

The Application of Concept-based Instruction in the Teaching of Phrase Verbs in High School English

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Abstract: In the critical learning phase of high school, the application of English phrasal verbs is particularly important and frequent. However, due to the numerous combinations and rich meanings of phrasal verbs, students often find them difficult to memorize. Traditional cramming and didactic teaching methods of phrasal verbs limit students' opportunities to deeply understand the conceptual meanings, thus affecting their overall learning outcomes. Researchers have observed that particles have characteristics of semantic similarity and polysemy, which makes the acquisition of English phrasal verbs trouble, therefore, they tend to choose particles as research subjects. The paper briefly introduces the characteristics of high school phrasal verb teaching, citing a multidimensional system model based on Concept-based Instruction. Finally, taking the particle "over" as an example, the paper explores the application of CBI in high school English phrasal verb instruction, aiming to provide English teachers with some valuable teaching experiences.

Keywords: senior high school, concept-based instruction, characteristics of teaching semantic phrase verbs, application in teaching

Introduction

Concept-based instruction (CBI) is a new trend in foreign language teaching that emerged in the early 21st century, originating from Lantolf and his research team^[2]. Now it has become a hot topic in international second language teaching research. Since CBI was introduced by Wen, the domestic research on it also showed a development trend^[10]. CBI claimed that teachers should adopt explicit ways to impart scientific concepts in the teaching process. This means that teaching activities should start from the scientific concepts and teachers should directly guide students to learn the formal interpretation of scientific concepts, so as to help students understand and apply these concepts. In this process, the focus of teaching is to let students have a deep understanding of scientific concepts. In order to help learners better understand and internalize the scientific concept, Gal'perin (1969) describes the schema for complete orienting basis of action (SCOBA) as a learning intermediary. Based on the principle of Gal'perin's research, the process of CBI includes five stages: explanation, materialization, communicative activities, verbalization, internalization^[3]. In the teaching process, mother tongue as a valuable intermediary resource plays a vital role in language acquisition. Mother tongue can help learners reduce cognitive burden and improve learning efficiency when learning second language. At the same time, CBI also requires the teachers to dynamically evaluate the students' learning process and results. This evaluation not only focuses on students' learning results, but also focuses on students' thinking, exploration and practice in the learning process. Through dynamic evaluation, teachers can detect students' learning difficulties in time and adjust their teaching strategies to better meet students' personalized learning needs.

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Phrase verb (PV) and verb phrase (VP) are different. Verb phrase known as a multi-word verb, is a combination of verbs and prepositions or with adverbs. According to the American Idiom Code, a phrase verb is a combination of a common verb and a preposition or an adverbial auxiliary. The Oxford Advanced Learning Dictionary defines a phrase verb as a phrase composed of verbs and prepositions or / and adverbs. According to the Oxford Advanced Learning Dictionary, it can be divided into three syntactic categories: verbs + adverb, e.g. break out, give up; verb + preposition, e.g. call on, look after; verb + adverb + preposition, e.g. do away with, look down upon.

1. Characteristics of teaching semantic phrase verbs in high school

In the critical learning stage of high school, the application of phrase verbs is particularly important and frequent, whether it is knowledge acquisition in the classroom and interaction in daily life. The core of these phrase verbs is often composed of the most basic English words, but it is through the combination of a wide variety of particles that they glow with new vitality. This combination not only enriches and extends the original meaning of the verb, but also generates a series of extended meanings, making the language expression more refined and clear, but also more expressive and vivid. For high school students, the systematic learning and mastering of phrase verbs can not only consolidate their understanding and memory of these basic verbs, but also greatly expand their vocabulary bank. Through learning, students can be exposed to more frequent and active verb expressions in practical communication. These expressions are not only common in daily life, but also the highlights of scoring in various examinations and academic writing. Therefore, teaching phrase verbs is of crucial value for improving the comprehensive English application ability of high school students, especially the oral and written expression ability. This not only helps them to progress in their study, but also lays a solid language foundation for their future social and career development.^[9]

