English Language & Literature Teaching, Vol. 17, No. 4 Winter 2011

Factors Influencing ESL Learners' Use of English Phrasal Verbs

Cheongmin Yook
(Chungnam National University)

Yook, Cheongmin. (2011). Factors influencing ESL learners' use of English phrasal verbs. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 17*(4), 273-291.

This study investigates factors that influence ESL learners' use/avoidance of English phrasal verbs. It especially focuses on two factors, topic difference and group membership. For the purpose, 60 ESL students who took the University English Proficiency Test (UEPT) were selected, and the 60 essays they wrote for the UEPT were analyzed. All the students were with non-Germanic first language backgrounds. Among the 60 essays, 30 essays were selected from the essays written for the International Students UEPT (IS UEPT), which was required of all new international students. Another 30 essays were selected from the essays written for the Regents' UEPT, which was required of all non-native English speaking undergraduate students as a graduation requirement. Results indicate that the length of residency in the U.S. and/or academic status and semantic complexities of English phrasal verbs but not topic difference nor English proficiency affected the use of English phrasal verbs. The study ends with a discussion of pedagogical implications of the findings.

[phrasal verbs/avoidance/length of residency/semantic complexity/textbook]

I. INTRODUCTION

As Cornell (1985) observes, phrasal verbs as part of multi-word lexical verbs were once thought to be common only in speech and informal writing, but they are now found in all registers, from street slang to the most academic forms of the language. In other words, phrasal verbs are extremely common in English. They are found in a "wide variety of contexts" (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2007, p. 6). Moreover, phrasal verbs are part of what is often called formulaic language. Recent work has suggested that much speech and writing in a native language is enabled largely by the internalization of formulaic language. For

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

example, Mackenzie (2000) argues that a great deal of linguistic performance is "a case of deploying prefabricated, institutionalized, and fully contextualized phrases and expressions and sentence heads, with a grammatical form and a lexical content that is either wholly or largely fixed" (p. 173). Successful learning of English as a second/foreign language (ESL/EFL) and acquisition of native speaker fluency, therefore, requires mastery of its formulaic language, which includes phrasal verbs.

Largely because of such pedagogical significance in ESL/EFL education, there has been increasing interest in English phrasal verbs (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Cornell, 1985; Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Darwin & Gray, 1999; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Side, 1990). Much of the interest in English phrasal verbs, however, has been either theoretical or methodological. For example, without an empirical experiment, Side (1990) looked into possible reasons for ESL/EFL learners' tendency to avoid phrasal verbs and suggested that: (a) there are too many combinations of verb and particle, (b) many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning, (c) the particle appears to be randomly combined with the verb, and (d) it is extremely difficult for ESL/EFL learners to adjust their use of phrasal verbs according to various registers, among other reasons.

The present study aims to empirically investigate what factors influence the use of phrasal verbs by ESL learners who do not have the phrasal verb structure in their native languages. (Hereafter, the expression *use* rather than *avoidance* of phrasal verbs will be used in order to make it clear that the present study focuses on the frequency of phrasal verbs in the writing of ESL learners with non-Germanic linguistic backgrounds). The current study explores the impact of topic difference on ESL learners' use of English phrasal verbs. It also investigates the impact of the group membership on their use of English phrasal verbs. The study involves two groups of participants which are both similar and different in several respects (e.g., age, status, length of residency in the U.S., English proficiency, among others). To be more specific, the study investigates the following two research questions. First, does topic difference influence ESL learners' use of English phrasal verbs? Second, does the group membership play a role in ESL learners' use of English? The results of this empirical investigation will show the factors that influence ESL learners' use of English phrasal verbs and, thus, will have significant pedagogic implications.

II. LITERATURE REVIEW

Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) argue that mastering phrasal verbs is a very difficult task for ESL/EFL learners, and this difficulty is especially true for those with non-

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Germanic first language (L1) background because *verb + particle* combinations are rarely found outside of the Germanic Family. This difficulty is often compounded by the particle movement, a unique grammatical characteristic of phrasal verbs. What is worse is that the meaning of many phrasal verbs cannot be deduced from their semantic components. These reasons suggested by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman lead to what is known as the avoidance of English phrasal verbs by ESL/EFL learners.

Most of previous empirical research has been on the avoidance of English phrasal verbs. Dagut and Laufer's (1985) study, which is recognized as one of the earliest studies on the avoidance behavior, examined Israeli learners' avoidance of English phrasal verbs. Dagut and Laufer selected 15 (literal, figurative, and completive) English phrasal verbs and created three tests: multiple choice, verb translation, and verb memorizing tests. They administered the three tests to 180 university freshmen (60 per each test) in Israel. Results indicate that a majority of the Israeli students avoided using English phrasal verbs in general and figurative phrasal verbs in particular, preferring one-word verbs. Dagut and Laufer argued that the avoidance was caused by structural differences between the L1 and the L2. That is, the phrasal-verb structure had no formal equivalent in Hebrew, and this L1-L2 difference resulted in the Israeli learners' avoidance of English phrasal verbs.

