

## EXPLICATING THE COMPLEXITY OF PHRASAL VERBS: THE TASK OF CORPUS LINGUISTICS

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**ABSTRACT:** *Phrasal verb is one of the complex vocabulary types in English which English as Second Language learners find difficult to master due to its idiomaticity. The focus of this study is to investigate the relationship that exists between the phrasal verbs presented in senior high school (SHS) students' course books and those that are found in real contexts of usage (corpus). The study is a corpus-based study as it seeks to explore an existing corpus to substantiate an assertion (Tognini-Bonelli, 2001). Accordingly, a reference corpus is the basis for the comparison. Apart from finding the relationship between the two sets of data, the distribution of the phrasal verbs in the senior high school course books is critically assessed. The data was a secondary one: SHS students' course books and the British National Corpus (BNC). The data is quantitatively analysed with little qualitative analysis, and the results, thematically presented. The findings indicate that there is a huge disparity in terms of number and composition of phrasal verbs in the two sets of data (SHS course books and the British National Corpus). The topic is under-presented in the course books and thus, a probable reason for students' abysmal performance on the topic and in the subject in general. Aside from that, the presentation of the concept in the students' course books does not facilitate learning since they are presented in out-of-context instances. The recommendations made are that corpora should be indirectly used (be the basis of course book materials) for teaching the concept and the subject as a whole since it presents authentic language usages which make learning meaningful and useful. Teachers of English ought to be abreast of corpora usages in order for them to explore them and use them as reference material for their teaching.*

**KEYWORDS:** *phrasal verbs, corpus linguistics, language teaching and learning,*

## INTRODUCTION

The knowledge of a language is highly dependent on the user's knowledge of the vocabulary of the language. Thus, in the learning of a second language (L2) or a foreign language (FL), vocabulary forms an essential element in understanding all situations (Folse, 2010 cited in Hou, 2014). Apart from knowing the sounds of a language, vocabulary knowledge is the next required element of every learner before one advances to the grammar of the language. A learner's lack of vocabulary in a language leads to language inhibition which results in students' reticence and, therefore, lack of proficiency in the language. Meanwhile, proficiency attainment is one expectation in language learning since language is basically meant for speaking.

Generally, it is recognised that English is rich in vocabulary. This richness is partly due to the complex and heterogeneous nature of the vocabulary which comprises such components as idiomatic expressions, phrasal verbs, phrasal prepositional verbs, and collocation. Phrasal verbs are one of the commonest vocabulary which appears often in spoken and written discourses. Li et al. (2000: 513) present that “Phrasal verbs are an important feature of the language since they form about one third of the English verb vocabulary.” They are combinations of verbs and prepositions (either one or two), yet the meaning of the combined structure does not denote any meaning of the individual constituents. This feature makes phrasal verbs possess some degree of idiomaticity (Dirven, 2001 quoted in Yasuda, 2010) thereby making it one of the challenging vocabulary to master as one attempts to attain proficiency in the English language. The difficulty it poses due to its idiomatic nature compels students to use Latinate verb forms as an alternative to phrasal verbs at certain times (Dempsey, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007). Schimitt (2007) and Crutchley (2007) (quoted in Yasuda, 2010) support that the phrasal verb is one of the challenging vocabulary to master as one strives to achieve proficiency in the English language.

This difficulty may result from the issue that its meaning as used in context is to be deduced. Apart from the fact that deducing meaning of phrasal verbs is unpredictable and thus poses a challenge to learners, some learners’ first language (L1) background contributes to their difficulty in mastering the topic. This is because phrasal verbs may not exist in the learners’ first language, therefore, they lack the skills and strategies to construct and understand them in the English language (Biber et al. 1999; Liao and Fukuya, 2004, and Neagu 2007). This is exactly the situation with Ghanaian learners of English; the structure does not exist in the various Ghanaian languages of learners of English so they find it difficult to use let alone to master it.

