

An Action Research Study on Teaching Phrasal Verbs to Saudi EFL Elementary Level Students

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Abstract

Research studies report that phrasal verbs, due to their syntactic complexity and semantic opacity, cause learning challenges for EFL students. One effective and localized way to help students grasp phrasal verbs is encouraging teachers to conduct action research. However, there is a scholarly gap in action research work that targets phrasal verbs as a focus of investigation. The present study planned a class observation in real-time settings to find out the extent to which a planned lesson on phrasal verbs succeeds in achieving the stated learning outcomes. The primary data obtained through the lesson observation report was triangulated with teacher's report stating the rationale for the lesson, and student participants' survey. The data was analyzed qualitatively, and the findings revealed that while the lesson was generally coherent, motivating for the students, and successful in achieving most of the learning objectives, there were deficits in regard to transmission of the meaning of phrasal verbs at a few instances, effective management of the feedback systems, and active involvement of the passive students in class tasks. The study is expected to interest those planning to design further action research projects on the topic as well as EFL practitioners who propose to review their teaching of the phrasal verbs.

Keywords: Action research, class observation, English as a Foreign Language, lesson planning, phrasal verbs

1. Introduction

Pedagogic initiatives in EFL programs across the academia are predominantly directed towards developing the communicative competence of the students by designing need-based course design centering upon language systems, language skills, discourse features etc. One component from the language system which is potentially efficacious in developing native-like proficiency among EFL students is the phrasal verb (PV) (Liao & Fukuya, 2004) for it not only pervades spoken or informal communication but also finds significant use in academic

discourse. Syntactically composed of a verb + particle (a preposition or an adverb) such as “*call in*”, “*break up*”, or “*figure out*”, PVs have often been found daunting for the EFL learners to master because of several reasons. First, the PVs carry metaphorical meaning which cannot be decoded from the verb and its particle. Secondly, the semantic opacity inherent in the PVs extends beyond the figurative meaning to include multiplicity of meaning senses (McCarthy and O’Dell, 2004), as, for instance, *take off* may mean leaving the ground in case of a plane, and may refer to removing something like dress or shoes. Similarly, PVs have different semantic realizations in formal and informal communication which may be baffling for the students. Especially, in formal communication a PV can be replaced by one-word lexical item as *put off* can be substituted with *postponed*. The grammar of PVs is also intricate for it involves the use of transitive and intransitive verbs, and separable PVs where the particle is placed after the object. It is also not always essential that a verb and particle combination is a PV as in “*I live in the UK*”, and the verb may follow a prepositional phrase. Since EFL students have the tendency to interpret individual words, they may overlook PVs as lexical or grammatical collocations. EFL students also try to find lexical equivalents in the first language which when not available can be challenging. These features of PVs also make them challenging to teach, and reflective practitioners often seek ways of resolving the students’ problems by adopting a variety of instructional and remedial approaches. One very effective and localized way of dealing with the immediate classroom or pedagogic challenge is to conduct action research which allows the teacher/s to investigate the problem and proffer practical solutions as an effective remedy.

Following McNiff and Whitehead (2002 p.46) that action research is a "self-reflective spiral of planning, acting, observing, reflecting, and re-planning", it may engage individual teachers or may be participatory involving collaboration by fellow teachers. Basically, action research is an extension of reflective practice and provides concreteness and practicality to reflection thus making it more suitable for effective classroom teaching (Ahmad, 2020). Teachers use it not only to identify pedagogic issues they encounter but also as a tool of professional development. A study that is based on peer observation of a lesson on PVs in a real-time EFL classroom is likely to unfold teaching effectiveness, students’ problems, and some practical solutions to dealing with these problems.

2. Theoretical Framework

2.1 Action Research in Academic Contexts

Action research is premised on the notion of proffering viable pedagogic solutions to a range of classroom challenges that teachers encounter on daily basis. Mills (2007 p. 7) defines action research as “any systematic inquiry conducted by teacher researchers, principals, school counselors, or other stakeholders in the teaching/learning environment to gather information about how their particular schools operate, how they teach, and how well their students learn”. Initiated by the teachers themselves, action research proposes to review pedagogic beliefs and systems to identify and resolve the issue that may pertain to the instructional methodology, course content, teaching materials, classroom management, feedback systems, assessment tools etc.

The concept of action research has been primarily developed on two major perspectives. Saeb, Nejadansari and Moinzadeh (2021) refer to the socio-cultural theory as a motivating force behind action research insofar that it empowers teachers to take control of the pedagogic processes when immediate solution to an urgent problem cannot be materialized at the institutional or higher level. The second approach to action research, and which is the most frequently adopted one, postulates that it is basically an extension of the reflective practice whereby teachers assume the role of researchers in their effort to enhance their teaching practice to the benefit of the students (Wallace, 1991). Burns (1998) expands on this idea by stating that action research builds on reflective practice and evaluative observations so that the change that is required to mitigate the classroom problem is pragmatically realized. On the other hand, Mohammad (2024) finds action research as participatory since more than one teacher can collaborate to investigate a common instructional challenge. This makes action research a useful tool for not only making the research project more effectively manageable but also ensures yielding results that may be contextually more informative and relevant.

