

## The Effect of Container Metaphor Awareness on Learning Phrasal Verbs by Iranian Intermediate EFL Learners

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### Abstract

Learning and comprehending phrasal verbs (PVs) is necessary for English writing and speaking especially for the EFL learners who like to speak like proficient speakers. This study used an experimental design to focus on the effect of ‘container metaphor awareness’, as a recently developed technique with the focus on two particles (*out* and *in*), on learning phrasal verbs by Iranian intermediate EFL learners. To this end, two groups of Iranian intermediate EFL learners were selected. They were homogeneous regarding their knowledge of English PVs. A pretest of phrasal verbs containing *in* and *out* particles was given to both groups. During a 5-week instruction, the PVs were taught to the control group with the traditional method through definition, examples, and sometimes translation and they were asked to memorize the PVs and their meanings. Meanwhile, PVs were presented to the experimental group by using images within videos prepared by the instructor to make their meanings concrete. After the instructional sessions, a posttest of target PVs was given to the participants of both groups in order to investigate their performance. The obtained results revealed that the experimental group significantly outperformed the control group. The findings of the study showed that teaching PVs based on container metaphor awareness could be more conducive to the learning and retention of PVs than the traditional method. Therefore, the application of container metaphor in teaching PVs can create an innovative method for teaching PVs in EFL contexts and facilitate PVs learning for EFL learners of English.

*Keywords:* Awareness; Container Metaphor; EFL learner; Intermediate Level; Phrasal Verbs

### 1. Introduction

Vocabulary teaching methodology has been an ongoing issue in Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL). Phrasal verbs, which

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can be considered as a subcategory of vocabulary, are essential to be taught and learned well but they are very difficult expressions due to their syntactic and semantic complexity (Laufer & Eliasson, 1993).

In fact, different definitions have been appeared along the years to refer to this language phenomenon and there is a struggle among linguists and grammarians about the definitions of phrasal verb (Gardner & Davies, 2007). Phrasal verbs are among some of the most challenging word constructions for foreign language learners (EFL) to learn well. (Cowie, 1998) and previous research has observed an avoidance phenomenon in the use of phrasal verbs by EFL learners (Laufer & Eliasson; 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007). These studies explained that, although learners know the meanings of phrasal verbs, they might deliberately decide to avoid using them in favor of their one-word verb equivalents.

Phrasal verbs are also an important feature of English vocabulary. While Biber, Johansson, Leech, Conrad, and Finegan (1999) estimated that phrasal verbs happen almost 2,000 times per million words in fiction and conversation, Liu (2011) revealed that they occur almost three times as much, and Gardner and Davies (2007) stated that learners would encounter on average one phrasal verb in every 150 words of English to which they are exposed. Furthermore, phrasal verbs may have different meanings and functions. Gardner and Davies (2007) search of the British National Corpus (BNC) showed that each of the 100 most frequent English phrasal verbs have between five and six meaning senses on average.

There are some reasons that make phrasal verbs particularly hard for foreign language learners to learn. To begin with, phrasal verbs are very common and highly productive in the English language as a whole (Gardner & Davies, 2007, Kamarudin, 2019). Many phrasal verbs have multiple meanings themselves. Thus, learners may find learning phrasal verbs particularly difficult, especially as there are problems with the issue of idiomaticity and semantic non-compositionality, which can be very confusing to learners (Moon, 1998, White, 2012). The meaning of many phrasal verbs is not transparent. Therefore, it is not easy, and sometimes impossible, to interpret the meaning of the verb by combining the meaning of each parts i.e. these phrasal verbs are said to be idiomatic.

A Phrasal verb is consisted of a verb and a preposition or adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its separate parts: look after, work out and etc . According to Trask (1993, p. 208) a phrasal verb is a lexical verb "which is made of a simple verb matched to

one or more particles" and its meaning then is typically unpredictable. Phrasal verbs have been problematic for learners of English. Although Phrasal verbs are widely used by native English speakers but they are difficult for second language learners to master (Moon, 1997; Kao, 2001). The issue of what is the best way to teach phrasal verbs is still quite controversial. Although teaching of phrasal verbs has been daunting and difficult for teachers to teach, it is also hard for the learners to learn as well. It is crucial to develop the students' skills in understanding and using them.

