrasal verbs ( $z = -2.45$ ,  $p < .05$ ,  $r = -.61$ ) was noted. For instances on the post-task where participants produced explanations different from incorrect explanations on the pre-task, four trends were identified: incorporation of the particle into the second explanation; a less literal, more figurative explanation; a more detailed explanation; an explanation that better fit the dialogue context. Responses on a questionnaire reveal that most students found the instruction engaging and useful.

This paper will detail the method of instruction, discuss results of the study, and suggest adaptations for the teaching of languages other than English.

## References

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Example sketch, where boxes depict zone of activity:



Example student sketch for “snow days pile up”:

