

# A Comparison between Traditional and Gamified Teaching Methods for Phrasal Verb: A Case of Grade 10 Students

**Wachiraporn Kijpoonphol**

*Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand*

**Wichian Phumchanin**

*Ubon Ratchathani University, Thailand*

## Abstract

In English teaching classes, teachers use some teaching methods that may have positive or negative impacts on students' learning attitudes. The purposes of this study were 1) to compare the differences between a traditional and gamified teaching methods in terms of understanding and remembering phrasal verbs and 2) to investigate students' learning satisfaction in learning with two different teaching styles and to discover which game was more satisfactory and appropriate helping the students memorize the phrasal verbs. Two classes of 10th grade students studying at a secondary school in Thailand were chosen from 15 classes by considering the mean scores of the preliminary test. Class 1 was a control group; Class 2 was an experimental group. Pre-post tests and a questionnaire were used to collect the data. Due to two different styles of teaching, the number of questions of both groups was different. Four more questions were included on the questionnaire for the experimental group. There were three lessons which last one hour each provided to each group. The results of the tests showed that Class 2 performed better than Class 1. The mean score of the control group was 5.50 while the higher mean score of the experimental group was 8.14. The significant difference between both groups was at 0.01 level. The results from the questionnaire illustrated that they were more satisfied with the traditional teaching method than the experimental group even though the posttest scores of the control group were lower than the experimental group's. The results also indicated that the two games could be effective materials for teaching phrasal verbs. In addition, the gamified teaching style obviously encouraged the 10th grade students to understand more phrasal verbs.

**Keywords:** game teaching method, phrasal verb, vocabulary learning, grade 10 students

## Introduction

English has been widely taught in Thai educational system from year to year. Nowadays, this language is still considered as an important and compulsory subject for all Thai students at different levels of Thai education. It can be said that they are required to study it since attending the first grade at school. However, most of them are still not successful in learning English. In fact, there are a wide range of factors or influences toward their English skills. One of those is that they do not have adequate knowledge of vocabulary. According to Huyen and Nga (2003), in terms of learning a foreign language, the knowledge of vocabulary is an important element which links the four English skills. They also added that students are supposed to acquire a proper number of words and also know how they are used in various contexts appropriately.

When learning a word, the learners are required to realize what they are supposed to think of. According to Darfilal (2014), vocabulary is a basic skill in learning English, particularly for beginners who try to put their effort into knowing words as much as they can. The teacher might use all his or her experience to teach this skill in different styles. However, it is very important for him or her to consider teaching methods that will facilitate students' learning. This is the reason why the knowledge of vocabulary of phrasal verbs is also very important part for Thai students to understand more English sentences. That is, when some English verbs are combined with a preposition or an adverb, the meaning of the word could be different from its original meaning. Thus, the phrasal verbs create an important aspect of the English language and are inevitable part of everyday English (Walter, 1997). If the students have more knowledge of phrasal verbs, they will be able to adapt it to their English examination or daily lives. However, as Bronshteyn and Gustafson (2015) mentioned the phrasal verbs are unpredictable because the meanings can sometimes

be literal, aspectual, or idiomatic. Moreover, they are inherently difficult for learners to master.

#### *Short and long term memories in language learning*

Basically, language input becomes an intake or element of the short-term memory of learners. This is consciously attended and learned by the language learner. When structures and vocabulary become an uptake or part of the long-term memory, it is considered as sub-consciousness and acquirement. Thus, the uptake means the proficiency level of the learner. For one important thing to do, teachers should provide the comprehensible input as much as possible to the students, that is, both listening and reading. The more the students are exposed to the comprehensible input, the more likely the language will become uptake and make its way to the long-term memory. It also means using some techniques to teach students English is very necessary helping them deeply understand what they have studied in the class. Technically, the teachers are supposed to somewhat make the students' knowledge of new vocabulary become uptake which is part of the long-term memory.

#### *Phrasal verbs*

Phrasal verbs are a combination of "a verb + particle" which functions as a single verb (Bronshsteyn & Gustafson, 2015). They are categorized in many ways by several scholars. For instance, Hook (1981) and Walter (1997) classified them into two major types: intransitive phrasal verbs that do not need an object and transitive phrasal verbs that need an object for complete meaning. In contrast, in term of meaning, phrasal verbs are classified into literal and figurative or idiomatic meanings (McArthur, 1992).