There is no specified or fixed method in which a student can learn all the phrasal verbs, idioms, adjectives, or nouns. Otherwise, one method is teaching phrasal verbs through alphabetical lists (Gamier & Schmitt, 2015). It is thorough and comprehensive but it is hard to memorize a phrasal verb and its meaning and then bring it into your active, everyday speaking and listening (Dainty, 1992). Although learning PVs through lists can be useful, but it may be hard to move the knowledge from the written page to active knowledge (Dainty, 1992). To teach PVs solely based on their verb part also causes problem and it should be avoided.

According to Yasuda (2010), the traditional model of presenting PVs faces students with a list of PVs with their definitions or translation and wants them to memorize such list. This traditional model of teaching PVs implies that PVs are non-compositional, meaning that their idiomatic meanings cannot be predicted from a combination of their constituents (Gibbs, 1990, Luo, 2019). Researchers who focused on traditional models such as Live (1965), Lipka (1975), and Fraser (1976) stated that the meaning of the PVs is arbitrary and idiosyncratic (Kovacs, 2007; Morgan, 1997) or they ignored the distinct differences in meaning (Tyler & Evans, 2003). They have found no clear connection between the individual components and the composite meaning of the PVs. They concluded that there is no a clear systematic way of determining the overall meaning of PVs depending on their elements, so learners must memorize them

Mahpeykar and Tyler (2015) explained that the traditional model of teaching PVs was not successful, as it did not teach the semantic and systematic behavior of PVs. In addition to the traditional model, there has been a focus on using conceptual metaphors as a pedagogical tool in teaching PVs. Lakoff and Johnson (2003) defined a conceptual metaphor as an imaginative understanding of one kind of thing in terms of another (p. 194). According to cognitive linguistics researchers such as Dirven (2001), Kovecses and Szabco (1996), Kurtyka (2001), Lindner (1982), Morgan (1997), Rudzka-Ostyn (2003), and Tyler and Evans (2003),

prediction or implying the meanings of some PVs by exploring the metaphors contained in the components of PVs is possible, especially through the particles but not so often through the main verbs. The modern notion of conceptual metaphors that defied the traditional view was first introduced in Lakoff and Johnson's book (1980) entitled *Metaphors We Live By*. In this book, they mentioned the significance of the metaphor in relation to how L2 learners think and select vocabulary to reflect their ideas and thoughts. Lakoff and Johnson (1980) identified two important types of conceptual metaphors that can be used in explaining, analyzing, and presenting PVs: orientational metaphors and ontological metaphors.

The container metaphor is one of the most important ways to conceptualize and figure out abstract ideas (Johnson, 2013). Besides, many abstract conceptual ideas can be conceptualized as containers that provide a systematic explanation for PVs represented by the particles out and in. Literally, out and in indicate an outside and inside position. However, these particles can be visualized from the mental image of a container. Leaving a container is represented by the particle out, and being inside or entering a container is represented by the particle in. therefore this is a method which can be applied in teaching PVs.

In present paper, the hypothesis is that giving the learners some awareness about the metaphorical nature of the meaning of the phrasal verbs may help their understanding of these verbs and improve their learning in terms of using PVs in English.

### ***1.1.Statement of the problem***

Many articles have been published on phrasal verbs as a problematic feature for EFL learners. It has been argued that learning phrasal verbs and the teaching approaches used to present them to the learners are the major issues of learners' difficulty in dealing with phrasal verbs (Imrose, 2013).

PVs are difficult for ESL students because of two main reasons: their inconsistent form and meaning, and their absence in the students' L1 (Neagu, 2007; Garnier & Schmitt, 2015). As they do not have uniform patterns, ESL students face problem in learning them.

Traditional method of teaching PVs focuses on memorizing and keeping the meanings of each phrasal verb as the best way of learning them; however, it does not explain how the components of the PVs are structured or why one particle must go with a particular verb. The traditional model has been problematic for teaching and learning PVs (Ansari, 2016; Ganji, 2011; Kartal & Uner, 2017; Lu & Sun, 2017; Talebinezhad & Farhadian, 2014; Yasuda, 2010). Therefore, working on

new and more effective methods of teaching PVs is necessary especially for teaching them to the intermediate EFL learners in order to learn them systematically and use them more efficiently due to their meanings.

Interpreting the meaning of the verb through combining the meaning of its transitive and particle is not easy, and sometimes it is impossible as the meaning of many phrasal verbs is vague due to their particles. These phrasal verbs are called idiomatic, like tune out, catch up, and put on (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Schmitt & Siyanova, 2007; Wyss, 2002).