A limitation of Dagut and Laufer (1985) is that they did not consider English proficiency level as a variable. This variable was taken into consideration by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) in their examination of Dutch EFL learners' avoidance of English phrasal verbs. Hulstijn and Marchena recruited 50 intermediate and 25 advanced Dutch students and administered three tests (multiple choice, memorization, and translation) to them. Each test contained 15 sentences, eliciting preference for either a phrasal verb or an equivalent one-word verb. On the basis of the results, Hulstijn and Marchena claimed that both the intermediate and the advanced Dutch EFL learners did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically and that, nevertheless, they avoided some phrasal verbs which they perceived as too Dutch-like (i.e., *give up*, which is the literal counterpart of the Dutch word *opgeven*).

One thing that was overlooked by Hulstijn and Marchena (1985) is that their claim was not consistent with the results they reported. The results indicated clearly that the intermediate learners in their study tended to avoid phrasal verbs more often than the advanced learners. This inconsistency seems to imply the effect of English proficiency. Liao and Fukuya (2004) took this inconsistency into consideration. Liao and Fukuya argued that the disparity between Hulstijn and Marchena's (1989) claim and the results they reported might have been the result of their failure to follow "the standard statistical interpretation procedure used when an interaction between two proficiency levels is significant" (p. 212). Thus, in their own investigation of the avoidance of English phrasal

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

verbs by Chinese ESL learners, Liao and Fukuya introduced proficiency level by recruiting three groups of intermediate learners and another three groups of advanced learners. Liao and Fukuya also included two other factors (phrasal verb types and test types) in their investigation. Liao and Fukuya explored three research questions: (1) whether or not Chinese learners avoid using phrasal verbs, (2) if they do, whether their avoidance reflects differences in the semantic nature of phrasal verb types (figurative vs. literal), and (3) whether their avoidance reflects differences in test types (multiple-choice, translation, or recall). From the results, Liao and Fukuya found that: (1) English proficiency level was an important factor for the avoidance of English phrasal verbs by ESL/EFL learners, (2) there was no interaction between group and phrasal verb type, and (3) the interaction between group and test types was found only on the translation test. On the basis of these findings, Liao and Fukuya claimed that Chinese ESL learners' phrasal-verb-avoidance behavior is "a manifestation of interlanguage development" (p. 212): The more Chinese learners become proficient in English, the less they tend to avoid English phrasal verbs. Liao and Fukuya further claimed that L1-L2 differences and semantic difficulty of phrasal verbs have statistically significant effects on the Chinese students' avoidance behavior, but the effects are offset by the increase in their English proficiency. In sum, Liao and Fukuya found that only proficiency level had a statistically significant impact on the Chinese students' use of English phrasal verbs. Therefore, the current study aims to look into some other factors that may influence ESL learners' use/avoidance of English phrasal verbs.

Darwin and Gray (1999) argue that one of the reasons for the lack of progress in the understanding of phrasal verbs is the confusion in the definition of the phrasal verb. Therefore, in order to identify phrasal verbs consistently in this study, a working definition of the phrasal verb is needed. This study follows the definition and terminology provided by the *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English* (Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, 1999). Biber et al. (1999) use the term *phrasal verb* as a subcategory of a larger class labeled *multi-word lexical verbs*. Multi-word lexical verbs include phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, phrasal-prepositional verbs, and other multi-word verb constructions.

According to the Biber et al. (1999), phrasal verbs are verbs that consist of a verb and a particle (a preposition or a adverb) or a verb and two particles (an adverb and a preposition). Phrasal verbs can be identified with three criteria: (a) whether or not there is an idiomatic meaning, (b) whether or not particle movement is possible, and (c) how the *wh*-question is formed. An important feature of phrasal verbs is that they are typically idiomatic. The whole meaning of a phrasal verb cannot be understood by simply putting together the meanings of its individual parts. Moreover, phrasal verbs often have a one-

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

word equivalent. For example, *pick up* does not literally mean "pick in an upward direction." One of its meanings is similar to *acquire*. Thus, *pick up* can be replaced with this single-word verb *acquire*. Furthermore, phrasal verbs usually allow particle movement when they are followed by a noun phrase. When the object of a phrasal verb is a pronoun, the particle usually is after the object pronoun (e.g., He *found out* the secret vs. He *found* the secret *out* vs. *He *found out* it vs. *He found it out*). Finally, in sentences with a phrasal verb, *wh*-questions are usually formed with *what* or *who*, and the particle cannot be separated from its phrasal verb (e.g., Susan *found out* the secret - *What* did Susan *find out*? - **Out what* did Susan *find*?). In addition, Fraser (1976) divides English phrasal verbs into three types: literal, figurative, and completive phrasal verbs. Literal phrasal verbs refer to those whose meaning can be easily deduced from their semantic components as in *come in* or *go out*. In contrast, figurative phrasal verbs are those in which a meaning has resulted from a metaphorical shift of meaning and the semantic confusion of the individual components as in *give up* or *turn off*. Completive phrasal verbs refer to those in which the particle describes the result of the action as in *burn down* or *cut off*. It has been generally agreed that figurative English phrasal verbs are most difficult for ESL/EFL learners to acquire (Dagut & Laufer, 1985).

III. METHOD

1. Participants and Materials

For the purpose of the present study, 60 ESL students who took the University English Proficiency Test (UEPT) were selected, and the 60 essays they wrote for the UEPT were analyzed. The UEPT is developed and administered by the University Testing Center in a university in the U.S. There are four different UEPTs. Among them are the International Students UEPT (IS UEPT) and the Regents' UEPT and they are all high-stakes tests. The IS UEPT is required of all new non-native English-speaking international students to take before each semester begins. The IS UEPT includes four components: a reading/writing section including one essay and short answers, a multiple choice listening section, a multiple choice reading section, and an oral interview. If international students fail to get certain scores in each component of the test, they are required to take one to two ESL courses depending on their scores. The Regents' UEPT is required of all non-native English speaking undergraduate students to take in order to fulfill a graduation requirement. It consists of two sections: a reading/writing section including short answers and one essay,

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

and a multiple choice reading section. If students fail to get certain scores in each section, their graduation is deferred.

Among the 60 essays selected for the present study, 30 essays were selected from the essays written for the IS UEPT and another 30 essays were selected from the essays written for the Regents' UEPT. When the essays (and thus their writers) were selected, three factors were taken into consideration: writers' non-Germanic L1 backgrounds, their length of residency in the U.S., and topics they wrote their essays on (see Appendix for detailed information on each writer's nationality, essay topic, academic status, gender, length of residency, and scores on rhetoric and language use).

The 30 essays chosen from the IS UEPT were written by students who had stayed in the U.S. for less than a year at the time of the investigation (hereafter IS group). The students of the IS group came from 13 different countries (Hong Kong and Taiwan were treated as separate countries). In contrast, the 30 essays selected from the Regents' UEPT were written by students who had stayed in the U.S. for more than four years (hereafter Regents' group). The students of the Regents' group were from 17 different countries. All the students of the IS group were graduates, while all the students of the Regents' group were undergraduates. The half of each group wrote on a topic *globalization*, while the other half of each group wrote on a topic *computer use in early childhood*. Thus, in total, 30 essays (15 from each group) were on the *globalization* topic, and another 30 essays were on the *computer* topic. All the members of the two groups use non-Germanic languages as their L1s. The gender ratio of the two groups was the same: each group consisted of 15 males and another 15 females.

2. Procedure

The focus of this study was on whether the ESL students attempt to use English phrasal verbs at all and, if any, what affects their attempts to use English phrasal verbs. For this purpose, the 60 essays were thoroughly examined, and presence of phrasal verbs (or whether any phrasal verbs were used) was identified for each essay (see Appendix for the phrasal verbs used in each essay). In this identifying process, the three criteria discussed above in relations to the definition suggested by Biber et al. (1999) were employed. The criteria were usually dependable. However, as Cornell (1985) and Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) point out, not all phrasal verbs cannot easily be identified with the three criteria. A number of phrasal verbs are non-idiomatic in that their meaning can be easily deduced from the two constituting parts as in *run away*, and some phrasal verbs do not allow particle movement as in *come across*. Therefore, whenever difficulty or

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

ambiguity arose, two dictionaries were referred to: *Longman Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* (Pollard, Egge, Adrian-Vallence, Leigh, Jackson, & Stark, 2000) and *Phrasal Verb Dictionary* which is available on the internet (http://www.englishpage.com/prepositions/phrasaldictionary.html).