#### *Using games in English teaching class*

Greenall (1990) defined 'game' as an element of competition between individual students or teams in a language activity. Games are, in this case, emphasized to encourage students' solidarity in teamwork in which they have to try their best to do the tasks or maybe to code any requirements given in the games for their team spirit. Byrne (1995) argued that a game is a form of playing which is controlled by rules. They are supposed to be enjoyable and fun. They are not just a diversion or a break from routines, but a way of getting the learners to use the language in the course. The games were used in the study to make the students try their best to compete with their friends and have more creativity of using language. Games encourage creative and spontaneous use of language )Chen, 2005(. In addition, teachers are also motivated by games to create contexts in which the language is meaningful and useful )Wright, Betteridge & Buckby, 2005(.

Language games can be classified into several ways. One of the interesting classifications was from Hadfield )1984( which classified them into two types. The first one emphasized on linguistic: accuracy and communicative games. By using these games, the focus was on exchanging information. Moreover, the games were classified into more detailed forms. The first group is related to sorting, ordering or arranging games. The teacher gives students a set of cards with months; they have to arrange those cards in order. The second is related to information gap games. Students having information have to exchange it with those who do not have it to complete a task. The third is about guessing games. Students with a flash card must mime it to others who try to guess the word. The fourth is searching games. By using these games, every student is given a clue to find out who the criminal is. They ask and reply to solve the problem. The fifth is matching games. Students need to find a correct match for a word, picture or card. The sixth is labeling games. It is a form of matching games; the only difference is that they match labels and pictures. The seventh is exchanging games. Students barter cards, objectives or ideas. The eighth is board games. The last one is role playing games: students play roles that they might not do in their real life.

According to Darfilal )2014(, language games are classified into four categories: listening games, speaking games, kinetic games and experimental games. For listening games, to make students enjoy listening, the teacher needs to bring it closer to them. A good way for the use of listening games is to maintain the student's attention and interest. For speaking games, they can be used at any time, especially as a follow-up to the previous listening to reinforce vocabulary and expression heard earlier. Their main aim is to make speaking and expressing ideas orally enjoyable. For kinetic games, they provide refreshment in the class, especially when students are getting tired and find it difficult to concentrate. They always need to be joined with another activity of reading, listening or speaking. The last one is

experimental games. Their real aim is not to win or complete a language task but to experience the process and learn from it.

Typically, most of the games require the students to work in group. However, two types of games – a matching game and a search game – were adapted to use in the study. These two types of games are involved with students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic. As Florea (2011) mentioned, the most common methods of student learning are these modalities. By using them, the teacher facilitates better learning. Especially for the students who are kinesthetic, allowing students to have actions are the best method of learning. The teacher prepares the reading text on the card for visual students and also reads aloud for the auditory students.

#### *Previous studies*

Huyen and Nga (2003) conducted the research on learning vocabulary through games in Vietnam by applying games in their own classes, observing other teachers' classes and interviewing both teachers and learners to explore the students' reactions, feeling and effectiveness of games in vocabulary learning. Twenty participants were participated in the study. The games used were Hangman (guessing words that related to the topic of jobs), Animal squares (words puzzle) and Advertisement poster competition (making an advertisement for a travel tour). The study was based on the communicative language teaching (CLT). The results showed that learning vocabulary through games is an effective and interesting way which can be applied in any classrooms. In addition, the researchers suggested that games are used not only for joy, but for the useful practice and review of language lessons.

The next study was relatively similar to the study of Huyen and Nga (2003) (but there were some differences of procedure. Chirandon et al (2009) studied the effects of teaching English through games on Thai students who studied in grade six at a high school in Thailand. There were 30 students who were selected by purposive sampling. The instruments consisted of a test and a questionnaire. Fourteen lesson plans were used to teach six different topics. In addition, nine types of games were implemented, for example, Hello Game and Nice to meet you, Who am I and missing information, Quick questions and answers and Searching questions and answers) conversation games (as well as Whispering games, Giving clues and fishing and Fishing) vocabulary games. The findings revealed that the students had significantly improved the vocabulary knowledge and had ability to communicate. Furthermore, they tended to have more positive attitudes toward learning English through games. It was recommended that using games in teaching English is beneficial to beginners. However, teachers are supposed to consider deliberately when selecting appropriate games to be used. This is because students with different learning styles and English ability performed differently when many types of games were used differently.