Attempts to overcome this and other related problematic topics in the teaching and learning of the English language in Ghanaian schools have generated a lot of debates as to how to handle the situation. Many have attributed the situation to teachers’ approaches and methods of teaching and have suggested the adoption of some contemporary methods of teaching, which is the Communicative Approach to teaching (Okoh, 2017). On the other hand, the situation has been linked to the techniques teachers employ in their lesson delivery. It has been proposed that learner-oriented techniques such as language games, role plays, dramatisation and brainstorming enhance learners’ participation in a lesson and eventually results in language proficiency. What seems to have been ignored is the contribution learners’ course books which are the first available learning materials for learners play in their learning of the English language.

The content of those materials play a crucial role in the learning process since students greatly rely on them; some teachers even rarely use other textbooks apart from the students’ course books. This stands to reason that whatever is presented in those course books should be a model of the native language. Unfortunately, the content of the course books appear not to be a replica of the native language. The writers of those books are not native speakers, though they are assumed scholars of the language. In language, disparity exists between nativity and scholarship as the former deals with one’s *knowledge of the language* as used in natural communicative situations and the latter, one’s *knowledge about the language* which deals more with the familiarization of

the rules of the language. Writers of course books thus greatly rely on intuition and anecdotal evidence of how native speakers use the language (Biber and Reppen, 2002). Meanwhile, intuition cannot be relied on since it may not be correct (Darwin & Gray, 2000). It cannot be disputed that a native speaker is much acquainted with the authentic use of a language than a scholar who may have learnt about the language but might not have attained native-like variety.

Course book writers rely on their intuition to produce those books and that signals that the authenticity of what is presented cannot be justified. Unfortunately, students consider those ones as the correct forms (Gabrielatos, 2005) and add them to the repertoire of their vocabulary.

Accordingly, the current study proposes a better option to present language items, especially phrasal verbs, to students; adoption of a contemporary and technological trend as proposed by many applied linguists. This new trend is the use of corpus linguistics as the basis of teaching in language classrooms. Using corpora to teach helps to reflect natural language which is devoid of intuition, thereby acquainting students with language items applicable to real life situations (Hunston, 2002). Also, using corpora implies that the great extent to which computer and technology is impacting on children and the youth especially, has been extended to language learning (Ergöl, 2014). It should be accepted that computing and technology is highly embraced by learners of this age and times thus the need to use the concept (corpora) to teach either directly or indirectly. The purpose of this paper is two-fold: to describe the relatedness of the phrasal verbs in students' course books and in corpora and to suggest means that teachers can employ to make the teaching and learning of phrasal verbs pragmatic and useful to learners. The rationale is to find out whether there is the need for corpora consultation in course book writings or whether reliance on intuition helps in the presentation of authentic materials in English as Second Language (ESL) situations.

The objectives of the study are to:

- ✓ compare the correlation that exists between the phrasal verbs in the British National Corpus and those in SHS students' course books;
- ✓ explore the presentation of phrasal verbs in learners' course books and
- ✓ ascertain the usefulness of corpora in the teaching and learning of phrasal verbs.

The study is guided by the following questions.

1. What is the correlation between the PVs found in the British National Corpus (BNC) and those found in the students' course books?
2. How are the phrasal verbs in students' course books presented?
3. In what way can corpus linguistics improve students' performance on the topic, phrasal verbs?

Statement of the problem

“Many times, the content of syllabus and course books are based on authors’ impressions and anecdotal evidence of how speakers and writers use the language” (Biber and Reppen 2002: 200) and how they perceive the language. Such intuitive and undependable presentation of the language defeat the purpose of teaching it (English); using it in meaningful situations. In an attempt to train learners to meaningfully use the language, there have been suggestions about the use of authentic materials to concretise concepts during teaching. The proposal of authentic use of materials to teach brings to bare the use of such pragmatic techniques as role play, dramatisation and language games. Unfortunately, those pragmatic strategies are just an epitome of the reality; the reality is what exists in corpora.

It has been proven by many scholars that there is much disparity between the representation of seeming problematic concepts or topics in students’ course books and in corpora. Notable of such studies are Grabowski and Mindt’s (1995) irregular verbs; Barlow’s (1996) reflexives; Jones’ (1997) discourse markers; Mindt’s (1997) futurity expressions; Jones’ (1997) and Romer’s (2004b) modal verbs; Jones’ (2000) on passive voice; Lorenz’s (2002) present perfect and Romer’s (2005) progressive verb forms. These studies concentrated on ascertaining the frequency of the items as well as the nature (composition) of the items in the two different texts. The outcomes indicated that there are great discrepancies between the way the items are presented in corpora and in course books.