1.1 Verb phrase recognition error

Mastering phrasal verbs is not an easy task. Structurally, phrasal verbs are units composed of several English words that carry a complete meaning. However, when this "unit" is embedded in English sentences or text paragraphs, it becomes difficult to identify, making it hard for students to treat it as a whole. This often leads to errors in the division of English sentences: either ignoring the particle within the phrasal verb and incorrectly incorporating it into the next semantic unit, or mistaking the initial preposition of the next semantic unit as the particle of the preceding phrasal verb.^[4]

1.2 Multi-meaning of verb phrase

In terms of meaning, first of all, it is not the case that the semantics of all phrasal verbs can be inferred from the verb and particle that constitute them. Many phrasal verbs are difficult to decipher from their literal meanings, and their actual meanings have little to do with the common semantics of the core verb and particle. Secondly, phrasal verbs often have multiple meanings, starting from their basic sense, they develop metaphorical meanings that are clearly related to the original sense, and continue to evolve until they form extended meanings that are almost indistinct from the original sense. Furthermore, multiple phrasal verbs may have the same or similar meanings, which demonstrates the richness and variability of the English language, but the different levels and subtle differences in semantics can easily lead to confusion. Obscure meanings, multiple meanings of a single word, and the proximity of meanings among different words greatly increase the difficulty of learning phrasal verbs, easily causing comprehension difficulties, difficulties in differentiation, and a burden on memory, leading to students' feelings of discouragement. The traditional method of rote memorization cannot truly grasp the connotation of phrasal verbs, which necessitates a change in the traditional vocabulary teaching approach. We should take a comprehensive view of phrasal verbs, make selective choices in content, be flexible and diverse in teaching methods, design activities to experience and perceive phrasal verbs, and deeply analyze their intrinsic meanings.^[8]

2. A multi-dimensional system model of concept-based instruction

The mediation in the teaching process of concept-based instruction plays an important role, and it is an essential issue to use what specific things to explain phrase verbs. This paper will explain the application of CBI in high school English phrase verbs based on the conceptual teaching multiple system model constructed by Li Lin.^[6]