Wang et al (2011) studied the effects of using games on the improvement of children's English proficiency in relation to motivation; vocabulary acquisition; and anxiety due to peer pressure. Fifty grade six EFL students studying at an elementary school in Taiwan were participated in the study. A questionnaire, interviews, and document collection were used. The major findings revealed that students had significant improvements in their learning motivation and vocabulary acquisition. In addition, their anxiety levels because of friend pressure were decreased when learning with games in the class. Other findings revealed that there was a significant relationship or difference in the usage of games and students' English performance, most notably with regards to proficiency levels. It was recommended that a control group which was covered by the traditional instruction and an experimental group should be inclusive to the next studies.

From the previous studies, it was found that using games in the language class is beneficial to the students. However, in choosing games, the teachers have to be very careful. Some games are suitable for some student levels. Too many games may make the students overwhelmed. This study was limited to two games in order to know their effects on students' learning. Therefore, the games which can enhance students' memorization and communicative skills were chosen. The first game, "Matching Game", adapted from Huyen and Nga (2003) was selected. Another game named "Search Game" adapted from the study of Chirandon et al (2009) was also used. These two games were used to find out how effective they could help 10<sup>th</sup> grade students understand and remember the phrasal verbs. Moreover, the recommendation of Wang et al (2011) was also concerned. This study then included a control group and an

experimental group.

### *Research Questions*

1. What are the differences between the traditional and gamified teaching methods in terms of understanding and remembering phrasal verbs?
2. What are the students' learning satisfaction in learning with traditional and gamified teaching methods? Which game is more satisfactory?

## **Methodology**

### *Participants*

The participants were students studying in grade 10 at a secondary school in Thailand. Initially, the students from 15 classes took a test for class selection. In every class, the students were mixed in terms of their proficiency and learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. Afterwards, two classes were chosen by considering the classes which received similar mean scores. Class 1 was a control group treated by the traditional teaching method; Class 2 was an experimental group run by the gamified teaching style.

### *Research instruments*

Three research instruments were employed: a test for class selection, a pre-posttest and a questionnaire.

### *A test for class selection*

The test was used to select the two classes as mentioned earlier. There were 20 items excerpted from the General Aptitude Test (GAT) in 2016 and 2017.

### *A pre-post test*

To compare the students' improvement in terms of their phrasal verb knowledge and ability to understand and remember the phrasal verbs, the pre-posttest was used. The test consisted of 12 items with three sets of phrasal verbs given in two different boxes. In other words, the four phrasal verbs were randomly selected from three categories of phrasal verbs "take", "look" and "get". The students had to choose the most appropriate phrasal verb for each item. The test was proved by an English native speaker and a university lecturer.

### *A questionnaire*

The questionnaire was used to check students' learning satisfaction in learning phrasal verbs. There were six same basic questions on both questionnaires. The questions were based on five factors of Topalaa and Tomozii (2013). The five factors used as indicators of learning satisfaction and the research purposes were: individual characteristics, material conditions and learning facilities, the teacher and the instructional activity, learning outcomes and learning environment. Due to two different styles of teaching, four more questions were included on the questionnaire for the experimental group. The questionnaire was tried out with a group of five students in order to see whether the questions were understandable. It provided five satisfaction levels: 5 = most satisfied, 4 = more satisfied, 3 = fairly satisfied, 2 = less satisfied and 1 = least satisfied so that the students could express their satisfaction scales differently.

### *Research Treatment*

First, the two classes were asked to take pretest. All of them had 20 minutes to complete their test. After the pretest was completed, three lessons based on phrasal verbs with "take," "look," and "get" were used in both groups. In the control and the experimental groups, method for teaching English known as 3Ps or PPP – presentation, practice, production – was used. During the first 15-minute part, there was the explanation of each phrasal verb along with the given examples in order that the students could learn how to use them correctly. For the next 5-minute time, they practiced pronouncing each phrasal verb by repeating up to the teacher. They were also randomly asked to give their own sentence with a provided phrasal verb.