Focusing on studies on phrasal verbs are the popular and common ones such as Courtney’s (1983) *Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, Sinclair and Moon’s (1989) (quoted in R  mer, 2011) *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, Spears’ (1993) (quoted in R  mer, 2011) *NTC’S Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs and other Idiomatic Verb Phrases* and Walter and Pye’s (1997) *Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*. All these works concentrate on identifying numerous examples of phrasal verbs in corpora as well as explaining and providing various contexts of their usages: as they are used in real situations.

Recent studies on phrasal verbs include Jackendoff (2002) who extensively worked on syntactic analysis of phrasal verbs, that is, the various permissible compositions of phrasal verbs. Dempsey, McCarthy and McNamara (2007) also considered how phrasal verbs can be used to determine text types or text genre. White (2012) worked on phrasal verbs but concentrated on how it could effectively be taught. Although all these studies have been conducted to reveal the way phrasal verbs are presented, few related works have been conducted on the correlation between the presentation of phrasal verbs in documents and in corpora. Works in this category are Gardner and Davis (2007) and Trebit (2009) who ascertain the relatedness of phrasal verbs in documents and corpora and show the huge difference between the way they exist in corpora and the documents.

Closely related to the current study is Kartal’s (2018) which explores the frequency of phrasal verbs in ELT course books that are used in Turkey and in corpora. His findings establish that the phrasal verbs in the course books are not the frequently used ones in the corpora. What distinguishes Kartal’s work from the current one is that he sets out to only find out whether the frequently used phrasal verbs in the corpora are those that are presented in the course books while this study seeks to find out, in addition to the frequency, the distribution of the concept in the

textbooks (in real context or in isolation). It is also necessary because the current study is situated in an ESL context whereas his is in an EFL context.

## LITERATURE REVIEW

A number of English language teachers have argued that multi word knowledge is essential for the development of native-like fluency in learners (Moon, 1997; Schmitt 2004; Wray, 2000 & Gardner and Davies, 2007). Examples of such multi word groups are idioms (bury the hatchet), phrasal verbs (give in), stock phrases (how do you do), prefabs (the point is that) which are essential to English because they greatly enrich the language. The enriched nature of the multi-words calls for its effective learning for students to be equipped with their uses. However, the effectiveness of how the multi-word is taught has been a great concern for many (Condon and Kelly 2002; Darwin and Gray, 1999 and Nesselhauf 2003). In some situations, the topic (multiword) is not taught at all probably because many language teachers are not much acquainted with it. In instances where they are taught, both teachers and students greatly rely on contents of students' course books.

Phrasal verb is a composition of a verb and one or more particles which function as a syntactic, idiomatic or semantic unit (Rudzka-Oslyn, 2003). Gardner and Davies (2007) consider phrasal verbs as structures between 'syntax and lexis' which are difficult to acquire, use and master due to their complex nature. Dempsey, McCarthy and McNamara (2007) describe phrasal verbs as idiomatic in nature, thus challenging for students to generate and use. Following the varied descriptions of the concept, *phrasal verb* by the scholars, one thing is obvious; it is not a single lexical item and its meaning cannot be easily determined. Determining their meanings is highly dependent on such factors as their contexts and one's familiarity with a particular phrasal verb. This explains why some scholars (Liao and Fukuya, 2004, Gardner and Davies 2007) address the issue of students' challenge in mastering them. In this study, phrasal verb is described as a group of two or more words with a lexical verb as its base and other adverbial particles.

Many linguists have done varied studies on phrasal verbs due to their complex nature. Bolinger (1971) sets out to ascertain three main issues in relation to characterizing and classifying phrasal verbs based on semantic considerations. These three specifics are finding out appropriate single words to replace phrasal verbs; ascertaining the possibility of separating phrasal verbs and exploring the sort of meanings phrasal verbs denote and connote.