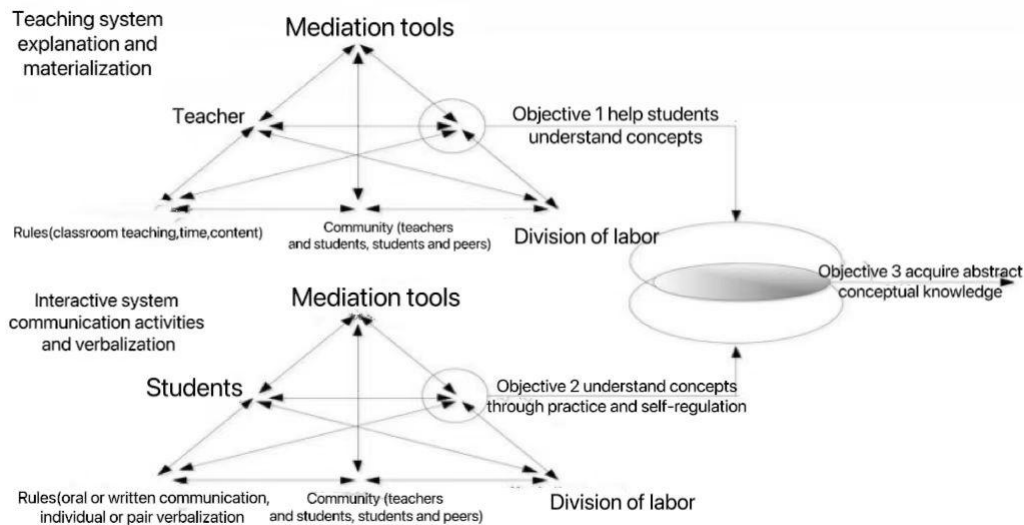


Figure1 Conceptual teaching multi-system model

The core of the teaching system is the teacher, whose purpose is to make students understand and master the conceptual knowledge. In this process, teachers will use intermediary tools such as foreign language, native language, objects, schema or some scientific concepts. The teaching system is composed of teaching rules, teaching community and division of labor. The teaching rules include teaching time, content, form and standard; the teaching community includes teachers and students; the division of labor involves the specific division of labor, status relationship and language level between teachers and students in teaching activities. It shows the whole process of explanation and materialization, highlights the activity process of mediation, and shows the regulatory effect of teaching subject, goal, rules, community and division of labor on mediation. In the explanation process, teachers need to use the language symbol intermediary to teach scientific concepts to students. However, scientific concepts are different from daily concepts, and it is difficult for teachers to explain them only in oral or written language. Therefore, in the materialization, teachers need to use less abstract objects or schema to show students the scientific concepts to guide their cognitive development. In addition, the learning ability and language level of students in the community, as well as the authority of teachers to students and the language ability and teaching level of teachers in the division of labor, will also have an impact on the activity process of intermediary activities.^[6]

In the interactive system, students are the subject, and their goal is to use materialized models and regulation concepts to understand science. The mediation includes foreign language, native language, objects, schema, foreign language scientific concepts and peer speech. The basic unit of interactive activities is that students use intermediaries to practice communication and describe scientific concepts, a process that takes place in a specific social-cultural environment and consists of interactive rules, communities and division of labor. In the interactive system, mediators act together and are influenced by many factors^[11]. For example, in communicative activities, students use both language tools and schema to communicate. At the same time, factors such as activity rules, peer speech, task allocation between teachers and students, and cognitive ability may also affect the use of intermediary. For example, in writing communication activities, students tend to use schema for communication, while in verbal communication activities, students are more dependent on language tools. In the form of group speech activity, the high frequency of speech mediation behavior of peers can play a greater role. In communicative activities with teachers, scientific conceptual knowledge appears frequently. The intermediary of interactive systems are flexible and diverse, occurring simultaneously or alternately as the target and complex sociocultural environment change.

3. Application in teaching

3.1 Explanation

3.1.1 Teaching explanation

A brief introduction of Concept-Based Instruction and the metaphor meaning. Teacher help students understand conceptual metaphor, which is not only a rhetorical device but also is “understanding and experiencing one kind of thing in term of another”^[1]. Then, teacher explains phrasal verbs and points out that are not arbitrary combinations of semantics, and there is a certain motivation for their semantic extension.

3.1.2 Teaching preparation

In this section, the particle-over utilized in classroom instruction were presented. Initially, students were prompted to collect the meaning of “over” that they have learned, and to present their findings in the subsequent class, discussing their meanings, applications, and so forth. During the following class, students exchanged their insights with peers to pique their interest and encourage their participation. This step was intended to establish a foundation for future teaching.

3.2 Materialization

The third step: materialization. Taking “over” as an example, multiple meanings of “over” are presented with schema to help students construct the overall conception of “over”. Considered as a mediation tool, SCOPA could provide students with a specific tool that connects their physical and mind knowledge and an easier way for students to understand the actual features of an abstract concept without any prior memorization.

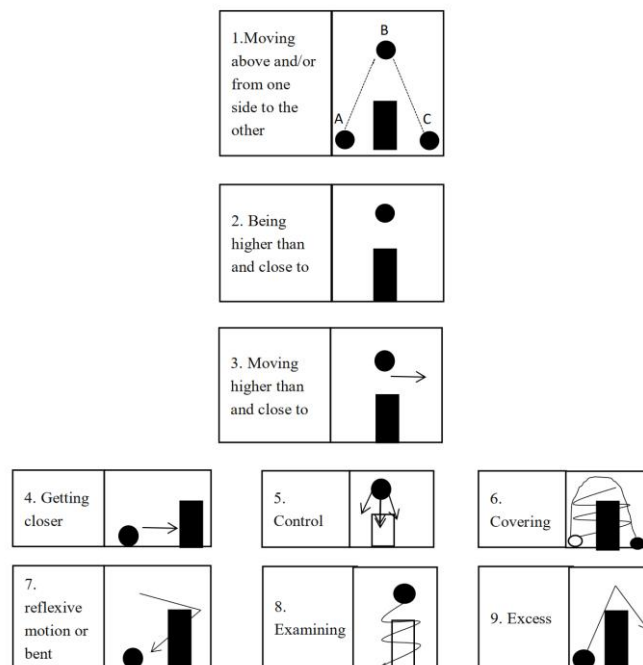


Figure 2 SCOBAs of over (from Hyewon Lee 2012:91)