Then, each group was participated in class activities that were the production part.

- Activities for the control group

When finishing each lesson, the students did two given exercises. The first exercise included one passage which was the story made up by the researcher. The students had to decide which phrasal verb was the most suitable and put it in eight given blanks. There were three different stories, namely, David’s Routine, The Summer Vacation and A Student’s Life for the three lessons. For the second one, the students had to choose the most appropriate adverb or preposition and put it in eight given blanks.

**- Activities for the experimental group**

For the experimental group, the two games were used. The first game called “Matching Game” provided the same content as in the first exercise of Class 1. Starting the game, the students had to work in groups of five. Each group got one set of phrasal verb cards. While playing the game, the sentence cards of phrasal verbs were shown up. Each group had to discuss with their teammates and make a decision choosing the most appropriate answer. One representative of the groups had to show up the answer. Then the correct answers were marked. The second game called “Search Game” was used to encourage the students to have communicative skill. A set of question cards containing phrasal verbs for each pair was carried. One of each pair had to choose a card and asked his or her partner question showing on the card. At the same time, the other tried to answer the partner as much as possible. Both students were needed to work together so that they could practice communicating more with each other.

As for the last process, the posttest was distributed to all the students of two classes. After the posttest process was completed, the questionnaire was also completed by the students.

*Data analysis*

In terms of marking the pretest and posttest, one correct answer is worth one mark. In both tests, there are 12 items entirely. The marks were analyzed to indicate the whole results of both tests and to find the mean scores, standard deviation and t-value. Aside from this, the questionnaire was also analyzed as percentages and mean scores to interpret the students’ satisfaction levels of both groups. The interpretation was as follow.

- 4.21 – 5.00 = Very satisfied
- 3.41 – 4.20 = More than satisfied
- 2.61 – 3.40 = Satisfied
- 1.80 – 2.60 = Partly satisfied
- 1.00 – 1.80 = Not at all satisfied

*Results*

To choose two classes for the teaching experiment, 15 classes of grade 10 students were evaluated by using the test for class selection. After comparing the scores of the entire classes, the two classes were finally selected for the treatment. As mentioned earlier, the students in each class were mixed in term of their learning styles: visual, auditory and kinesthetic. The scores of two classes were presented in Table 1.

Table 1 Scores of the test for class selection of two classes

Classes	N	Mean	SD	T-value	Sig. )2 tailed(
1	35	3.89	1.762	0.489	0.626
2	38	3.68	1.757		

Table 1 showed that the mean scores of two classes were relatively close. In other words, the results showed no significant difference between the two classes.

In order to answer the first research question, the pretest and posttest scores were statistically compared to see how different the results of both groups were before the pretest and after the posttest.

Table 2 Pretest and posttest scores of Class 1 (The control group)

Tests	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig. )2 tailed(
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Pretest	1.25	1.164	-12.119	0.000*
Posttest	5.50	1.796		

N = 32, \* Significant at 0.01 level

Table 2 showed that most of the students had some improvement in learning the phrasal verbs with the higher scores on the posttest. According to Table 2, the mean score of pretest was 1.25 out of 12. After the treatment, the mean score of test was higher with 5.50. Although most of the students got higher scores on the posttest, 47% of the students passed the posttest but the 53% still failed it. Since the p-value was lower than 0.05, the students showed measurable improvement in their phrasal verb knowledge after being taught.

Table 3 Pretest and posttest scores of Class 2 (The experimental group)

Tests	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig. tailed( )2
Pretest	1.65	1.211	-18.223	0.000*
Posttest	8.14	1.478		

N = 35, \* Significant at 0.01 level

According to Table 3, the students' improvement apparently increased after finishing all the lessons. The mean score of the pretest was 1.65 out of 12 which was also below the average score, similar to the control group while the one of the posttest was 8.14 which was greatly higher by 6.49. The scores indicated that every student could understand and remember more phrasal verbs so they performed very well and gained higher scores on the posttest. As the p-value was lower than 0.01, it can be said that the students showed improvement in their phrasal verb knowledge after learning in Class 2.