Action research not only promotes teaching practice as a tool of professional development but also provides reliable context-specific data about the students, fellow teachers, and other related pedagogic processes. It focuses on indigenous issues which makes it more contextually practical than other research paradigms. This stance is also validated by Cohen et al. (2007) who believe that action research can be conducted in almost every localized context when a pedagogic challenge involving students, teachers, administrators, processes etc., needs a resolution to arrive at more practicable results. Wallace (2000) considers it very suitable for teachers as it allows practitioners to discover, monitor, and propose transformative alternatives to their routine teaching practice.

Typically, action research is a cyclical process involving phases such as planning, action, observation and reflection. In the planning stage, the researcher identifies the problem and the causes of the problem as well as the necessary steps to resolve the problem. The action phase involves deciding on the practical steps that could be taken to overcome the challenge. In the observation stage, all the processes during the action phase are recorded as researcher's observations. Finally, the researcher reflects upon the findings and attempts to deduce some practical solutions to the initially identified problem. This completes the first cycle, which is generally inconclusive in the sense that it does not fully figure out the problem. Crane and Richardson (2000) recommend a second cycle which may engage more participants depending upon the research focus. The second cycle is designed on the findings of the first cycle in its processing of the four phases, and the project is deemed as complete if the desired outcomes are achieved. Otherwise, the researcher may initiate a third cycle.

2.2 Phrasal Verbs

Several factors contribute to causing problems in the acquisition of PVs. First, they can either be student-oriented or vocabulary related (Becker, 2014). The former is generated by second language (L2) influences, especially when there is non-availability of lexical equivalents for the target PVs in L2; while the latter pertains to the degree of opacity which impedes accurate understanding of the meaning of the PV. Similarly, syntactic structure comprising of a verb and a particle which may be a preposition, or an adverb has been widely reported (e.g., Wu, 2023) as being one of the major challenges for EFL learners in regard to handling the PVs. A

study of PVs by Alhammadi & Rabab'ah (2025) of Emirati EFL students revealed that the inherent complexity and arbitrary syntactical formation of the PVs was a major source of challenge for the students. Condon (2008 p,133) considers this form “unsystematic” which is further complicated when the PV carries metaphorical connotations which students find baffling to decipher. The idiomaticity inherent in PVs has several implications. First, it calls for a change in the teaching approach. Instead of typically engaging students with the explicit use of PVs, the teachers should use reading and visual content to help students notice PVs being employed as a lexical unit with a specific meaning in a specific context. Considering context specificity is crucial since PVs are likely to behave differently in varied contexts such as the informal discourse in a marketplace or a formal one inside the classroom (Gilquin, 2025).

Strong (2025) has identified five approaches to teaching PVs. One is the research-oriented approach namely corpus-based studies; while other four are the pedagogic approaches and include input-based, output-based, retrieval-based, and cognitive linguistics. Corpus-based research has provided insights into the incidence and frequency of PVs in the corpus which can be used to design pedagogic content. For instance, an analysis of the British National Corpus (BNC) by Gardener and Davies (2007) revealed that 20 lexical verbs when used with 8 similar particles constituted more than 50% of PV usage. Findings from Garnier and Schmitt's (2015) study of the Contemporary Corpus of American English (COCA) showed that 150 most frequently occurring PVs had more than 75% incidence of two meaning senses. A later study by Liu and Myers (2020) investigated the relevance of register specificity of PVs in varied contexts like that of spoken discourse and academic writing and found that close to 70% PVs had statistically significant variation in their use of the register across different contexts. The second perspective, input approach to teaching PVs, involves awareness-raising of the students through frequent exposure and noticing. Strong (2025 p.96) proposes the use of “textual enhancement” which involves highlighting or bolding PV specific instances of the text, so that the students notice their use as a cohesive lexical chunk rather than a fragmented occurrence of two or more unrelated lexical items. The third view is based on Swain's (2005) Output Hypothesis, which builds on the progress made through noticing the PVs, and involves engaging students in active learning through production tasks. The students use their schemata in an attempt to use PVs in contextually meaningful ways. The fourth approach, Retrieval-based learning, is premised on the notion that recalling information strengthens memory and thereby learning more effectively than by simply reviewing. Language testing provides one of the most common applications of retrieval-based learning where students recall what they have in their memory and produce it accurately. However, without proper feedback, there is the danger of inaccurate production from the learners which if remains unchecked may lead to fossilization. Lastly, Cognitive linguistics (CL) has provided insights into how human cognition decodes the meaning potential of PVs through syntactic features such as the attached particle to the verb, semantic load, and contextual embedding (Condon, 2008). Viewed from this perspective, the PVs assume the status of a comprehensive lexical chunk with a distinct meaning rather than a discrete structure of two or three words. This further realizes in establishing the lexical significance of the particle in association with the verb and thus helps in the extension of lexical resource of the students when this knowledge expands through an exposure from the high to low frequency PVs.