Many researchers (Kartal & Uner, 2017; Kovecses & Szabco, 1996; Talebinezhad & Farhadian, 2014; Yasuda, 2010) suggested that an approach that focuses on orientational metaphors helps ESL/EFL students learn PVs. Based on these studies, remarkable amount of research had focused on finding a difference between the traditional model and the orientational metaphor model in teaching PVs.

Majeed (2019) stated that in comparison to the traditional methods of teaching PVs, the container metaphor model can assist ESL learners in guessing the meaning of previously unknown PVs. However, little, if any, experimental studies have been conducted in an EFL context to determine the effectiveness of the container metaphor awareness. Therefore, this study examined whether presenting PVs by the container metaphor model facilitated the learning of PVs by EFL students in a more effective manner than the traditional model or not.

### ***1.2. Purpose of the study***

The primary goal of this paper is to conduct a quasi-experimental investigation to investigate whether container metaphor awareness could be effective in improving phrasal verbs learning by Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

The results may help to design not only a more effective method for teaching phrasal verbs but also a new method to teach vocabulary as well.

### ***1.3. Research Question***

Does container metaphor awareness have any significant effect on learning phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate EFL learners?

### ***1.4. Research Hypothesis***

H<sub>0</sub>: Container metaphor awareness has no significant effect on learning phrasal verbs among Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

## **2. Literature review**

There have been many studies on phrasal verbs and many scholars in linguistics have worked on phrasal verbs at different times, within different theoretical frameworks (Gorlach, 2004). However, the definition of a phrasal verb is still very controversial and vague.

Richards and Schmidt (2010) defined phrasal verb as a verb construction which is consisted of a verb plus an adverb particle.

Yule (1998) stated that when a particle is regularly combined with a particular verb, the resulting "two-part" verb often has a distinct meaning and is categorized as a phrasal verb. Moreover, he explained that phrasal verbs are single units of meaning. In other words, verb-particle combinations behave as single units; however, they can be separated by syntactic rules.

Similarly, Gorlach (2004) followed the standard view on phrasal verb and defined it as a discontinuous lexical item consisting of a transitive or intransitive verb and an adverbial particle, e.g. look after or put out. She explained the semantic aspects of phrasal verbs as well as the nature of the word order alternation typical of transitive phrasal verbs with a nominal object.

Phrasal verbs have different meanings from their transitive part or particle alone; however, researchers who focused on traditional model have failed to show the clear different meanings of each phrasal verbs. They have named the differences in meaning homonyms or arbitrary. One of the greatest weakness of the traditional view is its explanation of the distinct differences in meaning as homonymous (Tyler & Evans, 2003). Traditional view also fails to describe the relationship between the multiple meaning of some phrasal verbs (Kovacs, 2011a). It is generally recognized that the traditional approach has also failed to address the reasons behind the multiple meanings for the same phrasal verbs and how those meanings are formed.

Fraser (1976), Lipka (1972) and Yasuda (2010), and declared that learning phrasal verbs is a difficult job and the particles like *out*, *in*, and *up* carried only a part of the meaning of the whole phrasal verbs. Bolinger (1971) observed that the particle *out* has many different meanings such as the metaphorical meanings as in *hold out* and *mete out*, literal meaning as in *take out*. Lipka (1972) explained that in some contexts the particle *out* means "leave" as in *comb out* meaning "remove by combing" (p. 99). Although Bolinger (1971) and Lipka (1972) recognized the semantic roles of some particles but they did not define a systematic way of analyzing the phrasal verbs and they did not reveal much about the metaphor that links the abstract and concrete meanings.

Metaphors according to Lakoff and Johnson (1980), is a living phenomenon in our everyday life, our everyday thinking, and even in our actions. The container metaphor is a useful type of ontological metaphor (in which an abstraction is presented as something concrete), where a concept is conceptualized as having an inside or an outside, or being capable of holding something else. It is one of the most important and well-established metaphors in the human cognition (Stamatović & Bratić, 2018).

