

The Dairy of a Wimpy Kid: A Graded Material for Teaching Phrasal Verbs and Idiomatic Expressions in an ESL Classroom

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Brevity is the soul of communication, be it a small talk or a formal business exchange. Phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions are instrumental in maintaining brevity and accuracy. As these expressions are common in the slang of a native speaker, the second language learners find it difficult to master them. The phrasal verbs often keep mutating with slightest variant inflected to the root word. There is transition happening between phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions making it still more complicated. In the present world English is not limited to medium of instruction, it started taking strides into communication process leaving no exception. A thoroughly construed pedagogical methods would help to resolve the problems in English language teaching and promote learner friendly ambience an essential quotient in language learning. The acquaintance with abnormalities in the early stages will allow the learners to customize themselves for language learning in a better way. As it is practically impossible to byheart language traits, teachers can use literary works as graded material to accomplish the task of teaching phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions successfully. As the Young learners are the target group, less serious works will serve the purpose better. The comic text like **Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Heffley's Journal** by Jeff Kinney can be a fair recommendation for the purpose.

The Present paper tries to explore the possible activities that can be designed to teach phrasal verbs and idiomatic expression using **Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Greg** a novel in cartoons.

Key words: small talk, formal business exchange, phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions,

Introduction:

Phrasal verbs are compound verbs that result from combining a verb with an adverb or a preposition. The compound verb formed is often idiomatic. Language learning is ordained by the LSRW skills. Listening, Speaking, Reading, and Writing. They are categorised into receptive skills and productive skills. Listening and reading are receptive skills and speaking and writing are productive skills. It is an observed fact that receptive skills help in improving

to productive skills. The cognitive skills related to language learning are activated by the receptive skills like listening and reading. Second language acquisition can be done effectively if enough focus is given to receptive skills. The responsibility of the equipping students with language skills lies in the hands of secondary and upper secondary school teachers. Research proved that the reception and retention abilities are high in children. To take the maximum advantage of the abilities of the learners is to give them an opportunity to identify their talent. The pedagogical methods have now moved from teaching to instruction, even the teacher is only facilitator assisting students in understanding.

Traditional teaching methods might prove less advantageous in the era where a humanoid can replace a teacher. Learning by doing is well appreciated by the learners of the twenty first century. The three Es – Engage, Entertain and Educate can serve the purpose for the learners the present day, the kids of third millennium. In the process of devising the activities to teach language learning the teachers must make the learners to experience the actual thrill of learning. The present paper the comic text of the kind **Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Heffley's Journal** by Jeff Kinney is taken as target language text and prime focus is vested on phrasal verbs.

The five elements of language are grammar, vocabulary, diction, pronunciation, and accent. Grammar and vocabulary are the key elements that are instrumental in providing the language ability in the receptive skills speaking and writing. Accent and pronunciation can be imitated through observation. The best means suggested for improvising accent and pronunciation would be through listening native speakers. English as a second language is taught mostly by teachers who learnt English as a second language (non- native speakers). The exactness in pronunciation or accent is bound under certain limitations. It is the exposure to the language that makes the learners acquainted with pronunciation and accent which in turn will be reflected in the learner's speech.

The elements like grammar and vocabulary can be taught to the students in the classroom through various classroom activities. The target group taken for the study for the present paper is young learners. It is recommended to keep set of resource material so that the improvisation of activities can be seasoned and made more adoptive. The better suited works for the purpose would be comic books that children love to read as they could involve thoroughly into the scene and setting. **The Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Heffley's Journal** by Jeff Kinney is one of its kind

which narrates the story of a kid who struggles to cope up with dual environments, school, and house, often proving out of place at both the settings.

The language used in the novel **The Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Heffley's Journal** is less formal and hence more natural. The informality in the conversation makes it sound more of native. The setting of the novel is America, so the slang contains more of American idioms. The gaining momentum in American English popularity obviously commands due attention from learners. In the novella the author uses more than hundred and fifty phrasal verbs which of course sound natural, pulling in the right connotation for right situation. The novel can be used as a graded material for teaching phrasal verbs. Various activities can be framed taking the excerpts from the novel. The phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions in the novel are used by a kid so they are more informal in context and are easy to remember.