In terms of over, Rudzka-Ostyn (2003) presented 6 senses and they are as follows. (Rudzka-Ostyn, B, 2003)

- (1) Being or moving higher than and close to;
- (2) From one side to the other;
- (3) Crossing a certain distance to get closer;
- (4) Motion moved as covering completely or even in excess;
- (5) Examining thoroughly from all sides;
- (6) Reflexive motion or completely bent;
- (7) Higher than/beyond the norm^[5].

The teacher show some sentences containing “over” and ask students infer the meaning of over according to context, then teacher makes a conclusion about the meaning of over in these sentences.^[7]

Table 1 The meanings of “over” in these sentences

Sense	Example
From one side to the other	The cat jumped over the tree
Crossing a certain distance to get closer	The river flows over the rocks.
Crossing a certain distance to get closer	The birds flew over the tree
Motion moved as covering completely or even in excess	She spread a blanket over the child.
Examining thoroughly from all sides	The news spread over the country.
Higher than/beyond the norm	The project cost over budget

3.3 Communicative activity

The forth step: communicative activity. Teacher present several sentences containing over, and ask students to think about the meaning of phrase verbs and over in each sentence, students can draw their own SCOPA to show the relationship between meaning and images, helping students to memorize. Then, they can discuss their views with their partners, and jointly explain their concept of understanding of the particles.

3.4 Verbalization activities

The fifth step: verbalization activities. Verbal is a key link to help students understand the language concepts. Through the verbalization tasks, students can describe the concept of phrase verbs with their own understandings. Students' mother tongue is not English, so it may not be easy to express the connection between particles and images with spoken English. Therefore, practice can be done both orally and written. First, give the students a few sentences, let them read and analyze them carefully, and then let them say their understanding of the particles in the sentences. After-class homework asked students to match the particles concepts in these sentences to a given image and repeat them verbally with English.

3.5 Internalization activities

The sixth step: Internalization activities. The previous steps are all designed for students to better internalize. In this step, the completion of internalization is accomplished through the students' own self-interpretation and co-interpretation with their classmates. Students were given two sets of five sentences in each group. Students were asked to explain the meaning of over in each sentence, and gave why a certain image was chosen to explain over in the sentence. At the same time, other commonly used phrases and verbs were given to test whether students learned the internalization and transfer of over.

4. Summary

CBI is a new teaching method newly introduced into China in the 21st century. In this paper, through comprehensively analyzing the teaching process of CBI, explaining the importance of phrase verbs and the introduction of intermediary theory, this study reveals the great potential of CBI in improving the learning effect of students' phrase verbs. This is a summary of this study:

First of all, as a teaching mode emphasizing conceptual understanding and cognitive participation, the application of CBI in English phrase verb teaching in high school has significant innovative significance. Traditional English teaching often focuses on the teaching of rules, and ignores the students' understanding of the nature of the language. By applying the CBI into phrase verb teaching, this study enables students to perceive, understand and use phrase verbs in a specific context, thus improving the learning efficiency. As an important part of English language, the importance of teaching phrase verbs is self-evident. The mastery of phrase verbs is directly related to the accuracy and fluency of students' English expression. In this study, we analyze the characteristics and teaching difficulties of phrase verbs in detail, and take over as an example to explain the application of CBI in phrase verbs. Through the CBI, students can better grasp the semantics, collocation and usage of phrase verbs, and then improve the comprehensive use of English ability.

The application of mediation theory in this study provides theoretical support for understanding the mechanism of CBI in phrase verb teaching. The intermediary theory emphasizes the cognitive participation and meaning construction in the learning process, which is consistent with the core concept of CBI. In the process of practice, teachers guide students to

actively explore and construct the meaning of phrases and verbs by creating rich teaching situations, so as to realize the internalization of knowledge and ability improvement. Finally, taking the specific teaching process as an example explains the application process of CBI.

Conflicts of interest

The author declares no conflicts of interest regarding the publication of this paper.

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