The container metaphor is one of the most important image schemas that is used to understand and conceptualize abstract ideas in terms of physical containers (Lakoff & Johnson, 2003; Tyler & Evans, 2003). Lakoff (1995) stated that the container schema defines the basic distinction between *in* and *out*. Examples such as inviting someone to eat out or figuring out a problem are containers that we face in daily routines. Some of these containers are obvious like the first example and others are not obvious like figuring out a problem. According to Tyler and Evans (2003), some functional consequences are reflected in some phrasal verbs associated with the particles *out* and *in*. Thus, for instance, CONTAINMENT involves constraining movement, as in the case of a prison cell, which restricts the movements of a convict, but the container can also be conceived as a protection, as in the case of a jeweler's safe (Tyler & Evans, 2003). In addition, if the boundaries of the container are opaque, what is inside remains hidden and can only be seen if taken "out". The functional elements in the spatial meaning of prepositions are essential to understand how other senses are generated. Besides, these functional elements can explain the apparent arbitrariness of the alternation of prepositions. For example, if someone is "in trouble", this is conceived as a state from which one cannot easily escape, whereas if one is "on the take" it is perceived as a choice that can be reversed.

Ganji (2011) compared translation, sentential contextualization and metaphorical conceptualization approaches to teaching phrasal verbs to Iranian EFL learners. In his study, he presented 20 phrasal verbs to the subjects in 3 groups for some sessions and collected the data through immediate tests conducted 2 hours after each session and one final test given 5 weeks later. The results of the test on phrasal verbs revealed that both sentential contextualization and metaphorical conceptualization approaches had better effect than traditional method and had significant difference.

Safaie-Qalati (2016), studied the effect of conceptual metaphor awareness on learning phrasal verbs by Iranian intermediate EFL learners.

His study yielded positive results on teaching phrasal verbs with cognitively oriented methods like conceptual metaphor awareness.

Although, many of Cognitive Linguistics oriented methods on teaching phrasal verbs already are worked on, it seems that still further empirical researches are needed to work on the applicability of cognitive linguistics approaches to language teaching, particularly applying the theory of container metaphors to teaching phrasal verbs.

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Design**

In present study, the research design was experimental, as the participants were randomly selected and they were chosen from a limited number of Iranian intermediate EFL learners' population within a language institute.

#### **3.2. Participants**

The participants of this study were selected from intermediate EFL learners of Shokooh-e- Pouyan language institute in Shahreza. Among 450 teenager and adult learners of this institute according to the institute placement test 150 of the learners were in intermediate level. During Corona pandemic, they were reduced to 90. Based on a placement test conducted by the researcher, 40 language learners were recruited for the study. Then they were assigned into two groups, each of 20 homogeneous intermediate language learners. The two groups were taught by the same professor, who was the researcher herself, and she followed the instructional goals and curriculum for the two classes.

#### **3.3. Instrumentation**

##### **3.3.1. Phrasal Verbs Sampling**

Because of the variety of phrasal verbs in English, the author used the book " *Essential Idioms in English, Phrasal Verbs and Collocations* (2004) " to extract phrasal verbs containing *in and out* particles through its intermediate section as the participants proficiency level was intermediate in English. Among all the extracted PVs, 20 of them were selected regarding to their container particle to be assigned to two selected groups of students in a way that 10 of them were used for the pretest and 10 for posttest (20, in total) in order not to have same test items.

##### **3.3.2. Pretest of phrasal verbs**

The pretest was conducted to determine how many of selected PVs are known to the students who would participate in the study. A test on 10

English phrasal verbs was designed by the researcher which can be seen in Appendix A. Participants had to match the 10 PVs in Column A with their corresponding ones in Column B. During the test time, any help such as dictionary use was not allowed. In addition, the pretest measured if there was a significant difference between the control and the experimental group and functioned as a baseline to check what would happen after the treatment.

### 3.3.3. Illustration video clip

Two types of video clips were made on container metaphor for PVs by the researcher as the instructor of the classes. Participants in the control group had to watch a five-minute video based on the traditional model of presenting the PVs. Here PV was shown as a combination of two parts, in which, the first part is a verb and the second one is a particle such as *work out*. Then PVs were explained with the means of teaching their meaning by heart and trying to memorize them which was related to the idiomaticity of the PVs. The combination of a verb with different particles makes a different meaning of the word when it is looked at separately. For example, *work out* as a PV does not mean that a person is working outside. In fact, it means to calculate the answer to a question that involves numbers, amounts, prices, and so on. Therefore, the meaning of the particle *out* has no bearing on the meaning of *work out*. So, it emphasized that the idiomatic meaning of such verbs should be memorized.

Second video clip was made for the experimental group in which same PVs were presented through container metaphor model in which a container metaphor was explained as one of the most important image schemas used to understand PVs associated with the particles *out* and *in* in terms of containers. The particle *out* implies the meaning of exiting a container and the particle *in* implies the meaning of entering a container. In this type of video clip PVs were taught through concrete images.