In this identifying process, any use of a wrongly constructed phrasal verb (that is, verb + incorrect adverbial particle) was counted as a use of a phrasal verb when the context clearly showed that the writer intended to use the phrasal verb. For example, an essay in the IS group (ID #56 in Appendix) wrote: "Why computer don't *belong in* the classroom, and other reflections …." In this case, it was reasonable to guess that the writer intended to write *belong to*, and, thus, it was counted as an attempt to use the phrasal verb. To give another example, an essay in the Regents' group (ID #3 in Appendix) wrote: "As the clock *ticking off*, bringing us closer to the 21st century, it's a prove fact that globalization is spread throughout the world." Again, it was clear that the writer intended to use the phrasal verb *ticking away*, and it was counted as an attempt to use the phrasal verb. The reason for doing so was to take into consideration the fact that, as discussed in the beginning of the present study (particularly in relation to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999), acquiring phrasal verbs is not an easy task for ESL learners with non-Germanic L1 backgrounds. For example, a number of adverbial particles can be attached to the verb *take* to make a phrasal verb: *after, apart, against, back, down, in, off, on, out, over, to,* and *up*. Thus, ESL learners may often get confused when they attempt to use a phrasal verb to express his/her intended meaning. When making a decision on whether a student attempted to use a phrasal verb or not in a certain context, five native speakers of English were consulted. The five native English speakers received master's degrees in Teaching English to Speakers of Other Languages, were raters of the UEPT, and were instructors at the ESL Programs in the university the student participants were attending.

Finally, for the proficiency levels of the students of both groups, essay scores on "language use" and "rhetoric" were used. According to the University Testing Center homepage, the essay for both IS and Regents' UEPTs "is scored on content, organization, and use of language, using UEPT Scoring Rubric, and the final scores are reported on language use and rhetoric. The maximum scores for the two parts are 20.

IV. RESULTS

A chi-square test was carried out to examine whether task topic difference influenced the students' use of English phrasal verbs. As Table 1 shows, sixteen of the 30 students who

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

wrote on the globalization topic used phrasal verbs, while the remaining 14 did not. Seventeen of the students who wrote on the computer topic used phrasal verbs, while the remaining 13 did not. However, no statistically significant difference was observed in the use of phrasal verbs between the two topics, $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = .067$, $p < .05$.

TABLE 1

Topic and Use of Phrasal Verbs

		Use of phrasal verbs (PVs)		Total
		Number of students who did not use PVs	Number of students who used of PVs	
Topic	Globalization	14	16	30
	Computer	12	17	30
Total		27	33	30

TABLE 2

Group and Use of Phrasal Verbs

		Use of phrasal verbs (PVs)		Total
		No use	Use of PVs	
Group	Regents'	9	21	30
	IS	18	12	30

Another chi-square test was conducted to investigate whether the group membership played a role in the students' use of phrasal verbs. Table 2 presents the results of the chi-square test. The results indicate that the Regents' group used phrasal verbs more frequently than the IS group. Twenty-one students in the Regents' group used phrasal verbs but only 12 students in the IS group used them. There was a significant difference in the use of phrasal verbs between the two groups, $\chi^2(1, n = 60) = 5.46$, $p = .020$.

The two groups were different in English proficiency as measured by their scores on the language use and rhetoric of the UEPT. Therefore, one might expect that the different English proficiency levels of the two groups influenced the two groups' use of phrasal verbs. To examine it, a two-factor analysis of variance was conducted to analyze the relationship between the students' scores on language use and their use of phrasal verbs, between their scores on language use and groups, and interaction between groups and use of phrasal verbs. Table 3 presents the number of students (of each group) who used/did not use phrasal verbs and the means and standard deviations of their scores on the language use.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

TABLE 3

Relationship between Scores on Language Use and the Use of Phrasal Verbs

Group	Number of students who used/did not use phrasal verbs (PVs)		Scores on language use	
			Mean	SD
Regents'	Students who did not use PVs	9	14.00	2.151
	Students who used PVs	21	15.33	2.373
	Total	30	14.93	2.355
IS	Students who did not use PVs	18	15.06	1.494
	Student who used PVs	12	15.33	1.155
	Total	30	15.17	1.354

As the table shows, the IS group received slightly higher scores than the Regents' group on language use. The mean of the Regents' group was 14.93, while that of the IS group was 15.17. In addition, the students who used phrasal verbs received higher scores than the students who did not. The mean of the Regents' group students who used phrasal verbs was 15.33, while that of those who did not use was 14.00. The mean of the IS group students who used phrasal verbs was 15.33 but that of those who did not was 15.06. However, there was no statistically significant main effect for use of phrasal verbs, meaning that there was no relationship between the use of phrasal verbs and the scores on the language use; no significant main effect for groups, meaning that there was no group difference in the scores on the language use; and no interaction between groups and use of phrasal verbs.

Another two-factor analysis of variance was conducted to examine the relationship between scores on rhetoric and use of phrasal verbs, between scores on rhetoric and groups, and interaction between groups and use of phrasal verbs. Table 4 summarizes the number of students (of each group) who used/did not use phrasal verbs and the means and standard deviations of their scores on the rhetoric.

