



International Journal of Advanced Academic Studies

E-ISSN: 2706-8927

P-ISSN: 2706-8919

www.allstudyjournal.com

IJAAS 2020; 2(3): 761-765

Received: 12-05-2020

Accepted: 15-06-2020

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The Extensive reading effect on the phrasal verbs learning of Afghan intermediate EFL learners

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Abstract

To be aware of the difficulties the learners of English as second language experience with learning phrasal verb and its significant impact on language learning, the researcher of the current study aims to see whether the extensive reading method has any effect on phrasal verb learning of Afghan English as Foreign Language learners. Phrasal verbs are subset of English vocabulary that are extensively used by native speakers of English but they have been very difficult for L2 learners to master. Therefore, the students and some teachers tend to ignore its significance. One main null hypothesis was formulated, i.e. whether using extensive reading technique has any significant effect on the improvement of learning phrasal verb achievement of Afghan intermediate EFL learners. According to this hypothesis, the quasi- experimental method and two t-test were used to analyze the data and examine the null hypothesis. For achieving the homogeneity of proficiency in EFL, the PET test was conducted for 70 students and 40 homogeneous EFL learners were chosen.

The age of the learners were between 20 to 25 years old. The participants under investigation were then randomly separated into control and experimental groups. There were 20 participants in each group. The researcher taught phrasal verb to the experimental group using extensive reading technique four hours a week for an eight-week period. But he taught phrasal verb to control group in a traditional or teacher-centered way. After carefully dissecting the results and scores of the pretest and posttest in both groups it was determined that the experimental group outperformed the control group. As the results in this study shows, it is suggested that in order to promote the learning phrasal verb ability of Afghan EFL learners, teachers can use extensive reading technique.

Keywords: Extensive reading, intermediate EFL learners, phrasal verb learning

1. Introductions

Phrasal verbs are two or three word idiomatic expressions, consisting of a verb and a particle or a combination of a verb and a preposition which are so common in everyday real life conversations and informal written language. These phrasal verbs are subgroup of English vocabulary that are widely used by native speakers of English but they have been found to be difficult for L2 learners to master. Maybe learners encounter with a lot of English phrasal verbs during the learning process in classroom, but, gradually they forget them and cannot recall them easily, so they need to learn them in a way that these words retain in their mind and are used for a long time. In addition the amount of phrasal verbs that they should learn is very considerable. There are many effective techniques to teach phrasal verbs like guessing the meaning from the context, word association activities, giving word synonyms, and so on. Amanda Hare (2010) ^[1], indicate that reading is an increasing input of the target language & helping students to strengthen their phrasal verb. Reading is a one of the means which can be used in educational setting to improve individual's phrasal verb learning. The ability to read in a second language (L₂) is considered to be an essential skill for academic students & represents the primary way for independent language learning Rivers (1981) ^[3] defines reading as the main activity, as a source of information and entertainment, but also as a way of consolidating one's knowledge of the language. She also differentiates two types of reading for comprehension (p.259) Reading can also be seen as an "interactive" process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts dynamically with the text as he/she tries to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well schematic knowledge (through top-down processing). Therefore, reading is the basic skill through which students are able to learn to read great amount of authentic materials and to read for communication. Learners can also promote

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their knowledge understanding of the culture of the speaker of the language, their people and their ways of the thinking, and their past and present civilizations.

Having a strong belief in the role reading plays, I felt a natural inclination to explore whether or not extensive reading as one type of reading can help learners acquire phrasal verb & to what extent. Like Hafiz and Tudor (1989)^[4], the researcher believes that: "the pedagogical value attributed to extensive reading is based on the assumption that exposing learners to large quantities of meaningful and interesting L2 material will, in the long run, produce a beneficial effect on the learners' command of the L2". Besides, there has been a growing interest in researching the value of extensive reading (p.5). Hafiz and Tudor (1989)^[4] conducted a three month extensive reading programmer as an extra activity.

The subjects were Pakistani ESL learners in a UK school and their parents were manual workers with limited formal education. The results showed a marked improvement in the performance of the experimental subjects, especially in terms of their writing skills. The subjects' progress in writing skills may be due in part to "exposure to a range of lexical, syntactic, and textual features in the reading materials" as well as the nature of "the pleasure-oriented extensive reading" (Hafiz & Tudor 8).