Each class had 5 of their own types of video clips within 5 sessions of their online classes during the ongoing pandemic.

### 3.3.4. Posttest

In order to evaluate the overall performances of the control and experimental groups, regarding learning the selected PVs, after the completion of the course, i.e. the treatment, a post-test was run. The posttest contained 10 different phrasal verbs from the pretest (Appendix B). Finally, an independent samples t-test was run to show whether the container metaphor awareness method could be more effective than the traditional method applied to the control group.

### 3.4. Teaching Methodology

PVs have different meanings and researchers who focused on traditional model failed to illustrate the individual different meanings of each PV. They have concentrated on teaching where they are located, how they work and within the area of the differences in meaning, considering them homonyms or arbitrary. This approach also fails to outline the relationship among the multiple meanings of some PVs (Kovacs, 2011a). In the control group of the present study, the traditional method of teaching PVs was applied which contained explaining the meaning of each PV, using them in different sentences to get its meaning and usage and finally asking them to memorize their function and meaning.

In contrast, PVs for experimental group were taught through the container metaphor model which was designed by the researcher herself in which participants were informed that each image they would see is consisted of two parts: the first part reflects the state before any movement, while the second part refers to the results after the movement. In other word, it tries to illustrate the concrete meaning of each part of the PV.

For instance, to analyze the PV *work out* according to the container metaphor model, a problem was considered as a container, and then connection between the verb and the particle could be recognized. Therefore, *working out* the problem, which was a container, meant that a person found the solution to the problem to get out of that container. So, container metaphors could be used to show the underlying meaning of PVs.

Based on the mentioned theoretical framework which was developed by the researcher based on the previous research done by Majeed (2019) on comparing two different models of presenting phrasal verbs, the procedure of the present study for the experimental group was based on the container notion of the particle and the verbs which were taught through a video and visualizing the notion of the PVs.

The course contained 12 sessions in which there were five 10-minute instructions beside their main lesson devoted to teaching the 20 phrasal verbs (four phrasal verbs in each session were taught) and two extra sessions for holding the pretest and the post-test. The posttest was given to the participants a week after the last session as a part of their final exam.

The independent variables were the type of presenting PVs: a) traditional model (i.e., definitions and examples only), and b) container model (i.e., definitions and examples plus images). The dependent

variable in this study will be students' scores on the PV measures included in the pretest, and the posttest.

#### 4. Results

To check the homogeneity of the two groups at the beginning of the study a pretest was run and its results are presented in Tables 1 and 2. Table (1) shows the statistical description of the pretest.

Table 1. *The Statistical Description of the Pretest*

|                    | <b>N</b>  | <b>Mean</b> |            | <b>Std. Deviation</b> |
|--------------------|-----------|-------------|------------|-----------------------|
|                    | Statistic | Statistic   | Std. Error | Statistic             |
| Control group      | 20        | 4.4000      | .31954     | 1.42902               |
| Experimental group | 20        | 4.7500      | .37609     | 1.68195               |

Descriptive statistics in Table (1) gives the mean, number of participants and the standard deviations of the two groups. The mean score of the experimental group is 4.7500 with a standard deviation of 1.6819; for the control group mean score is 4.4000 with a standard deviation of 1.4290. This shows that the mean score of the subjects in the experimental group is higher than that of the students in the control group; also, to check if this discrepancy is statistically significant or not, it was needed to run an independent samples t-test. The results of the independent samples t-test are shown in table 2.

Table 2. *The Results of the Independent Samples T-test*

|                            | Levene's Test for Equality of Variances |      | t-test for Equality of Means |      |                 |                  |                       |   |         |
|----------------------------|---|------|------------------------------|------|-----------------|------------------|-----------------------|---|---------|
|                            | F                                       | Sig. | T                            | Df   | Sig. (2-tailed) | Mean Differences | Std. Error Difference | 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference |         |
|                            |   |      |                              |      |                 |                  |                       | Lower                                     | Upper   |
| Equal variances Assumed    | .211                                    | .352 | 0.7092                       | 37   | .4826           | .35000           | .76389                | -.77154                                   | 2.43820 |
| Equal Variance non-Assumed |   |      | 0.833                        | 36.3 | .4425           | .35000           | .73573                | -.71941                                   | 2.38607 |

At the beginning of the research it was necessary to get sure about the difficulty level of the target PVs., i.e. It was necessary to make sure that

the target phrasal verbs were not too easy. As long as, the pretest for the two groups was graded from 0 - 10, the mean scores in Table (1) (4.40 for the control group and 4.75 for the experimental group) clearly show that both groups were familiar with roughly 50% of the phrasal verbs which meant the study could be conducted.