As the table shows, again, the IS group received slightly higher scores than the Regents' group. The mean of the IS group was 15.10 and that of the Regents' group was 14.80. In addition, the students who used phrasal verbs received higher scores than the students who did not. The mean of the students who used phrasal verbs in the IS group was 15.62, but that of those who did not use phrasal verbs in the same group was 14.75. The mean of the students who used phrasal verbs in the Regents' group was 15.07 but that of those who did not use phrasal verbs in the same group was 14.16. However, there was no statistically significant main effect for use of phrasal verbs, meaning no relationship between the use of phrasal verbs and scores on rhetoric; no significant main effect for groups, meaning no difference in proficiency (as measured with scores on rhetoric) between the two groups; and no significant interaction between groups and use of phrasal verbs. The results all together indicate, therefore, that English proficiency did not play any significant role in the two groups' use of English phrasal verbs.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

TABLE 4

Relationship between Scores on Rhetoric and the Use of Phrasal Verbs

Group	Number of students who used/did not use phrasal verbs (PVs)		Scores on rhetoric	
			Mean	SD
Regents'	Students who did not use PVs	9	14.16	2.179
	Students who used PVs	21	15.07	1.925
	Total	30	14.80	2.011
IS	Students who did not use PVs	18	14.75	2.296
	Students who used PVs	12	15.62	1.333
	Total	30	15.10	1.988

V. DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSION

The present study aimed to investigate two research questions. The first research question examined a relationship between task topic and use of phrasal verbs. Statistically significant difference between the two topics was not observed. However, students who wrote on the *computer* topic used phrasal verbs more frequently than those who wrote on the *globalization* topic. In addition, most commonly used phrasal verbs by the Regents' group were *help out* and *look into*, while those most commonly used by the IS group were *boost up* and *go up.* An interesting finding here is that the Regents' group tended to use *grow up, help out, open up,* and *move up*, while the IS group tended to use their one-word equivalents (i.e., *grow, help, open,* and *move*). For example, an essay in the Regents' group (ID#10 in the appendix) wrote: "Globalization benefits people because it raises the standard of living … and *helps* people *out* to make better decision." Another essay in the Regents' group (ID#25) also wrote: "Since I *helped* him *out*, his grade improved tremendously." In contrast, an essay in the IS group (ID#35 in the appendix) wrote: "Computers seem a very strange technology device, but it can *help* people facilitate their jobs." Another essay in the IS group (ID#60 in the appendix) wrote: "Reading a book does *help* us build personal academic skills."

Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) found that the Dutch EFL learners exhibited "a tendency to adopt a play-it-safe strategy, preferring one-word verbs with general, multi-purpose meanings over phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic, meanings" (p. 241) and that such tendency became stronger with literal phrasal verbs (e.g., *go out*) than with figurative phrasal verbs (e.g., *let down*). On the basis of the findings, Hulstijn and Marchena argued that the phrasal verb avoidance behavior may be caused not only by L1-L2 difference (or the lack of the *verb + adverbial particle* structure in a non-Germanic language) but also by "perceived semantic difficulties" of phrasal verbs (p. 243). Liao and Fukuya (2004) accepted this semantic play-it-safe-strategy hypothesis but explained it in a slightly different way: "Because of the L1-L2 differences, the semantic function of the

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

particles in English phrasal verbs may be confusing to intermediate Chinese learners of English" (p. 211).

The finding from the topic difference appears to be related to this "perceived semantic difficulties" of phrasal verbs, although the case is not the same as that observed either by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) or Liao and Fukuya (2004). The finding of the present study is related to the difference between the use of the *verb + adverbial particle* structure (e.g., *help out*) versus the use of the same verb only (e.g., *help*), while the two previous studies' findings are related to the difference between the use of the phrasal verb structure (e.g., *find out*) and the use of its one-word equivalent (e.g., *discover*). Despite this gap, the finding of the present study seems to be best explained by the semantic play-it-safe-strategy hypothesis. That is, the Regents' group tended to use phrasal verbs to express the meanings in a specific way, while the IS group tended to play it safe by not using them with which they were not comfortable because of perceived semantic complexities.

The second research question asked whether the ESL students' group membership played a role in their use of English phrasal verbs. The results indicate that the Regents' group used phrasal verbs more frequently than the IS group. Then, the question is what made the difference in the two group's use of phrasal verbs. The difference between the two groups' English proficiency did not make the difference, as discussed above. As summarized in Table 5, the two groups were different in some other respects as well. First of all, although both groups consisted of students with non-Germanic L1 backgrounds, the two groups were different in terms of nationality. However, it is hard to conclude that the nationality played a role in the use of phrasal verbs because nationality is diverse in both groups, although there were more Chinese students in the IS group than in the Regents' group. Gender and age might have been influencing factors. However, as Table 5 shows, the two groups consisted of the same number of males and females, and the age difference between the two groups was negligible. Therefore, it is again hard to claim that the two factors played any significant role in the different use of phrasal verbs by the two groups.