Biber et al (1999) attempt categorizing phrasal verbs based on their composition. They thus produced such fuzzy classes of the phrasal verbs as prepositional verbs, phrasal prepositional verbs and free combination. Their work does not elucidate the concept in any respect since it was just about classification.

In another work on the classification of phrasal verbs, Darwin and Gray (1999), in much the same way as Biber et al (ibid), attempt to put phrasal verbs into different categorizations based on the various compositions of phrasal verbs. As has been indicated earlier, such classifications do not contribute to the understanding of the users of the language. We believe that, in an attempt to help users understand and be able to use phrasal verbs, much still needs to be done beyond a mere classification of the concept.



It is in line with exploring authentic use of phrasal verbs that a number of detailed works on the concept (phrasal verbs) based on corpus linguistics has been produced by many scholars. The popular and common ones among those numerous works include Courtney's (1983) *Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, Sinclair and Moon's (1989 quoted in Romer, 2011) *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*, Spears' (1993 quoted in Romer, 2011) *NTC'S Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs and other Idiomatic Verb Phrases* and Walter and Pye's (1997) *Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*. All these works concentrate on identifying numerous examples of phrasal verbs in corpora. Their works transcend just identification of the concept to include their explanations as well as provisions of contexts of their usages: as they are used in real situations.

Relatively, current studies on phrasal verbs on corpora are Davies and Gardner's (2007) and Trebit's (2009) which explore the dominant phrasal verbs in documents vis-a-vis their existence in corpora. In both works, there exists disparity between the ways the concept is presented in the documents as against their presentation in corpora. What that implies is that those found in the documents are not language of native speakers and were thus generated based on intuition. The relatedness of the current study with Gardner and Davies' (2007) lies in the fact that both have pedagogical implication: establishing what to teach as far as phrasal verbs are concerned.

### **What is Corpus Linguistics?**

The history of corpus linguistics can unofficially be traced as far back as the 1960s. However, the concept was officially accepted as a sub-discipline of linguistics in the 1980s (Leech, Hunst, Mair and Smith 2009 quoted in Hou, 2014). Gabrielatos (2005) reports that many English language teachers' attention was drawn to the concept in the year 1987 following the publication of *Collins Cobuild's English Language Dictionary* which happens to be the first corpus-based dictionary for learners. This is not to suggest that attempts had not been made to popularize the concept since scholars such as McKay (1980), Higgins and Johns (1984), and many others (Johns, 1986; Leech, 1986 and Sinclair, 1991 quoted in Trebit, 2009) had made earlier proposals on the usefulness of the concept to Language teaching.

The awareness and the acceptability of the concept in the late 1980s have been followed by a considerable number of studies on corpus research. Subsequently, many studies on corpus linguistics have been published to aid language teaching in diverse mediums. Many of the studies are geared towards language teaching and learning: contextualization of the use of language with a few on the structure and the use of language. Popular among these studies are Biber et al's (1998), Kennedy's (1999) McEnery and Wilson's (2001), Hunston's (2002), McEnery, Xiao and Tono's (2005), Darwin and Gray's (1999), Ngula and Nartey (2014) and many more. Following this short history about the concept, it appears evident that corpora can be very useful for teaching and learning of languages, especially, the English language. It is noted for its authentic nature as regards language teaching and learning.

Since the word, *corpus*, is embedded in corpus linguistics, attention to what corpus linguistics is serves as precedence to the understanding of what constitutes a corpus (plural corpora). McEnery and Wilson (1996: 1) explain corpus linguistics as "the study of language based on examples of

real life language use.” This implies the concept advocates for concretization of language material which is highly commended in language learning. Corpus linguistics transcends using close to reality instances to teach language to using real instances to teach. Leech et al (2009:24), on the other hand, succinctly define corpus linguistics as “the study or analysis of language through the use of (computer) corpora.” Both definitions point to language analysis. However, the latter definition views the concept in a very modern sense where corpus linguistics and computer are inseparable and that has been corpus linguistic: using computer to analyse a corpus.