Apart from these perspectives, a number of teaching strategies have also been proposed to effectively train students in the acquisition and use of PVs. For instance, Liao (2020) proposed that teaching of PVs without or without emphasis on the idiomaticity of the verb-particle structure can be a useful way of helping students deal with the PVs. As reported in research studies (Bouzaiane and Dayananda, 2023; Roohani & Vinchah, 2023) extensive exposure to authentic listening materials, game-based learning, and social media applications such as the WhatsApp can also prove efficacious for students to grasp and use the PVs.

Nevertheless, PVs, especially with high frequency, are an essential component of authentic language use, and potentially promising in developing native-like comprehension and proficiency among the EFL learners (Liu & Myers, 2020). This finding is also supported by Alhammedi and Rabab'ah (2025) who argue that students' proficiency levels in the use of PVs correspond with the frequency index ranging from the high to moderate to low occurrence. They also reveal that majority of high frequency PVs have a limited range of basic meanings in a specific linguistic background with the original definition comprising more than 50% of the overall PV incidence. Besides being trained in the use of high frequency PVs, students can also develop their understanding of the English idiom, lexical range, and thereby communicative competence for a variety of functional use. An adequate understanding of the PVs not only enables EFL students to communicate productively but also empowers them to reciprocate receptively and competently in communicative events, especially those which involve native English speakers.

3. Significance of the Study

Most research work on PVs has predominantly focused on investigating the topic from theoretical perspectives or by using quantitative interventions such as surveys. Almost a similar situation prevails with the studies on action research. In fact, there is a visible gap in the research work which blends the use of action research for studying PVs. More specifically, the proposed action research study is likely to be one of the very few projects which aim to use qualitative approach to report a real-time lesson on PVs in an EFL context. The results are expected to have positive implications for EFL practitioners interested either in professional development or conducting further action research on PVs.

4. Research Questions

The researcher generated the following research questions for the study:

1. What was the teacher's rationale for designing a lesson on phrasal verbs?
2. To which extent did he effectively plan the lesson on phrasal verbs?
3. How effectively did he deliver the lesson on phrasal verbs?
4. To what extent did the teacher's knowledge affect the learning of phrasal verbs?
5. How successful was teacher's class management of the lesson on phrasal verbs?
6. How did the student participants feel about the lesson on phrasal verbs?

5. Method

The action research study was predominantly qualitative in its approach to data collection, analysis, and presentation of results. The researcher used three instruments to collect data: teacher's personal notes (rationale for the lesson), lesson observation report, and a student survey. Teacher's rationale attempted to answer the first research question, while the lesson observation report was used to respond to research questions 2, 3, 4, and 5. Students' perceptions about their learning experiences were documented by research question 6.

5.1 Research Context

The study was planned and completed at the English language Institute (ELI), University of Jeddah, Saudi Arabia which offers English language programs to Foundation and undergraduate level students. The participants for this study were recruited from an Elementary level EFL class. The course content was based on *Life* (Elementary) by National Geographic Learning (NGL). However, the teachers at the ELI had the autonomy to use supplementary materials to consolidate learning. The participants (N = 28) were all male Saudi elementary level students enrolled in a Diploma program at the ELI. The course spanned over 14 weeks with 12 hours weekly instruction. PVs were part of the grammar component of the course syllabus aiming at raising awareness of the students about PVs as well as helping them to use them in specific topic-based contexts (*Travel* for the present study). Before this lesson, they learnt use of present and past tenses, a few adjectives in comparative form, pronoun cases, a few basic collocations to describe a city, and reading comprehension exercises. Assuming that the participants were acquainted with collocations, it would be appropriate to teach phrasal verbs at this point of the course.

5.2 Data Collection and Analysis

The data was collected from three different but interrelated sources: teacher's rationale for the lesson plan, lesson observation report, and student participants' responses to the survey questionnaire. Following Pratiwi (2024) that teachers' perceptions on how they design and implement lesson plan are crucial in determining instructional quality, the first source was recording the teacher's rationale for the lesson with the primary aim of triangulating it with the lesson observation outcomes and results from the student survey. The researcher who was also the teacher for this lesson prepared the rationale before the lesson and submitted it to the lesson observer before the lesson. Premised on thematic analysis, these notes dilated upon the teacher's input on specific themes or topics such as the lesson plan in general, lesson stages and tasks, materials, classroom interaction patterns, time management and feedback systems. The teacher attempted to justify as to why he designed a certain lesson stage, a task or teaching material. He also included his observation on how effective or ineffective his teaching interventions were, and how these impacted the learning outcomes of the lesson. The second data collection tool i.e., the lesson observation report was premised on the concept that classroom observations not only provide a critique of the teaching practices but also motivate positive change in teacher beliefs about personal development (Tarusha and Bushi, 2024). A colleague from the ELI with over 20 years of teaching and teacher training experience was invited to observe the lesson. In a pre-lesson meeting, the research and the observer decided on

the modalities of the observation including the lesson plan and the observation form.