Table 4 Differences between Class 1 and Class 2 pretest scores

Tests	Classes	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig. tailed( )2
Pretest	1	32	1.25	1.164	-1.400	0.166
	2	35	1.65	1.211		

Comparing the results of pretest, either the control group or the experimental group had the ability of English at the same level. As shown in Table 4, the mean score of the control group was 1.25 and the experimental group was 1.66. In other words, there was no the significant difference between both groups. This shows that both groups' knowledge of phrasal verbs was no very different for the specific treatment. It could be also said that both classes were taught by the same teaching methods from their high school English teachers.

Table 5 Differences between Class 1 and Class 2 posttest scores

Tests	Classes	N	Mean	SD	T-Value	Sig. tailed( )2
Posttest	1	32	5.50	1.796	-6.599	0.000*
	2	35	8.14	1.478		

\* Significant at 0.01 level

It was found that the experimental group with the gamified teaching style performed better than another class with the traditional teaching method. According to Table 5, the mean score of the control group was 5.50 while the higher mean score of the experimental group was 8.14. The difference between the two groups in the posttest mean scores were highly significant ( $p < .01$ ). Thus, it could be concluded that the game-teaching method could enhance students' knowledge of phrasal verbs rather than students who were treated by using the traditional teaching style.

To answer the research question 2, the questionnaire was collected to find the differences of satisfaction levels between the control group and the experimental group as well as which game was more satisfactory.

**Table 6 Numbers of student responses and average rating**

No	Questions	Classes	Satisfaction Levels					Mean
			5	4	3	2	1	
1	You like this style of teaching.	1	5	18	8	1	0	3.84
		2	5	12	15	3	0	3.54
2	This class is useful for your daily life.	1	18	10	3	1	0	4.40
		2	10	18	7	0	0	4.08
3	This class made you understood more phrasal verbs.	1	11	14	6	1	0	4.09
		2	9	13	12	1	0	3.85
4	You want to have more sets of phrasal verbs.	1	8	17	6	1	0	4.00
		2	5	12	13	4	1	3.45
5	You are satisfied with studying 8 phrasal verbs for each lesson.	1	16	10	5	1	0	4.28
		2	12	10	13	0	0	3.97
6	You want to have the next session of teaching.	1	15	12	4	1	0	4.28
		2	11	18	5	1	0	4.11

From Table 6, it was found that the students in Class 1 was satisfied with the traditional teaching style at a more than satisfied level (average mean score = 3.84). The satisfaction level of Class 2 students was at the same level as Class 1. However, the average mean score was lower than Class 1 (average mean score = 3.54). Most of Class 1 students agreed that the class was beneficial for their daily life with the mean score of 4.40. For Class 2, the mean score was lower with 4.08.

The satisfaction percentage of understanding more phrasal verbs in Class 1 was 78% while the fewer students of another group thought that they understood more with 63%. It showed that Class 1 students thought that the traditional exercises helped them learned more. In term of the number of phrasal verb sets, 78% of the students were satisfied

with having more sets of phrasal verbs while the experimental group's percentage was 48%. It indicated that Class 1 students agreed that there should be more sets of phrasal verbs. Even though their scores of posttest were lower, it seemed like they wanted to study more than the experimental group.

On the fifth question, the mean score for Class 1 students' satisfaction toward studying 8 phrasal verbs for each lesson was at the very satisfied level with the mean score of 4.28. For Class 2, the students' satisfaction was lower. Their satisfaction toward studying 8 phrasal verbs for each lesson was at more than satisfied level with the mean score of 3.97. Lastly, Class 1 students who were satisfied with having this kind of teaching class were at very satisfied level. The mean score was 4.28. However, Class 2 students' satisfaction was at more than satisfied level. It was much lower than Class 1 students' mean score.