Hedge (2003)^[5] briefs the advantages of extensive use in the following lines: Learners can build their language competence, progress in their reading ability, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge, and develop confidence and motivation to carry on learning (204-205). Moreover, learners will reach autonomy through extensive reading by reading either in class or at home, by sustained silent reading (SSR).

Carrell and Sisterhood believe that SSR activity can be efficient in helping learners become independent learners seeking meaning provided an SSR program is "based on student-selected texts so that the students will be interested in what they are reading. Students select their own reading texts with respect to content, level of difficulty, and length". Thus, pupils are competing only against themselves, and it is up to the teacher to provide the motivation and monitoring to ensure that maximum number of books is being read in the time available "(p.329)".

Through this approach reading can be considered as a "collaborative" and "interactive" process between the one who read and a reading text which leads to automatous reader or (reading fluency). In this process, the reader interacts actively with the text as he/she attempt to elicit the meaning and where various kinds of knowledge are being used: linguistic or systemic knowledge (through bottom-up processing) as well schematic knowledge (through top-down processing). Since reading is a complex process, Grabe W (1991)^[8]. Current developments in second language reading research, argues that many researchers attempt to understand and explain the fluent reading process by analyzing the process into a set of component skills in reading.

Reading goal is to read for meaning or to recreate writer's meaning, reading to improve pronunciation, practice grammatical forms and study vocabulary do not constitute reading at all because, by definition, reading involves comprehension, Grabe W (1991)^[8]. Current developments in second language reading research.

When readers are not comprehending, they are not reading. However, suggesting that the objective of reading has been gained when students are able to read for the message may still be short of a satisfying goal. The ultimate reading goal must consist elements that transform a heavy problem-solving task into a variable skill. Language learners have to learn to face with linguistic material over which they have no control. They must learn to collaborate with the reading in a reflective and productive approach so as to specify meaning even when some of the words, endings, and design do not make sense or are not immediately meaningfully acceptable. The main aim here is to reach a level at which they have full confidence in their capability to overcome temporary or permanent lapses of understanding and to continue reading until they have got the writer's general meaning. It is essential for them to promote to a level of speed that will enable them to use the reading skill realistically as a source of knowledge, information and entertainment.

In order to help learners gain this objective, the teacher has the responsibility of directing students to their overall objectives and distinct goals. The course objective is to be able to read without focusing on grammar structure or translating into their native language. These findings recommends that meaningful conceptual content in reading promote motivation among leaners for reading and text comprehension. The second practice that enhance desire showed that students who were provided choice of text performed higher on reading tasks than those with no choice. The third practice was using engaging texts.

This comply with Hedge's proposal that in selecting task texts, teachers should search for attractive texts and consider different topics. Readers' interest can be declared by setting "a reading interest questionnaire" where students check the fields that suit their interest, i.e. short stories, thrillers, science fiction, etc. In particular, children with reading difficulties need to see the high frequency words in context if they are to better comprehend how written language works. Once children have mastery of even a few automatic words they should be exposed to more text that will support and utilize that group of known words.

A phrasal verb list or puzzles (built through educational web sites) can be given to students in advance that contain the words in the specific lesson by the teacher this can create an opportunity for the students to prepare themselves for reading lesson. The researcher believes that beginning readers can expand their phrasal verbs through the use of word play, puzzles, etc., which will at the end help them to become competent, skillful readers of English texts.

Apparently there are other effective techniques that can be used to develop English phrasal verb learning. Here, the researcher was going to base his study on phrasal verb learning through both traditional way and extensive reading in order to see whether they have equal effect on learning phrasal verbs or one of them is more effective than the other.

1.1 Statement of the Problem

Most learners have problems in learning and retention phrasal verbs in mind for a long time. Unfortunately, teachers do not pay much attention to this issue that why their students cannot recall the phrasal verbs in coming sessions. They only think that they do their job in this way, and this is the learner who ever studies and repeats the

words for themselves. In fact, teachers, instead of being creative in order to practice different teaching ways, only believe that learners are the only faults. It is essential to mention that how to expose a new phrasal verb for the first time. Actually, the researcher has taught English for several years in an Institute. Everything in my class has been partly well except an important problem, which always makes my mind busy.