As suggested by Tarusha and Bushi (2024 p.718) that “the analysis of teaching observation relies on structured national and international instruments”, an adapted version of the Cambridge Awards Form (Table 1) previously used by Ahmad (2020) was further amended to focus on planning and preparation, lesson delivery, teacher knowledge, and classroom management as the main areas for observation. Each descriptor had sub-categories (Table 1) to provide a fuller understanding of the lesson quality. The observer used this framework to observe the lesson on the standards as had been enunciated in the framework. He took notes of the teacher’s performance and lesson stages as they unfolded during the course of lesson delivery. Each standard and its subcategories were duly observed to produce a reliable and valid commentary. These notes were then rephrased into a narrative account to be used as results of the data analysis.

As argued by Benton and Cashin (2011) that student surveys are not only statistically reliable and valid but also devoid of researcher bias, the last data collection instrument namely student survey was a questionnaire based on 10 statements requiring students to respond either in the affirmative or the negative. The items on the survey were generated so that they correlate with the lesson plan and lesson objectives. It was anticipated that this would not only ensure reliability of the tool but also supply trustworthy information on students’ opinion of the lesson which could then be used to ascertain the quality of lesson delivery. The results were reported in percentage scores which gave a clear overview of how students felt about different aspects of the teaching and learning experience.

For the proposed lesson, the researcher set two main aims and two sub-aims. The primary aims included raising students’ awareness of the PVs in general (*set out, check in, get on, take off, touch down, get off, check out stop over*), and providing controlled and semi-controlled practice of this lexical set of PVs as used in the context of travel. The secondary aims were to help students read for gist and preview and notice the target lexis, and to provide an opportunity for semi-controlled speaking practice as students engaged in questions and answers about their travel experiences.

5.3 Reliability and Validity

To ensure reliability, the researcher collected the data following robust procedures which were consistently documented in detail. For instance, the use of a previously used framework for teacher observation (Table 1) was applied to further enhance reliability of the study. Similarly, the student survey was premised on the notion that students’ perceptions would eliminate researcher bias making the study more reliable. As for the validity, the use of triangulation not only produced varied data but also attempted to validate data obtained through different sources to the extent that findings revealed trustworthy perceptions of the participants.

Table 1. Lesson Observation Form

Observation criteria	Observation standards	1/2/3
2 Planning & Preparation	Knows his students' background knowledge	
	Identifies clear lesson aims	
	Connects present learning with the previous	
	Arranges lesson procedures and tasks logically to attain lesson aims	
	Prepares and uses instructional materials effectively	
	Succeeds in timely management of the lesson stages	
Observer's Comments		
3 Lesson Delivery	Delivers lesson according to the plan and suitable to the students' level and needs	
	Persuades students to engage in classwork actively	
	Conducts active monitoring of the students' performance and promptly responds to their queries.	
	Devises strategies, activities and tasks to completely attain lesson aims	
	Makes effective use of the lesson materials to help learners achieve learning outcomes	
	Delivering a coherent & suitably varied lesson	
Supervise students' progress and gives effective feedback when required		
Observer's Comments		
4 Teacher Knowledge	Make use of graded language suitable to the students' level	
	Exhibits adequate models of language use	
	Transmits precise details about language use	
	Observes students' performance and integrates the information with the learning process	
Observer's Comments		
5 Classroom Management	Enacts lesson plan and modifies it to the immediate needs	
	Makes effective use of the classroom paraphernalia such as the space, furniture, whiteboard etc.	
	Creates effective and varied interaction patterns such as pair and group work	
	Manages the class effectively so that the students remain focused on lesson aims and stated learning outcomes	
Observer's Comments		

1 = Achieved; 2 = Partially Achieved; 3 = Not Achieved

The third data collection tool, namely students' survey questionnaire (Table 2) based on seeking *YES/NO* responses was created to gauge their opinions about the lesson, their problems, and levels of motivation.