TABLE 5

Bio-data for Regents' and IS Groups

Group	Nationality	Status	Gender	Age (Mean)	Years of residency in the U.S. (Mean)
Regents'	17 different countries	undergraduates	15 Ms 15 Fs	26.5	7.93 years
IS	13 different countries	graduates	15 Ms 15 Fs	26.7	.79 year

A major difference between the two groups was the length of residency in the U.S. The Regents' group's mean length of residency was 7.93 years, while that of the IS group

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

was .79 year. As mentioned above, the Regents' group used phrasal verbs more frequently than the IS group. In this sense, the length of residency in the U.S. appears to have played a role in making a difference in the two groups' use of English phrasal verbs. This interpretation supports Liao and Fukuya's (2004) speculation on a possible impact of the length of the Chinese students' residence in the U.S. All of the 30 advanced students in their study had been in the U.S. for periods ranging from 9 months to more than 3 years at the time of the study, while only 10 of the 40 intermediate students had been in the U.S. for less than 9 months. This fact made Liao and Fukuya speculate that "one significant contributing factor to the [Chinese students'] development from avoidance to nonavoidance found in this study might have been the amount of contact with the L2" (p. 213). Liao and Fukuya reasoned that the advanced students "had plenty of interactions in English with native speakers," while the intermediate students had no such interactions. Focusing on this difference in the different amount of interaction with native English speakers or in the different amount of exposure to a native English environment, Liao and Fukuya speculated:

> Phrasal verbs are a structure that occurs more often in spoken than in written English. The different amount of exposure to and interaction with English in the case of the Chinese learners might have been an important reason why the advanced learners in this study incorporated phrasal verbs in their language use significantly more than the intermediate learners. (p. 214)

Liao and Fukuya stated that more empirical studies were needed to determine the impact of the length of residence in a native English environment on the use of phrasal verbs. The findings of the present study support that such a speculation was reasonable. The length of residence in the U.S. was one of the important factors that contributed to the ESL students' use of (or avoidance of) English phrasal verbs. It is reasonable to think that the longer they had stayed in the U.S., the more they had been exposed to phrasal verbs within and out of the classroom. This higher exposure to phrasal verbs gave them more opportunities to pick up, learn, and eventually use phrasal verbs.

Another difference that might contribute to the two groups' different use of English phrasal verbs is their academic status. All of the Regents' group students were undergraduates, while all of the IS group students were graduates. According to Reid (1998), international students such as the graduate students in the present study are *eye* learners who learn English largely by reading. Therefore, the graduate students of the IS group might have been more exposed to academic English than the undergraduate students of the Regents' group. According to Biber et al. (1999), overall, phrasal verbs are used most commonly in conversation and fiction and relatively rare in academic prose. However,

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

at this point, it is hard to determine whether the difference in two groups' use of English phrasal verbs is from their status, length of residency, or interaction of the two. This issue should be further investigated in future study.

In summary, this study claims that the length of residency in the U.S. and/or academic status, and perceived semantic complexities of English phrasal verbs but not topic difference nor English proficiency were factors that influenced the student participants' use of English phrasal verbs.

These findings have some pedagogical implications for English language education in an EFL context. One of the implications is that, to facilitate the acquisition of English phrasal verbs, which is significant for successful learning of English language, EFL learners must be provided with more opportunities to be exposed to them in a native English-speaking environment. However, this is not always easy to be realized in an EFL context, where textbooks are frequently major sources of input. Therefore, in an EFL context, English phrasal verbs must be highlighted when they come up along with their collocations. At the same time, phrasal verbs must be taught/learnt in chunks along with examples (Kim, 2010; McCarthy & O'Dell, 2007). A textbook titled *Middle School English 3* (Kim, Song, Yun, Kim, & Yun, 2003) uses a number of phrasal verbs: *cheer up, depend on, devote to, give up, fill in, find out, go out, go through, grow up, look at, look for, make up, name after, pass away, pick up, run up to, show up, sleep over, stay up, take off, take over, turn out, warm up, wipe off*, and more. However, in the *New Words* section attached at the end of the textbook, none of the phrasal verbs are introduced in chunks.