1.2. Research Question

The research question in this study is as follows:

Does extensive reading have any effect on Iranian intermediate EFL learners' phrasal verbs learning?

1.3. Purpose of Study

The purpose of the research has been to examine the effectiveness of teaching phrasal verbs through extensive reading of Afghan intermediate EFL learners.

The goal of this study is to help academic field in order to overcome difficulties in teaching phrasal verbs. Moreover, by administering extensive reading, teachers' and creativity has been shown to others. That is, not only do they teach on the basis of textbooks, but also, they think creatively to solve the problems regarding those books. Furthermore, by the application to this technique, the researcher can posit extensive reading on learning phrasal verb.

1.4. Significance of the Study

The study in this field, on the effectiveness of teaching through extensive reading on learning phrasal verb will be important because its result is going to be helpful to all the teachers in EFL classes. In this study, the researcher tries to teach phrasal verbs in a way that learners can recall them easily and know when and how to use them. In this way extensive reading is one of the most important language skills. In fact a considerable amount of knowledge and information is obtained through reading. The development of this skill enables the students to receive the ideas put forth by the great men of letters from all over the world and of other cultures. It is also helpful for them to keep in touch with the developments in the fields of science and technology.

Accordingly, any attempts to find methods for developing this skill are to be appropriated. As a matter of fact, this project is an attempt in this direction. It tries to investigate the effectiveness of teaching extensive reading on learning phrasal verbs. This research, result also will help greatly English institute teachers, school teachers, and even university instructors, because phrasal verbs as one of the significant part of English are included in books and are widely used by native speakers of English in everyday spoken and informal written language and must be taught in schools, institutes, and even universities.

1.5 Review and Analysis of related literature

Reading is a receptive skill in that the reader is receiving a message from a writer. Various writers have also refereed to reading as a decoding skill. This terminology has been derived from the idea of language as a code, one which must be deciphered to arrive at meaning of the messages. Although this term points out the active role the reader must play in reading, it does not show the whole story. Recent researchers in reading describe the reading process in a way that implies an active reader intent upon using background

knowledge and skills to recreate the writer's intended meaning Chastain K. (1988) ^[11]. Developing second-language skills: Theory and practice (3rd ed).

Rivers (1981) ^[3] describes reading as a most important activity, not only as a source of information and enjoyment, but also as a means of consolidating one's knowledge of the language. She also differentiates two types of reading for comprehension (p.259).

Another aspect of reading is the "collaborative" or "interactive" process between a reader and a text which leads to automaticity or (reading fluency). During this process, the reader interacts actively with the text as he/she attempt to elicit the meaning and where different kinds of knowledge are being used: lexical or fundamental knowledge (through bottom-up) processing as well schematic knowledge (through top-down) processing.

2. Method

2.1. Subjects of the study

The participants in this study were 70 Afghan intermediate EFL learners. The subjects were male and female learners in Kabul polytechnic University. In order to scientifically and objectively determine the proficiency level of the subjects, the PET test was administered. After they had taken the PET test, the students whose scores were within the range of one standard deviation above and below the mean were selected as homogeneous participants for this study. Then forty of the participants were regarded as intermediate learners. These subjects were assigned in two groups. 20 students as the control group, and 20 as the experimental group members to participate in the study.

Each of the groups included male and female learners, ranging from 19 to 25 years of age. However, the researcher didn't include sex and age factors in this study.

2.2. Instrumentation

In order to come up with satisfactory results, some sets of tests were carried out in this study.

1) PET test was used as a standardized measure to check the homogeneity of participants in terms of language proficiency. The result was used to select those who will be the final participants of the study.

The range of scores was determined based on the mean scores and the standard deviation of all scores on the test.

2) Pre – test: This test is standard and authentic test which are related to Phrasal verbs organizer book by John Flower.

This test was administered to all subjects in the first session of the class. The test consisted of fill- in- the blank, multiple-choice, matching items.

After that, the researcher started to give the treatment to experimental group, which contained reading passages. In another group, which is control, learning new phrasal verbs along with their definitions, repetition, memorization, and drills which are presented on the board and their books.

3) Post - test: This test is standard and authentic test which are related to Phrasal verbs organizer book by John Flower. This was a test consisting fill- in- the blank, multiple-choice, matching items. This test was administered in order to measure the student's performance after the treatment.