Table 2. Students' Survey

	Survey Statements	YES	NO
1	The lesson was interesting		
2	I liked the pair and group work		
3	I understood teacher's instructions about the tasks		
4	The teacher helped us with our problems with the tasks		
5	The lesson tasks were challenging		
6	The lesson tasks were easy		
7	I understood the form, meaning and use of the phrasal verbs		
8	I learnt new vocabulary		
9	I can use this new vocabulary again in different contexts		
10	I was able to finish the tasks on time		

6. Results

The findings of the data analysis are based on teacher's rationale for the planned lesson (research question 1), lesson observation report (research questions 2, 3, 4, and 5), and students' responses to the survey questionnaire (research question 6).

6.1 Teacher's Rationale for the Lesson

The lesson primarily aimed at raising awareness of the students about meaning and concept of the PVs for use in the context of travel as well as providing them with practice to use these verbal phrases. Two main factors dictated the selection of the topic: First, since the students had already done adjective-noun collocations for description of a city, it was motivating to pick this topic and further reinforce students' notion of the meaning of lexical chunks. Secondly, based on personal observation as a class teacher, the researcher knew that most of the students wanted to develop their communication skills for traveling purposes. Assuming PVs were an effective way of developing native-like fluency and naturalness in speech, the teacher felt motivated to introduce a few of the relevant PVs to students which would not only raise their awareness of the target lexis but also equip them with some frequently used chunks for use while traveling.

However, he had to respect the level of his learners and, therefore, picked only 08 PVs to share with them in a 60-minute class. He had to be very careful in the selection of the target lexis as he knew the students might find it difficult to understand the complexities of the form and diversity of meaning the PVs had. So, keeping in mind the needs and level of the students, he chose those PVs which were frequently used on travel such as *check in* and *check out*. Almost all of them had concrete meaning except *set out*. Six out of eight PVs were each other's

opposites like for example, *get on* and *get off*. This meant they did not have to struggle with the idiomatic meaning of the phrasal verbs or the behavior of the particle with the lexical verb. However, to challenge the students, he picked two PVs (*set out* and *stop over*) which might be a little difficult for them.

Keeping in view students' needs and learning styles, the teacher used both in-house and adapted materials. He seemed to have a clear cognizance of challenges PVs as lexical items may pose to the students. Hence, he prioritized to first raise awareness of students so that they comprehend what PVs were and what their significance was in language learning. Based on these assumptions, he attempted to create a meaningful learning context by using students' schemata, prediction, reading, and visual stimuli. Then, he tried to reinforce the prediction process by showing them more prompts and asking them to order the pictures with the help of the text and then, match the pictures with the target lexis. To enhance awareness of the students about semanticity of the PVs further so that they grasp them as single lexical item, he provided explanation of the PVs, and the learners (in groups) would provide suitable PVs for each explanation. After this, the students received controlled practice in the form of a gap-fill activity which aimed at helping students to conceptualize the contextual use of the target lexis. The last production activity was a semi-controlled speaking activity where students engaged in a speaking survey asking each other questions and answers. This activity was designed to help students personalize the newly learnt vocabulary.

To ensure that the students take responsibility for their own learning, the teacher used varied interaction patterns by asking students to not only engage in pair or group work but also give the peers feedback on performance. Since the teacher had planned to cater for different learning styles, the tasks and activities he used appealed to the visual learners through the use of pictures, to the kinesthetic students while moving around in group or to the whiteboard, and to the analytical students be engaging in a gap-fill activity. The teacher persistently monitored students' performance and provided support whenever needed. He also kept an extra activity to better manage the class in the event of completing the lesson before time or a few students requiring reinforcement.

6.2 Lesson Observation Report

The lesson observation report attempts to answer research question 2 about lesson planning, research question 3 in regard to lesson delivery, research question 4 pertaining to teacher knowledge, and research question 5 focusing on classroom management.

6.2.1 Lesson Planning

The lesson observation report revealed clarity of the teaching aims which seemed relevant to the elementary level students as mentioned in the research context section. The teacher designed the lesson procedures generally clearly and were easily traceable through the lesson stages. Similarly, there was a clear mention of the instructional materials for the lesson as was the allocated time for each stage and activity and seemed practically doable.

The teacher successfully exhibited an approachable and purposeful manner, and the classroom environment was generally conducive to learning. There was positive rapport between the

teacher and the students. The teacher made students engage with the tasks; however, the quieter ones were observed sitting passive while the teacher could not activate their involvement. In general, the teacher kept changing his role, responding receptively to the students' queries, acknowledging their participation and work while praising the good work where applicable.

6.2.2 Lesson Delivery

While the teacher employed effective lesson procedures and techniques to support and reinforce learning, and a good thematic link and smooth transitions between stages in the lesson, he could not exploit the lesson materials well, and more could have been done to ensure learners were clear about the meanings of the different PVs and how they were used. Likewise, board-work was not adequately managed because visuals were posted too densely which left minimum space to write the words, and even when the words were written under each picture, they were then removed before the students could find the chance to write them down. In addition, students were not given the chance to personalize the meanings with the target PVs before the final activity.