An independent-samples *t*-test was run using an alpha of .05 to determine if there was a statistically significant difference between the control group and the experimental group. Since the probability of the P value (Sig. = 0.48) is more than the alpha level so the variances are not significantly different from each other. Based on these statistics, the homogeneity of the variance assumption has been satisfied; P value confirmed that neither of the two groups had much prior knowledge about the selected PVs and there was no significant difference between them.

After the treatment, a post-test comprising 10 different phrasal verbs rather than the pretest, was given to the two groups and an independent samples *t*-test was done on the results to compare the performances of the two groups in terms of learning phrasal verbs. The descriptive statistics is given in Table (3):

Table 3. *The Statistical Description of the Posttest*

|                    | N         |           | Mean       |           | Std. Deviation |
|--------------------|-----------|-----------|------------|-----------|----------------|
|                    | Statistic | Statistic | Std. Error | Statistic |                |
| Control group      | 20        | 5.2500    | .37609     |           | 1.68195        |
| Experimental group | 20        | 8.3000    | .27242     |           | 1.21828        |

As Table (3) depicts, the obtained mean scores of both the experimental group (M= 8.30) and the control group (M= 5.25) show considerably different amounts of improvement. It can be concluded that the experimental group performed better than the control group. In Table (4) we check if the expected P value is met or not. As long as the P value of the final posttest is 0.0001(P < 0.05), based on the results of the final posttest, the null hypothesis that was mentioned at the beginning of the present study is rejected.

Table 4. *The Results of the Independent Samples T-test*

|                                   | Levene's Test<br>for Equality<br>of Variances |       | t-test for Equality of Means |       |                        |                    |                          |   |         |
|-----------------------------------|---|-------|------------------------------|-------|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------------|---|---------|
|                                   | F   | Sig.  | t                            | df    | Sig.<br>(2-<br>tailed) | Mean<br>Difference | Std. Error<br>Difference | 95% Confidence<br>Interval of the<br>Difference |         |
|                                   |   |       |                              |       |                        |                    |                          | Lower   | Upper   |
| Equal<br>variances<br>assumed     | .426  | .0001 | -.178717                     | 38    | .0001                  | -.8299             | .464                     | -1.48967  | 1.22301 |
| Equal<br>variances<br>not assumed |   |       | -.219                        | 18.36 | .0003                  | -.8999             | .464                     | -1.54478  | 1.27812 |

Obtained results reveal that there is a significant difference between the performances of the experimental and the control groups in a way that the experimental group has outperformed the control group.

## 5. Discussion

The results obtained through this study revealed the significant positive effect of the container metaphor model by using video and image on learning PVs. The findings of this study revealed that intermediate EFL learner who followed the container metaphor model as a way of presenting PVs performed significantly better than the traditional model that relied mainly on memorization in both learning and retaining PVs.

This finding is in line with Kovecses and Szabo (1996) and Yasuda (2010) that found the participants in the orientational metaphor group performed better than those who followed the traditional model in determining the meaning of the untaught PVs. Majeed (2019) did a study on comparing traditional model and container metaphor model on learning PVs. She found that neither the container metaphor model nor the traditional model made a difference in figuring out the untaught PVs to ESL learners while this research showed the opposed results in the case of EFL learners.

Along with the the case of Majeed (2019), results of the present study about applying this approach to teaching phrasal verbs to the intermediate Iranian EFL learners supports the previous related findings about the positive effect of using this method to teach PVs.

One general tip in cognitive linguistics is that all the abstract concepts we learn in our everyday life derive from basic level concrete perceptions (Gallese & Lakoff, 2005; Lakoff, 2008; Lakoff & Johnsen, 1980). All in

all, the findings of our study corroborate the Lakoffian view and many other scholars of Cognitive Linguistics about the role of conceptual metaphor models in understanding and using PVs.