**Table 7 Numbers of Class 2 student responses and average rating**

No	Questions	Satisfaction Levels					Mean
		5	4	3	2	1	
1	You like the first game of each lesson.	9	1 8	7	1	0	4.00
2	You like the second game of each lesson.	8	1 6	1 1	0	0	3.91
3	You prefer studying phrasal verbs in a traditional class to in a gamified teaching class.	4	5	1 6	9	1	3.05
4	You prefer studying phrasal verbs in a gamified teaching class to a traditional class.	9	1 7	9	0	0	4.00

To answer which game was more satisfactory, there were four additional questions in the questionnaire of the experimental group aside from the seven same questions used in both groups as shown in Table 7. For the first game of each lesson, the mean score for Class 2 students was 4.00. There were 77% of them who was satisfied with the game. The mean score for Class 2 students liking the second game of each lesson was 3.91 while the mean score for the second game preference was 3.91 which was lower than the first one. It could be concluded that most of the students preferred the 'Matching Game' to the 'Search Game.' It was possibly because they worked in group unlike the second game that they needed to actively work in pair.

Asking about which type of class they preferred, the mean score for Class 2 students who preferred studying phrasal verbs in a traditional class was 3.05. In an enjoyable way of learning, the mean score for Class 2 students who preferred studying phrasal verbs in a gamified teaching class was 4.00. This certainly confirmed that most of the students preferred studying the phrasal verbs with games.

### *Discussion*

The study showed that the mean score of the experimental group's posttest was significantly higher than the pretest. This result reflected that most of the students could understand and remember more phrasal verbs after finishing all the lessons. Hence, the two games were part of helping them gaining the higher scores on the posttest. The first game named 'Matching Game' implemented in the experimental group was adapted from the study of Huyen and Nga (2003). The results of the present study supported their results. According to their study, students successfully performed on their study. In addition, the students of both studies were collaborating relatively actively while playing the game that required the group work, even the quiet students. This was because the students had a chance to use their creativity and imagination during the activity. Therefore, they were motivated to learn (Domke, 1991). For the second game of the study adapted from the study of Chirandon et al (2009), the students relatively performed well. Comparatively, the results of this study supported the results of Chirandon et al (2009)'s study. Both studies' results

were going to the same positive way. Thus, it can be stated that the two games were effective for the students' phrasal verb learning and should be strongly recommended and considered for using in the English class.

Comparing between the game which was used to promote students' memorization and students' communicative skills, the first one was more preferable. It may be caused from in the Matching Game the students had to help each other to find the best answer, compete with other groups and share their ideas with friends. As Florea (2011) emphasized, the four modalities of learning are important in learning the language. In the real classroom setting, the gamified teaching involved with students' visual, auditory and kinesthetic may be one of the best choices that suits the class of students with different modalities of learning.

With the traditional style of teaching in the control group, the students could not perform well on the posttest with the mean score of 5.5 out of 12. The result differed from the experimental group that had the mean score of 8.14. However, although the posttest scores of the control group were lower than the experimental group's, the mean score of Class 1 on the method of teaching was higher. When comparing with the opposite group, although their posttest scores were higher, the mean score of their satisfaction for studying in the game teaching class was lower. This implied that the mean score of satisfaction may be from the students' familiarity of the learning method. Also the students in Class 1 may have only one perspective of the teaching method. When the students in the experimental group rated each question in the questionnaire, they may compare it with the traditional way of learning. As they were familiar with the traditional teaching, they may not be familiar with the new teaching style.

However, considering the results from the Class 2 students in Table 7, it was found that the students were more satisfied with learning with the gamified teaching method than the traditional method. While learning with the game teaching style, the students had to be active and creative and spontaneously use of language (Chen, 2005).

#### *Recommendations for further studies*

As the study was conducted, there are some points that are supposed to be discovered. First, there should be more sets of phrasal verbs in the next study to find out how different the results might change. Furthermore, the next study could be adapted by using other games to discover the differences of both groups' results and the effectiveness of the games used in the study. Finally, the study was taught for a short period of time and did not measure the students' long-term memory. The next study is supposed to be evaluated based on the long-term memory.

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### About the Authors

*Wachiraporn Kijpoonphol* is a lecturer in the MA Teaching English program, Faculty of Liberal Arts, Ubon Ratchathani University. Her interests include language learning strategies and e-learning and teaching. She can be reached at [wachiraporn.k@gmail.com](mailto:wachiraporn.k@gmail.com).

*Wichian Phumchanin* is an English tutor of a private company. His interests include teaching vocabulary and language learning strategies.