Now- a-days activity-based language learning is encouraged in the classroom. The routine way of by hearting and imposition of memorizing is out place in language learning. Even the acquisition of grammar a traditional task for mastering L2 is restricted to functional grammar. Memorizing the syntactical structures and rules of grammar have receded giving way for more practical means of learning language. The learners of the millennium are fortunate to have access to umpteen number of learning material via different sources in the net. Proper planning is very much essential to get desired output from the activities. The text, **The Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Heffley's Journal**, can be adopted in such a way that mastering of phrasal verbs becomes less difficult and more interesting. The teacher, before taking up the task of teaching the phrasal verbs from the novel, must narrate the story of Greg in nutshell to draw the attention of the learners.

Activities

Picking the phrasal verbs from the excerpt.

Every topic must be introduced to the students with a lead-in where the instructor will provide the road map for the activity at same time leads to comfortable and accommodative learning. Phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions are spread all over the text of the novel. An excerpt from the novel can be chosen and given to the students they should underline the phrasal verbs and the idiomatic expression from that piece of write-up.

Example:

Today is the first day of school, and right now we're just waiting around for the teacher to hurry up finish the seating chart. So I figured I might as well write in this book to pass the time. (p.4)

Waiting around: stay in the same place, usually doing very little, because you cannot act before something happens or before someone arrives.

hurry up: to tell someone to do something more quickly.

Tracing the phrasal verb from the given page:

The novel is given as the study material to the students at least one week before the scheduled session. The session can be started with an assumption that the students have read the novel and are acquainted with the text. The teacher can give the page numbers from the novel and ask the students to locate the phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions.

Example: Page no- 6 to 10

what the heck (p6): expressing surprise, frustration, or dismay.

sneak off. (p8) leave furtively and stealthily. synonyms: slip away, **sneak** away, **sneak** out,.

Cheese touch (p9): If somebody has the **Cheese Touch**, they will be a social outcast

Cross your finger: (9): put one finger across another as a sign of hoping for good luck.

get off (p10): escape a punishment; be acquitted.

Sharing the experiences with classmates:

In the novel Greg the wimpy kid, the narrator, shares his experiences he has with his parents, teachers, friends, and sibling. These are typical and majority of kids have such experiences to share. An activity of this sort can be conducted in the classroom like asking students to share their funny experiences with the siblings or parents. The prompts from the text can be used to initiate the activity. Each student can be given one minute. After the narration the student should gather the information from his classmates on how many of them had the similar experience like his. The students themselves will take turns to continue the activity. One important instruction would be to ask the students to make use of phrasal verbs from the text for that scene as was done by Greg.

Example: Mom is always getting on me for not finishing my breakfast.(p 23)

Dad is a pretty smart guy in general but when it comes to common sense, sometimes

I wonder about him.(p25)

Cultural awareness activity:

Language and culture are interlinked. Language exposes the culture and culture enriches the language. In the novel Greg explains about Halloween festival and Christmas. Learners can be instructed to explain (In writing or speaking) the festival, that are native to their culture, modelling the description from the text. The phrasal verbs and idiomatic expression are to be a part of their description.

Example: trick or treat (pg. 65) , showed up (64) there was a catch (66) squirm out of it (66),

Games:

In the novel there is a mention of a game – cheese touch. Students can speak of a game like this. The reference of the text can be used to borrow required vocabulary narration. Learners can be given some ideas to invent games and label them with relevant names.

Example: Phrasal verbs used in the context. Cross the fingers (9)

Enacting a skit:

An interesting activity which learners would love to participate is enacting a skit. The instructor can choose a context from the novel and ask the students to prepare a skit which is more relevant to their real-life situation. An excerpt from the text be provided for better understanding. Students should understand the situation and translate it to their experiences.

Example: Dad came in my room to see what was going on. I told dad that mom was making me sign up for the school play, and that if I had to start going to play practices, it would totally mess up my weight- lifting schedule. I knew that would make dad take my side. Dad and mom argued for a few minutes, but dad was no match for mom.(p.96)

Identifying the page numbers of the given phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions:

Phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions of the type can be given to the students and ask them to locate them in the text, while doing so they need to explain the context in which these phrases are used in the text. An exercise to find the meanings and the usage of the same in their own sentences can also be added so that students remember them better. This activity can be conducted as a quiz dividing the class into teams.

Example: Hangout (Pg 16), take someone under the wing (pg.19), pull on someone (pg 19) fall to pieces (pg 27)..

Cloze- test:

It is always essential to assess the comprehension of the learners. Cloze test is the one of the suggested ways to the assessment. An excerpt from the text can be supplied to students in which the phrasal verbs are removed. The learners must fill the blanks with the apt phrasal verbs.