However, the teacher employed a variety of interaction techniques including the pair and group work which contributed towards giving the lesson a coherent shape. He also attempted to produce different types of feedback while supervising students in pair and group work at the same time. But there were instances when the teacher could not provide clear feedback to students on the challenges they were facing with the use of the PVs. For instance, rectification of the pronunciation of *touched* and *stopped* went unnoticed, and so was the lapse in providing feedback on errors identified in the final speaking task.

6.2.3 Teacher Knowledge

Teacher language was mostly accurate and adequately graded to the level of the students. However, there were occasional lapses, such as the inability to discriminate *words* from *verb* (using /v/ for both). Overall, the teacher not only produced accurate models of language use with an instance of mispronouncing the word *off*, but also did some useful pronunciation work.

However, the teacher did not effectively manage to transmit the meaning of the new vocabulary clear for all students on certain instances. For example, the focus of meaning for *get on/off* was restricted only to be understood for planes, and that of *check-in* was limited to airports despite it being visible both in the text and gap-fill activity with hotels. For the most part, the teacher could not manage feedback effectively, especially during the initial presentation when the teacher's pace was relatively fast. Similarly, in the event of most students being noisy and the absence of any written record, it could not be deduced if all students understood the meaning of all the PVs or not. Besides, the teacher also did not ask preset concept-check questions which otherwise could have provided him with a clearer idea about students' understanding of the task.

6.2.4 Classroom Management

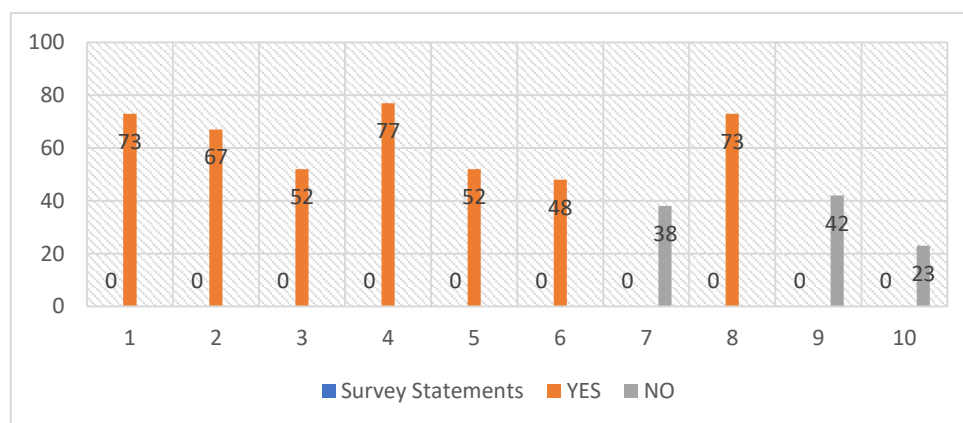
Overall, the lesson was delivered according to the plan, and class was managed effectively. The students were engaged in the activities and were also quite motivated. The teacher did his

best to persuade them despite the fact that while a few students seemed struggling with understanding the meaning of the target vocabulary, a few others were unclear about the nature of the tasks. So, there was a clear deficit in lesson delivery about helping students know what exactly was expected from them. This could have been effectively achieved had the teacher performed instruction checks through questions or, for instance, checked the meaning of key words such as *land*, *boarding card* and *journey*, which were required in order to do the matching task. In addition, during the gap-fill activity, the teacher overlooked that *check-in* was used differently from which had been taught previously. Similarly, the teacher ignored, both before and after the activity, to mark the difference between the use of past simple in affirmative and negative form which takes infinitive after *did*. And as such, it was only during the feedback that the teacher focused on the past forms of the target PVs.

6.3 Students' Survey

The results obtained from the students' survey (Table 3), which was based on 10 items (Table 2) revealed a mixed response. While most students (73%) found the lesson interesting and 67% liked working in teams, the percentage of students who were satisfied with the teacher instructions was comparatively low (52%). Majority of the students (77%) felt that the teacher support was good. However, response to the difficulty level of the tasks was almost equally distributed. While majority of the students (73%) agreed that they learnt new lexis, 38% reported they were still having problems with the form, meaning and use of the PVs. 42% were confident of their ability to use the same phrasal verbs again in a new context. 23% of students felt that they needed more time to complete the task.

Table 3. Student survey results



7. Discussion

Overall, this was a purposeful lesson which motivated and engaged learners and was clearly useful for them in that it raised their awareness of some PVs and gave them some useful speaking practice. The teacher displayed good personal qualities and engendered a classroom environment conducive to learning. There was sensitive handling of learners, and the teacher

assumed a variety of appropriate roles. There were links between stages and activities as well as a good variety of interaction patterns. The teacher showed the ability to implement the plan and keep to the timing allocated. Classroom management and the use of pictures was helpful. The learners were kept on task and worked hard throughout the lesson.