McEnery and Wilson (2001:197) define a corpus in a very liberal term as, “any body of text”, meaning it is any collection or compilation of texts, either spoken or written. Corpus can thus be described as a collection of authentic language items. It must be noted that modernity has modified what constitutes a corpus. Accordingly, a corpus is perceived as “a body of machine-readable text” (McEnery and Wilson, 2001: 197), that is, a corpus is in electronic form and thus comprises a large collection of language. The modern corpus can be easily manipulated since other language items can be added at any opportune time. A distinction ought to be drawn between corpora and text archives. The two seem similar but are different.

Leech (1991:11) indicates that “the difference between an archive and a corpus must be that the latter is designed for a particular “representative” function.” Contrastively, an archive or database is just “a text repository, often huge and opportunistically collected and normally, not structured” (Kennedy, 1998:4). Corpora, thus, appear to be a collection of language which was meticulously compiled to serve as a representative of a variety of language or a specific genre. With archives, the collection is not meticulously done; it can be a lump of works, several genres or works by a particular author kept for records sake. So, whereas corpora focus much on representativeness, archives do not in any way consider that. The issue of representativeness is crucial to corpora since it captures the attempt to compile a database that provides a statistically viable sample of language use in general (Mukherjee, 2006:5).

Though practicalising the concept of representativeness in corpus design is a controversial one, (Biber, 1993) says it still cannot be ignored. This is because it is only by ensuring a text’s representativeness that the use of corpora can yield reliable outcomes in its usage. In that respect, a high level of assumption is exercised on the concept (representativeness) because until a corpus is perceived as a representative of a language, extrapolation of findings in a corpus will not be wholly accepted or cannot be generalized. Therefore, the issue of representativeness in a corpus design or in working with corpora is closely related.

### **Corpus Linguistics as a Method of Teaching vrs Other Methods of Teaching**

In English as Second Language (ESL) and English as Foreign Language (EFL) regions, much concern has been raised about the need for helping learners to acquire or reach an appreciable standard of proficiency. That notwithstanding, a conclusive and a better method of teaching the language has not been sought and thus the general aim of teaching English in many non-native regions, especially in Ghana, has not been met. Evidence of that is the outcome of candidates’ performance in the English language paper of the West Africa Secondary Schools Certificate

Examinations (WASSCE) over the years and the way some educated people struggle to hold discussions in the language. Apart from that, it has been recorded that students' fluency level in the language is unappreciable. In an attempt to sojourn this situation, many methods and approaches to teaching the language have been suggested and implemented. It is in the pursuit of an effective teaching method that the Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) was in vogue in the 1980's to replace such methods as the Grammar Translation, Direct and Audio-Lingual ones.

The Communicative Language Teaching (CLT) method was wholly welcomed by many language teachers since it seeks to shift focus from the teacher dominating classroom to a learner centred one. The basis of the method (CTL) is that the employment of practical techniques such as role play, language games and other activities compel learners to use the language in a relaxed manner. Due to the use of learner-centred techniques, the method appears to aid in the concretisation of concepts learnt. What should be noted is the techniques used in the method do not embody real language situations. Apart from the CLT, many other current teaching approaches and methods such as the Task-Based Language Teaching, Text-Based Language Teaching, Cooperative Language Teaching, Content-Based Language Teaching (Richards & Rodgers, 2014) and a host of others that are learner-fronted methods have been proposed and used by many. Unfortunately, it can be reliably indicated that none equates the use of corpora to teach. Corpora can be used as a method of teaching language since many activities could be done with them to result in gaining knowledge. That is not to suggest that using corpora as a method does not pose any challenge at all; it does, yet, it is better when compared with others (eg. CLT, TBLT).

Though the current approaches and methods have been used by many teachers of the language over decades, students' performance seems not to have improved. This could be attributed to the fact that content of language games and other techniques are based on teachers' intuition instead of attested language use, and students tend to pick intuitive models as the correct forms (Gabrielatos, 2005). Accordingly, we believe the use of corpora as a method of teaching will greatly help in the realization of the purpose for which language is to be taught: helping learners to develop their linguistic and communicative competences. The advantage of employing corpora in the language classroom is that it provides opportunity for learners to interact with authentic language. Apart from that, it provides authentic situation of language uses and positions students as 'explorers' of the language (Dodd 1997) who interact with authentic materials and sometimes discover learning themselves. With the students' interaction and exploration of language items, students' learn through the Discovery Learning Theory which makes learners responsible for their own learning. Considering the great impact of computer and technology in every facet of life, it is pertinent the impact is extended to language learning (Ergül 2014). The outcome of this type of learning is that learnt items become part and parcel of learners since they tend to tutor themselves.