It's getting really annoying to have ---¹--- Rowley's every time I want to pay a video game. There's this weird kid (...). Fregley is always -----²---- in his front yard. So it is pretty hard to avoid him.(pg 28)

1. go up to
2. hanging out

Class Quiz by students:

Students can be given the task of listing the phrasal verbs and the idiomatic expressions. They will be given the opportunity to conduct the quiz. The questions will be prepared by themselves. The class can be divided into A,B,C,D teams. Each team will be given the chance to ask the questions. When team A asks the questions, other three teams will answer the question. If the questions remain unanswered, even after passing among the teams B,C,D, then team A will get the marks. In the other teams will get the chance in turns.

Memorizing exercise:

The teacher can give five to ten phrasal verbs, from the text, ask the students to use them in their daily conversation for two to three days and then ask them to note them in the class notes meant for recording the daily exercises. After the given time teacher can check the notebooks and award the marks. The students should share the instances where they made use of the phrasal verbs.

Learning to characterise:

The students must describe the characters or a real-life situation . The choice of the characters and situations can be left to the discretion of the students. The phrasal verbs in the text can be used to describe the characters. The teacher can supply the phrasal verbs and idiomatic expressions relevant for describing the characters.

Example: To mop the floor(pg 27), snuck out (Pg 32), bail out (pg52), Cutting corners (pg 55), getting grounded: (pg.60), Set off (pg.77), Handy down the road(pg.86), piped up: (pg.94), Just cut (pg.99), Get to bean (pg.99), A bone to pick with(pg.100) tripped over (pg 105)

Identifying phrasal for the given situation:

The class should be divided into teams, one team will describe the situation from the novel and the other team should relate apt phrasal verb.

Example: Greg finds his brother attending the school function in which the former has a role to play.

Page no: 106 – Peeking through, check out.

Mime activity.

Divide the class into two teams give a phrasal verb for one team and ask them to enact it so that the other team will identify the phrasal verb.

Verb and phrasal verb:

The class can be divided into teams, one team gives the verb to a team the other should read out all the phrasal verbs related to the given verb in a time limit of 1minute.

Phrasal verbs associated with a given particle.

This activity can also be conducted in teams. One team gives the particle (preposition/ adverb). The other teams should read out the phrasal verbs associated with the particle.

Memory game:

The teacher display's some phrasal verbs on the screen, students should not note them down in their notebooks, instead they should try to remember them. After one minute the teacher removes them from the screen, the teams should memorize the phrasal verbs reading them loudly. The team which reads out the phrasal verb which has not been read out by other teams will be given the marks. If team A reads 3 phrasal verbs team B 5 of which three are the same as team A then team B will get only 2 marks.

Sitcom:

Students must be given time to read the text and create sitcom and enact in the classroom. This is also a team activity, so students feel interested to participate.

Cartoon depiction:

Students can be given time to draw a cartoon to the phrasal verbs. The cartoons drawn by the students can be displayed in the classroom.

Narrating the experience:

Students can be asked to describe their experiences.

- with their best friend modelling the example from the novel (Greg's friend Rowley) borrowing relevant phrases from the novel.

- In school sports and games.
- School elections.
- Annual day function.

Election:

In the novel there is a reference to school, election. The students can be given the activity like choosing class representative and other roles that are apt for a through class election. Students can context for different roles and conduct campaign in the class. The phrasal verbs in the novel can be used as per the relevance.

Different situations in the novel:

The instructor can ask the students to prepare questions on different situations in the novel that can be compared to real life situations. Use the phrasal verbs and idioms from the novel - Example: Cheese touch, Bullying, Sweet memories with siblings and cousins.

Writing Review:

Students should be taught to write the review for the novel. As the novel is a simple and much relevant to them, they can well appreciate it. This can be used as a writing activity.

Preparing the prompts:

Students should prepare some prompts from the novel and exchange them with other teams for presentation. The teams will discuss on the prompts, handed over to them by the other team. The choice of selecting the presenter will be given to the team that prepares the prompt. The instructor along with the rest of the class will be the audience. Peer feedback is given due importance. The choice of speaking keeps scrolling in the teams.

Conclusion:

The aim of any pedagogy is to make learning interesting and make learners pay more attention. The texts like **Dairy of a Wimpy Kid Hefley's Journal** can be used a resource to yield better results for teaching complex language devices like phrasal verbs and idiomatic express.

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