One problem facing this study, and most of the previous related studies, was that, as long as conceptual metaphor awareness is a recently introduced method to the field of language teaching and learning, there are not many clearly configured methods of teaching based on this approach available in the literature. Hence, by supporting the theoretical basis of teaching methods developed by cognitive approaches to language teaching and providing practical details, studies like the present one might *practically* level the ground for building up clearly structured cognitive methods of language teaching which could plausibly be more effective than the traditional methods.

## 6. Conclusion

On the whole, the aim of the study, was to evaluating the effect of the container metaphor model in comparison to traditional model to teach PVs. Quantitative comparative analyses of pretest and posttest revealed that intermediate-level students who were taught through the container metaphor model performed significantly better than those who were taught through traditional model with the focus on memorization in both learning and retaining PVs.

In terms of pedagogical implications, the findings of this study may play a significant role for EFL teachers In teaching PVs through using the container metaphor. Therefore, this model is recommended to be considered as one model of teaching PVs in order to be learnt easier by the learners specifically in the case of intermediate EFL learners. This study revealed how the container metaphor model can be employed as an effective model of teaching PVs because many physical and abstract structures of the PVs can be conceptualized as a container.

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## Appendices

### Appendix 1: Pretest

Please match the phrasal verbs in column A with the appropriate definitions in column B. Then write the answer letter in the blank. There are extra definitions in each box in column B that you do not need to use.

| A  | B  |
|--|--|
| 1. branch out -----<br>2. kick in -----<br>3. lock out ----- | a. to break a door, window etc. by hitting it with the foot very hard especially in order to enter a building.<br>b. to leave your keys inside a building, room, car, etc. by mistake.<br>c. to avoid doing something that you do not want to do but have to do or have promise to do.<br>d. to start doing something different from what you usually do in your business, job, etc.<br>e. to choose or recognize somebody carefully from a group of people or things. |

|   |   |
|---|---|
| <p>4. pass out -----<br/>                 5. step in -----<br/>                 6. hand out -----</p>                                       | <p>a. to help somebody in a disagreement or difficult situation.<br/>                 b. to completely get rid of something that is dangerous such as crime or disease.<br/>                 c. to go to a meeting, do a job, etc. instead of the person who usually does it.<br/>                 d. to become unconscious, usually for a short time.<br/>                 e. to give something such as a book, a piece of paper, etc. to each of the people in a group or to people who are passing.</p>  |
| <p>7. opt out -----<br/>                 8. tune out -----<br/>                 9. join in -----<br/>                 10. dive in -----</p> | <p>a. to start doing or becoming involved in something with other people.<br/>                 b. to make a decision without careful thought.<br/>                 c. to ignore something or stop listening to it.<br/>                 d. to cause someone to receive money as income or profit.<br/>                 e. To decide not to join a group or take part in a system.<br/>                 f. to start doing something very eagerly, especially without stopping to think before you do it.</p> |

Appendix 2: Post test

Please match the phrasal verbs in column A with the appropriate definitions in column B. Then write the answer letter in the blank. There are extra definitions in each box in column B that you do not need to use.

| A   | B   |
|---|---|
| <p>1. pop in -----<br/>                 2. get in -----<br/><br/>                 3. duck out -----<br/>                 4. pencil in -----</p> | <p>a. to avoid doing something that you do not want to do, but have to do or have promised to do.<br/>                 b. to succeed in doing something that is very difficult.<br/>                 c. to make an arrangement for someone to do something which is not definite, and which might be changed later.<br/>                 d. To go into a friend's house, an office, a shop etc. for a short time, usually without having arranged your visit.</p> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
|   | <p>e. to cause someone to receive money as income or profit.<br/>                 f. To arrive at your home or at work</p>   |
| <p>5. lock out -----<br/>                 6. fill in -----<br/>                 7. branch out -----<br/>                 8. turn in -----</p> | <p>a. to reduce something or stop it increasing especially the amount of money spent by government or company.<br/>                 b. to leave your keys inside a building, room, car, etc. by mistake.<br/>                 c. to get an agreement with another person, country, or organization, after a lot of argument.<br/>                 d. to start doing something different from what you usually do in your business, job, etc.<br/>                 e. to write all the necessary information in the empty spaces on an official document or test.<br/>                 f. to go to bed.</p> |
| <p>9. give out -----<br/>                 10. barge in -----</p>  | <p><b>a.</b> to cause someone to receive money as income or profit.<br/> <b>b.</b> to make an arrangement for someone to do something which is not definite, and which might be changed later.<br/> <b>c.</b> to rudely enter a building or room without being asked especially when it is a private place and other people are in there.</p>  |