However, the teacher did not equitably involve quieter learners. Most importantly, neither did he make the meaning of the target phrasal verbs clear for the learners nor did he consistently give the learners clear feedback on their use of the phrasal verbs, nor did he check students' individual learning. He also failed to exploit the materials well to focus learners on the meaning of the target lexis as the lesson activities were not set up well, and opportunities to pre-teach key lexis first and focus on the tenses to be used were missing. There was also a lack of focus on key weaknesses in the evaluation and lack of focus on future consolidation of learning.

Overall, learners were motivated and on task throughout, and the teacher handled them sensitively and competently and created a good learning environment. Awareness was raised about PVs, but the other main aim of the lesson was not achieved in that the target lexis was not well presented or practiced, and learners were not made sufficiently clear concerning the form, meaning and use of it, either during the presentation or feedback stages.

These weaknesses in the lesson plan and delivery can be removed by further refining the teaching strategies in regard to awareness raising and using practical tasks. According to McCarthy and O'Dell (2004 p. 6) teachers should help their students partake the PVs as a lexical chunk rather than two or more discrete items. Exploiting noticing strategies involving PVs through reading or listening can prove extremely useful. However, it would be wise of the teachers if they prioritize starting from the high frequency PVs moving gradually to the low frequency ones and that too with contextual relevance. As an instructional technique, the teachers can present topic or theme-based sets of PVs and ask their students to identify and mark the PVs before they actually attempt to use them in similar other contexts.

Building upon the noticing stage, the teachers can target the syntax of by designing exercises on the contextualized use of the PVs. This point is corroborated by Thornbury (2002 p. 122) who suggests that “knowing a word means knowing its associated grammar”, referring to the strong association between lexis and grammar. Classroom activities such as substitution exercises or tasks that engage students in identifying different grammatical patterns of PVs may effectively help students raise their awareness about the relationship between grammar and its syntax. Thornbury (2002) also recommends an active use of high frequency PVs in classroom language to further raise awareness of the students through extensive exposure to the target lexis.

As traditional teaching has focused more on form, the lexical approach takes PVs as one unit and aims at helping learners with an understanding of the lexical chunks in different contexts. Elementary learners can be presented with a set of topic-based PVs such as dealing with sports, food, airport, market etc. Higher level learners can be engaged with contextualized groups of sentences or a short reading text, for instance, a cloze test where they complete the gap using the correct PV. Teachers can also design activities to give students more practice in the use of particles. They can later be asked to match the description of the target phrasal verbs, for

instance, with the particles *up* or *in* with the sentences.

Since L2 learners are prone to first language influence in their handling of PVs, it would be a useful practical step to engage elementary level students to do a matching activity involving the PVs and their definitions or synonyms. Ahmad (2019 p.247) suggests the use of rephrasing activities for higher-level learners, for instance, by replacing a verb by a PV with identical meaning such as “*depart* can be replaced with *set off*”. Similarly, issues with the phonology of PVs can be overcome by providing accurate models of pronunciation through authentic texts as well as engaging students in drilling activity.

There is, however, a chance that the newly learnt PVs degenerate in students’ active memory if not reinforced or consolidated in the forthcoming lessons. Morley (2006) recommends using a variety of classroom tasks that can help students recycle PVs for better retention. For instance, group discussions where students use the newly learnt PVs for an assigned topic or students personalizing the use of target PVs on a topic of their own choice can be interesting activities. In addition, engaging students in memory games such as Pelmanism can motivate students to identify separate items of a set of PVs in an attempt to reconstruct grammatically and semantically correct PVs. Another effective activity could be to let students complete the grid which requires them to form a new PV by using a particle with a new verb.

8. Limitations of the Study

Being a case study of a single lesson, the results cannot be overtly generalized in other contexts. Similarly, the data that was collected from teacher’s rationale, lesson observation report, and students’ survey may yield different outcomes when the same instruments are used to collect data from a larger population. In addition, replacing the lesson observation form with another observation criteria may produce different results as could be the case with the students’ survey. Using mixed-method approach by including quantitative data would further give new insights about the dynamics of the topic. The lesson adopted Presentation, Practice, Production (PPP) framework for the lesson plan and delivery which if replaced with other lesson models such as the Task Based Learning (TBL) are likely to unfold a different teaching style, use of different teaching materials, and thereby different learning outcomes.

9. Conclusion

Teacher development is an ever-evolving concept, and if pursued professionally promises transformation into teaching beliefs and practices which ultimately benefit the student community. EFL teachers are expected to be ready for contemporaneous challenges which they or their students face and consequently modify their teaching to suit the learning needs of the students. Engaging in action research is one of the most powerful tools which can provide up-to-date information about their teaching context and student problems and thereby equip them with adequate pedagogical solutions to overcome any challenges that may impede the efficacy of the teaching and learning processes.