Corpora can be used in two main ways for the benefit of learners. The first way is when students directly manipulate the corpora themselves in an attempt to discover learning themselves and the second is when students encounter products of corpora in 'refined' forms (texts written from corpora).



A good number of studies have been conducted on corpora and language teaching in diverse ways. Mukherjee (2006) concentrated on corpus linguistics and its indispensability in the language classroom. Much importance of the concept as regards language teaching was assessed in the work. He focused attention on three main pedagogical areas in English Language Teaching (ELT) for which corpus is relevant. The areas he identified include using corpus to design standardized learning materials such as dictionaries; using corpora as teaching and learning materials in ELT contexts where learners are made to discover learning concepts themselves and the third, using learners' materials to build corpus (compilation of learners' writings to constitute corpora). Mukherjee's (2006) is an eye opener as regards corpus linguistics and language pedagogy. His work is useful to this study since this one also aims at urging course book writers to rely on corpora to write their materials so as to bridge the gap between what exists in students' course books and what the reality is.

In another study on corpora and language teaching, Gabrielatos (2005) presents detailed tutorials on the concept. Whereas Gabrielatos positions readers as naive about the concept and thus presents detailed and chronological information about the concept, Mukherjee's is not a piece for naives. This is because Gabrielatos provides basics about the concept (what it is, the various types and how to create it) before engaging readers on how it could be utilised in various respects. His interest in doing that is to help many inexperienced teachers of the concept to be abreast of its relevance in ELT so to use it as teaching materials. He admits, despite the numerous advantages of using corpora as teaching resource in ELT, the concept has certain challenges which could be overcome if users are critical with its usage. The essence of Gabrielatos' work in this study is the fact that he promotes the significance of teachers' knowledge of the concept and their subsequent use of it in their teaching.

Romer's (2011) is a masterpiece on corpus and L2 teaching which presents a range of developments that have evolved in the field of corpus linguistics. He provides details of the various corpus studies that have been done since the development of the concept. The impact of corpus application in teaching on such aspects as grammar, vocabulary and phraseology are duly presented. The two main approaches of using corpora (direct and indirect) proposed by Leech (1997) are elaborately discussed. Concluding his study, he provides three main concerns which need attention for the successful application of corpora in language teaching. The concerns are addressing the needs of learners and teachers in the use of corpora, promoting indirect use of corpora whereby specialized corpora are used in creating dictionaries and grammar books and enhancing direct use of corpora by equipping teachers and learners with corpus data and tools. Though Romer's (2011) covers a wide tenet of the concept, it is significant in this study because both address the usefulness of corpora in simplifying and authenticating phraseology in English language. Also, both propose indirect use of corpora to produce teaching materials for students.

Chambers (2005) admits that researchers have proven corpora as an effective resource for language pedagogy although there seems no evidence of corpora being alternative to dictionaries, textbooks and other course books. He studied undergraduate students who were given the chance to explore

corpora to learn which undoubtedly proved that it is advantageous to language teaching. This, she supports, is because the concept (corpora) positions students as autonomous learners who take responsibilities of their own learning as they could make discoveries about language themselves. Accordingly, students tend to easily understand and remember learnt items easily as they take charge of their own learning.

Cheng, Warren and Xun-Feng (2003) strongly advocate the use of corpus linguistics as part of language curriculum timetable for graduate students of English. Employing Tim John's Data-Driven Learning approach, they placed learners as both researchers and learners to explore corpora in order to fulfil various tasks. From their reports, the students were successful in their use of language through corpora deployment as compared to their use of the traditional way of learning which is intuitive-based and teacher-fronted.