3. Results

The t-test carried out to answer the research question.

Table 1: Independent samples T-test of comparison between posttest of two groups

		Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		T-test for Equality of Means						
		F	Sig.	t	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference	
scores in post test	Equal variances assumed	.002	.968	3.761	38	.001	3.920	1.042	Lower	Upper
	Equal variances not assumed			3.761	37.833	.001	3.920	1.042	1.810	6.030

**sig <.05 =It shows significant difference

Table 2: Descriptive statistics of paired samples test for group of control

		Paired Differences					T	DF	Sig. (2-tailed)
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference				
					Lower	Upper			
Pair 1	Control group in post test - Control group in pre test	1.157	1.246	.279	.574	1.740	4.153	19	.001

4. Conclusions

The results and conclusions of this study are reviewed here, in order to establish a close connection between them and the derived implications that will be discussed later in this chapter. According to the data analyzed through the t-test statistical technique that is used for comparing mean scores, "experimental group" and "traditional" groups turned out to be different in learning phrasal verb at the intermediate stage of language proficiency.

Therefore, the null hypothesis stated for the above mentioned groups were strongly rejected at 0.05 level of probability. As the data were analyzed through matched t-test, more information was obtained. When the pretests and posttests of the same groups were calculated, it was Revealed that the "experimental "group proved to be more efficient in learning phrasal verb than the "traditional" group, maybe because of the more amount of exposure in a certain amount of time. The results in this study, all in all, suggested that presenting reading material extensively is a very effective technique for the development of the reading skill for EFL students and this program is more efficient, learning wise, than the program in which reading materials are presented intensively at intermediate stage of language proficiency.

As the results of this study, the following conclusions were obtained:

- It is concluded that the learning with extensive reading method, the students can learn to build their language competence, become more independent in their studies, acquire cultural knowledge & develop confidence & motivation to carry on learning.
- They are used to read independently by using the resources within their reach. Oppositely, in common traditional English classes, students are passive learners who listen to the teacher's teaching, and attempting to learn the subjects only from English teacher's presentation in class.

- The learning environment in extensive reading classroom was rather positive, supportive and active. It entails learners reading as much as possible, for the purpose of pleasure or information rather than learning particular language features, & is usually self-selected. It also facilitate reading comprehension ability, reading speed vocabulary acquisition, & positive attitudes towards reading.
- The obtained results in this investigation indicate that the participants' English extensive reading ability had remarkable improvement after the eight weeks instruction in phrasal verb learning. The researcher found a number of possible explanations for the improvement of participants 'extensive reading abilities. Participants had more opportunity to read the assigned parts individually & to expose learners to large quantities of meaning full & interesting reading. In the common traditional English classroom the students' tendency was to receive the lessons directly from English teacher but they did not have sufficient opportunities to think to discover the lessons on their own. On the other hand, the students learning in extensive reading approach needed to develop reading ability & achieve their independency by reading either in class at home, and the teacher was just a director or guide who believed students could correct their mistakes after some examinations. Second, the participants develop good reading habits, to build up knowledge of vocabulary & structure & to encourage a liking for reading.

Recommendations for further studies

The researcher in this study try to encourage other researcher for doing further studies on extensive reading. The following recommendations are also made for further research in this field of study:

1. In the present study the gender was not controlled there for further study can be done comparing the result among male and female learner separately.
2. The present study focus on intermediate level but it can also be done for higher levels.
3. The present study was done among English language learner in University but can also be done among students in school & Language centers.
4. To investigate "the impact of extensive reading" in ESP and EST situations.
5. To investigate "the impact of extensive reading" in ESL situations.
6. To investigate "the impact of intensive" vs. extensive programs in improving EFL reading comprehension for male and female learners.
7. Similar studies can be conducted in other educational settings with different student populations in order to get additional information about the effectiveness of extensive reading on EFL Afghan learners.
8. The results of this study may be relevant to researchers in other language skills as well as other fields of research.
9. The present study is limited to EFL learners in University in Kabul. The same study can be conducted with male and female students to find out the probable difference that gender may cause.
10. The scope of this research covered only the effectiveness of extensive reading assignment on learning phrasal verb. Another study could be conducted on effectiveness of extensive reading assignment on learning other skills and sub-skills.

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