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Appendix 1: lesson plan

Time	Stage/Stage Aim(s)	Procedure	Interaction	Materials
2 min	Lead-in: to activate the schemata of the students (SS) for the target lesson by arousing interest in the topic.	Greet the SS Make one student sit back to the board Give instructions {I'll write a word (<i>travel</i>) on the board; look at the word and help your friend guess it; don't say the actual word; you can use other words & signals etc. to make him understand} Tell SS that today we'll talk about travel.	T ↔ SS SS ↔ SS T ↔ SS	White board
08 min	Context set-up: to develop a clear and meaningful context for the lesson with the help of a prompt and elicitation to help SS preview TL	Give instructions Tell SS that they are going to read a story about Erdal's travel. Form SS pairs. Give SS reading text that includes the target lexis (TL) <i>set out, check in, get on, take off, touch down, get off, check out, stop over</i> and, a couple of comprehension questions. SS read individually & answer the questions. SS check answers in pairs Get feedback from the SS.	T ↔ SS S ↔ S(PW) T ↔ SS	Worksheet
07 min	Stage 1 To help SS think further about meaning and prepare them for TL.	Task 1 Give instructions (these pictures tell Erdal's story) Give SS a set of pictures (cutouts) Ask them to put pictures in order using the text. SS work in pairs and do the task.	T ↔ SS S ↔ S(PW) T ↔ SS	Pictures Worksheet White board

		<p>Monitor SS work. One S goes to the board and puts the big pictures there. Get feedback from SS</p>		
08 min	<p>Stage 2 To encourage SS notice TL To motivate SS do peer correction</p>	<p>Task 2 Point to the phrasal verb <i>set out</i> and match it with the picture. Give instructions for the matching task. Tell SS to use the same pictures again & match the phrasal verbs with pictures. Monitor SS work. One S writes the answer on the board. The SS check their work.</p>	<p>T ↔ SS S ↔ S (pw) T ↔ SS</p>	<p>Worksheet White board Pictures</p>
10 min	<p>Stage 3 To further raise awareness of the meaning of the TL</p>	<p>Task 3 Give instructions. Give SS a worksheet which has explanation of the TL. Ask SS to provide phrasal verb for each explanation. Use concept check questions (Look at the verbs. What do you notice? <i>They all have two words.</i> Or prompt – How many words do they have? <i>Two</i>; How many meanings? <i>One</i>. Do you know the name of this kind of verb? Elicit/give –Phrasal Verbs) Elicit & drill (choral & individual) TL from pictures. Use concept check after 4 pictures</p>	<p>T ↔ SS S ↔ S (pw) T ↔ SS</p>	<p>Worksheet White board Pictures</p>

12 min	<p>Stage 4</p> <p>To give SS controlled practice in the use of TL</p> <p>To help SS conceptualize & contextualize new lexis.</p> <p>To encourage SS do peer correction.</p>	<p>Task 4</p> <p>Form 2/3 groups</p> <p>Give instructions through elicitation about gap-fill task.</p> <p>Give SS a gap-fill worksheet.</p> <p>SS do the activity.</p> <p>Monitor SS work.</p> <p>One S from each group goes & checks with other groups.</p> <p>SS will notice their work and correct themselves.</p> <p>The group with maximum correct answers will be the winner.</p>	<p>T ↔ SS</p> <p>SS ↔ SS (GW)</p> <p>T ↔ SS</p>	Worksheet
10 min	<p>Stage 5</p> <p>To give SS semi-controlled speaking practice in the use of TL in context</p> <p>To let SS personalize new learning.</p> <p>To use comprehension checks</p>	<p>Task 5</p> <p>Give instructions about the speaking activity –</p> <p>Ss stand in pairs of their choice.</p> <p>Use the questions from the gap-fill.</p> <p>SS ask each other questions and give answers; move around & go to other SS and do the same.</p> <p>T monitors the activity and notes SS errors</p> <p>Ask SS questions “What did you learn about your friends?”</p> <p>Give feedback on SS errors by delayed error correction on the board.</p>	<p>T ↔ SS</p> <p>SS ↔ SS</p> <p>T ↔ SS</p>	Worksheet
03 min	<p>Round-up</p> <p>To recapitulate the lesson</p> <p>To see whether the lesson objectives have been met.</p> <p>To praise & thank SS</p>	<p>Back-up plan: (If time permitted)</p> <p>Form groups for error correction activity.</p> <p>Give & elicit instructions.</p> <p>Give worksheet.</p> <p>SS write their answers on white board.</p> <p>SS notice their answers</p>	<p>T ↔ SS</p> <p>SS ↔ SS</p> <p>T ↔ SS</p>	Worksheet White board

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