Shifting focus to studies on phrasal verbs and corpora, a related study to this work is Gardner and Davies' (2007) which explored the British National Corpus with the attempt to establish the phrasal verbs that are frequently used in authentic situations. Their study revealed that, out of the total of 518, 923 phrasal verbs in the corpus, only 100 of them are frequently used. Interestingly, only 20 lexical verbs combine with eight adverbial particles to result in 160 combinations. Semantic analyses of the 100 phrasal verbs show that 559 different meanings can be derived from the 100 most frequently used phrasal verbs identified in the BNC. Their study has pedagogical implications as it establishes the commonly used phrasal verbs in real contexts. Although their study establishes the frequency of phrasal verbs in documents as against those in corpora which is the intent of the current study, the latter considers the frequency of the phrasal verbs in corpora vis-a-vis their presentations in students' course books.

A more closely related work to the current study is Trebit's (2009). She sets out to ascertain the most frequent phrasal verbs in the European Union (EU) document vis-a-vis those in the British National Corpus (BNC). In addition to finding out the frequency of the phrasal verbs, she explored the semantics of the phrasal verbs found in the document. The study found twenty-five (25) frequently used phrasal verbs in the document and classified them as the most used phrasal verbs in the document. Those twenty-five verbs generally accounted for about 60% of all the phrasal verbs used in the document. Comparing the uses of the phrasal verbs in the document (EU) and in the BNC, it was realized that the way those phrasal verbs were used in the BNC have more semantic implications than they were used in the EU document. The study has strong pedagogical implications as well as implication for course designers.

The similarity between Trebit's and the current study is that they both set out to ascertain the most frequently used phrasal verbs in a particular document and compare them with how they are presented in the BNC. However, while Trebit's is on European Union (EU) document, the current study is on purely teaching material (learners' English course books). This positions the current study very pragmatic in achieving pedagogical effect.

## METHODOLOGY

The data for the study comprise Ghana senior high school students' English language course books and a reference corpus (the British National Corpus). Precisely, the selected books for the study are Gateway English Language Books 2 and 3; the book 1 is not included because it does not treat the topic under consideration. That brand of book is one of the accredited books which are approved by the Ghana Education Service (GES) and Ghana Association of Teachers of English (GATE) to be used at the senior high school level. The choice of that book as against the others was based on the fact that it is the most commonly used book at the senior high school level. About eighty percent of the schools in the Eastern and Central regions that the researcher contacted on their English course book selection use the Gateway brand. What informed the choice of schools in the two regions is that the researchers happened to know a number of English language teachers in those regions and it was thus easy to make that enquiry.

Apart from the book's popularity in many schools, it appears to be the brand that has survived market competition for a relatively long period. This may be attributed to the books' endorsement by Ghana Association of Teachers of English (GATE) and its association with Pearson Publishers. The books (2 & 3) are used in comparison with the British National Corpus (BNC) with the view to ascertaining the total number and the type of phrasal verbs that SHS graduates would be exposed to at the end of their three year programme which prepares them for tertiary education and sometimes for life in general. The essence of the comparison is to establish the relatedness of what students are exposed to in their course books and what obtains in reality.

The BNC is a one hundred million word composition of both written and spoken parts of British English which was constructed in the twentieth century. The corpus covers about four thousand (4000) samples from various text genres (Gardner and Davies, 2007). The grammatically tagged version of the BNC was used to ensure that lexical verbs and the adverbial particles were easily identified. The BNC is preferred over the other existing corpora because the variety of English used in Ghana is a British variety. Although in terms of phrasal verbs usage there might be the same across varieties of English, the researcher intended to use that variety because British English continues to be the standard variety of English used in Ghana.

The research design for this study is content analysis and corpus-based. Accordingly, the content of students' English course books is explored to ascertain the phrasal verbs used in them. Also, the BNC is analysed to ascertain the fifty (50) frequently used phrasal verbs and their relatedness with those used in the learners' course books. As indicated by Tognini-Bonelli (2001), corpus-based study aims at exploring texts in order to repudiate or approve of an assertion. Content analysis, on the other hand, will help to identify patterns in the texts (the course books).

The data is quantitatively and qualitatively analysed but the quantitative analysis takes precedence over the qualitative one. With the quantitative, the correlation between the phrasal verbs used in the BNC and those used in the students' course books is established.