Another implication is that serious efforts should be made to draw learners' attention to characteristics of English phrasal verbs. Recently, cognitive linguistics (CL) and L2 pedagogical methods based on CL have been making a great impact on the field of L2 education. Studies based on CL argue that conceptual knowledge is relevant for language and that explicit conceptual knowledge can be best rendered through instruction with materialization/visualization of concepts (Lantolf, 2011). For example, Condon (2008) reports that students' ability to interpret English phrasal verbs was improved when they were provided with explicit explanations of their meanings. CL-oriented studies also argue that beginning level students should be provided with more explicit instruction on (grammatical) concepts. The middle school English textbook mentioned just above has a chapter in which a phrasal verb *pass away* and its one-word equivalent *die* are presented together. In the chapter, no explicit attempt was made to draw students' attention to the difference in formality between the two items. As a result, the chapter gives an impression that the two items are always interchangeable. However, *pass away* and *die* are similar in meaning but different in politeness. Native English speakers use *pass away* when they want to be very polite and avoid using the word *die* (Pollard et al., 2000, p. 352). According to CL, this conceptual knowledge should be explicitly rendered to learners. That

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

is, EFL students need to be explicitly taught that *pass away* is used in speeches or in official writing but seldom in ordinary conversation because *pass away* is a euphemism for *die*.

Getting students to come to terms with English phrasal verbs is a constant challenge. Hard and fast rules for English phrasal verbs are hard to come by. Nevertheless, what is clear at this moment is that students need to be aware that phrasal verbs "permeate English" (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2007. p. 6) and that, if we as EFL teachers or experts do not teach English phrasal verbs in a carefully prepared and meaningful way, students will be confused and demoralized in their efforts to learn them.

REFERENCES

Biber, D., Johansson, S., Leech, G., Conrad, S., & Finegan., E. (1999). *Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English*. Harlow, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

Celce-Murcia, M., & Larsen-Freeman, D. (1999). *The grammar book: An ESL/EFL teacher's course* (2nd ed.). Boston: Heinle & Heinle.

Condon, N. (2008). How cognitive linguistic motivations influence the learning of phrasal verbs. In F. Boers & S. Lindstromberg (Eds.), *Cognitive linguistic approaches to teaching vocabulary and phraseology (Applications of cognitive linguistics)* (pp. 133-158). Berlin: Mount de Gruyter.

Cornell, A. (1985). Realistic goals in teaching and learning phrasal verbs. *IRAL, 23,* 269-280.

Dagut, M., & Laufer, B. (1985). Avoidance of phrasal verbs: A case for contrastive analysis. *Studies in Second Language Acquisition*, 7, 73-79.

Darwin, C., & Gray, L. (1999). Going after the phrasal verb: an alternative approach to classification. *TESOL Quarterly, 33*, 65-83.

Fraser, B. (1976). *The verb-particle combination in English*. New York: Academic Press.

Hulstijn, J. H., & Marchena, E. (1989). Avoidance: Grammatical or semantic causes? *Studies in Second Language Acquisition, 11*, 241-255.

Kim, N. B. (2010). The effects of the explicit lexical collocation instruction on the grammatical collocation knowledge: Focusing on preposition collocation. *English Language & Literature Teaching, 16*(3), 141-160.

Kim, S. K., Song, M. J., Yun, j. M., Kim y., & Yun M. J. (2003). *Middle school English 3*. Seoul, Korea: Dusan.

Lantoff, J. P. (2011). Integrating sociocultural theory and cognitive linguistics in the second language classroom. In E. Hinkel (Ed.), *Handbook of research in second language teaching and learning II* (pp. 303-318). New York: Routledge.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Liao, Y., & Fukuya, Y. (2004). Avoidance of phrasal verbs: The case of Chinese learners of English. *Language Learning, 54*, 193-226.

Mackenzie, I. (2000). Improvisation, creativity, and formulaic language. *The Journal of Aesthetics and Art Criticism, 58*, 173-179.

McCarthy, M., & O'Dell, F. (2007). *English phrasal verbs in use: Advanced*. Cambridge, MA: Cambridge UP.

Pollard, E., Egge, K., Adrian-Vallence, E., Leigh, J., Jackson, T., & Stark, M. (2000). *Longman phrasal verbs*. Essex, England: Pearson Education Ltd.

Reid, J. M. (1998). "Eye" learners and "ear" learners: identifying the language needs of international students and U.S. resident writers. In J. M. Reid & P. Byrd (Eds.), *Grammar in the composition classroom* (pp. 3-17). New York: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.

Schachter, J. (1974). An error in error analysis. *Language Learning, 24*, 205-214.

Side, R. (1990). Phrasal verbs: Sorting them out. *ELT Journal, 44*, 144-152.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

APPENDIX

Regents' Group

ID	Nationality	Essay topic	Status	Gender	Age	Years of residency	Rhetoric scores	Language use scores	# of PVs	Examples of PVs
1	Korea	G*	UG**	F	23	4	14	12	1	mix up
2	Mexico	G	UG	M	24	9	15.5	17.5	1	grow up
3	Vietnam	G	UG	M	25	9	17	16	2	*tick off, spread out
4	Poland	G	UG	F	27	3	17.5	16.5	1	bring up
5	Vietnam	G	UG	F	30	10	16	17	1	bring in
6	Mexico	G	UG	M	21	4	15.5	15.5	0	
7	Korea	G	UG	F	22	9	10	14	0	
8	Ghana	G	UG	F	23	10	15	15	1	expand out
9	Haiti	G	UG	F	27	13	15.5	15	2	live by, turn into
10	Taiwan	G	UG	F	20	6	16	15	1	help out
11	Vietnam	G	UG	F	24	10	16	18	1	fill up
12	Korea	G	UG	F	48	23	13	10	0	
13	Bosnia	G	UG	F	20	6	17.5	17	0	
14	Korea	G	UG	M	24	5	13	11.5	0	
15	Haiti	G	UG	M	27	7	16	16	2	open up, move up
16	Ethiopia	C	UG	M	29	14	15	14	1	catch on
17	Ethiopia	C	UG	M	22	7	13	15.5	1	lock on
18	Vietnam	C	UG	M	32	5	9.5	8	3	carry on, look into, look for
19	Argentina	C	UG	M	23	5	14.5	18	3	carry on, look into, *bring of
20	Egypt	C	UG	M	22	9	15.5	14	0	
21	Haiti	C	UG	M	27	8	15.5	13.5	0	
22	Nigeria	C	UG	M	24	5	15	18	2	look into, help out

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

23	Colombia	C	UG	F	22	4	15.5	16.5	2	end up, grow in
24	China	C	UG	M	22	6	14.5	13.5	2	role up, make up
25	Vietnam	C	UG	F	23	4	18	16	3	help out, speak up, sum up
26	Brazil	C	UG	F	48	5	11.5	12.5	1	write up
27	Hong Kong	C	UG	M	20	6	16.5	15.5	1	grow up
28	Somalia	C	UG	M	26	8	14.5	15	0	
29	Poland	C	UG	F	43	19	13	15.5	0	
30	Haiti	C	UG	F	27	5	15	16.5	1	help out

IS Group

ID	Nationality	Essay topic	Status	Gender	Age	Years of residency	Rhetoric scores	Language use scores	# of PVs	Examples of PVs
31	Jordan	G	G	F	24	0.7	14	15	0	
32	Greece	G	G	M	24	0.6	16	15	0	
33	Iran	G	G	M	26	0.6	13.5	13	0	
34	China	G	G	F	29	0.6	11	13	0	
35	China	G	G	M	28	1	16	15.5	0	
36	Malaysia	G	G	F	30	1	14.5	14.5	2	boost up, continue on
37	China	G	G	F	31	1	14	15.5	0	
38	China	G	G	F	26	1	16.5	14.5	3	fit into, boost up, point out
39	China	G	G	F	27	1	14	14	1	go up
40	Burkinafaso	G	G	M	28	0.6	13.5	16	1	build up
41	Korea	G	G	F	29	0.4	16	15	0	
42	Bulgaria	G	G	F	28	1	18	17	2	turn out, go up
43	Algeria	G	G	F	26	0.6	11.5	14.5	0	
44	Taiwan	G	G	F	30	0.5	12	12	0	
45	China	G	G	M	23	0.2	16	15	1	look up

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

46	China	C	G	M	29	0.7	15	15	1	think of
47	China	C	G	M	23	1	15.5	14	2	think of, look up
48	China	C	G	F	28	1	17	16	0	
49	Taiwan	C	G	M	26	0.5	13.5	16	0	
50	China	C	G	F	23	1	15.5	17	2	go on, find out
51	China	C	G	M	29	0.5	13.5	15	0	
52	China	C	G	M	24	0.5	17	16	0	
53	Mongolia	C	G	M	24	0.5	16,5	16	0	
54	China	C	G	M	28	0.4	17.5	16.5	0	
55	China	C	G	M	25	0.3	17	15.5	1	take away
56	China	C	G	F	23	0.7	15	14.5	1	*belong in
57	China	C	G	F	26	0.3	19	18	0	
58	Albania	C	G	F	27	0.8	17	17	1	sum up
59	Ethiopia	C	G	M	30	0.6	15.5	16	0	
60	Korea	C	G	M	27	0.6	12	13	0	

* G in the essay topic column stands for globalization, while C stands for computer.

** UG in the status column stands for undergraduate, while G stands for graduate.

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre

Examples in: English
Applicable language: English
Applicable level: Elementary/Secondary/College

Cheong Min Yook
Department of Linguistics
Chungnam National University
Gung-dong, Yuseong-gu,
Daejeon, Korea

E-mail: chmyook@gmail.com

Received in October, 2011
Reviewed in November, 2011
Revised version received in December, 2011

교보문고 KYOBO Book Centre