For this study, we define phrasal verbs as two-part or three-part verbs in the BNC comprising a lexical verb (LV) followed by one or two adverbial particles which are either adjacent to the main verb or are separated by one or more intervening words. With this definition, we select from the corpus any lexical verb followed by an adverbial particle either directly or disjointed by some words other than verbs. So, we had such structures as, *give up* (LV +ADVP), *put the fire off* (LV + AT+ N + ADVP) which is lexical verb followed by an article followed by a noun or a noun phrase then adverbial particle. This exemplifies phrasal verbs that are intervened by other words. The resulting structure of that is (LV + - + - + ADVP) (Davies and Gardner, 2009).

### Data Analysis Procedure

The first step taken in gathering the data from the books was to manually extract all the phrasal verbs from each of the books by listing them. The topic (phrasal verbs) was treated in the two books (books 2 & 3) and only the pages which had the topic were considered but not the use or appearance of phrasal verbs in every page of the books. Accordingly, phrasal verbs in each of the books (books 2 & 3) were presented separately. In the analysis, the way the topic is distributed in each book was considered; whether they are presented in context or whether they are presented in isolation. Therefore, three types of distribution, *in real context*, *in context* and *in isolation* were considered. *In real context* instances represent the items that are used in dialogues or narratives, *in context* represent items that are found in mere sentences with which the sentences are highly unrelated and the *in isolation* ones represent instances where phrasal verbs are just listed. After the items were explored in each of the books, they were computed together and were considered as a unit to establish the general presentation of the concept in the course books.

The next step was to compare the items in the course books with those in the reference corpus. The comparison was based on finding the frequency of occurrence and the variation in the lexical verbs used as well as the various combinations that are in the two data in order to establish the correlation between the items in the two separate data.

For effective comparison, the data (phrasal verbs) in the text books and those in the BNC were coded as TBC (data in the text books) and BNC (data in the corpus) for easy reference. The data was imported and organised in Excel where simple percentages were ran to come out with certain findings. Also, SPSS was used to ascertain the relationship between the two set of data (TBC and BNC), precisely, the repeated items were sought. A simple concordance was run on the BNC to establish the first fifty (50) frequently used phrasal verbs. The concordance function of the Wordsmith Version 2 computer software was employed for the study since concordance shows the search word in context and also gives an indication about frequency of occurrence of items (Flowerdew, 1993). The concordance function of the Wordsmith Tools software helped to identify all the verb + adverbial particle combinations in the corpus.

After establishing the relatedness of the concept in the two separate data, much attention was given to the distribution of the concept in the TBC with the purpose of establishing the extent of contextual presentations in the books.

## FINDINGS AND DISCUSSIONS

**Table 1: Phrasal Verbs in the Book Two**

In Table 1 below are all the phrasal verbs presented in varied ways in the Book Two of *New Gateway to English for Senior High Schools* under consideration.

S/N	IN REAL CONTEXT	IN CONTEXT (sentences)	IN ISOLATION
1	Call off	Turned on	<b><i>Live up to</i></b>
2	Left behind	Handed in	Run out of
3	Finish off	Wrapped up	Fall back on
4	<b><i>Get on with</i></b>	Put on	Stand up to
5	Wash up	Ask over	Getting on for
6	Cut up	<b><i>Live up to</i></b>	
7	Tidy up	Caught up with	
8	Clean out	<b><i>Get on with</i></b>	
9	Sweep away	Made up for	
10	Sort out	<b><i>Go in for</i></b>	
11	Cut out	Stood up for	
12	Fill in	Put up with	
13	Wear out	Went along with	
14	Tired out	Keep away from	
15	Look through	Drop out of	
16		Stand up for	
17		Get around to	
18		<b><i>Go in for</i></b>	
19		Lead up to	
20		Face up to	
21		Look down on	
22		Get away with	
23		Look out for	
24		Grow out for	
25		Charge with	
26		Blame for	
27		Exonerate from	

In the Book 2, which introduces the topic, as many as forty-seven (47) phrasal verbs are presented with just three of them, *get on with*, *go in for* and *live up to*, repeated. That implies that forty-four (44) different phrasal verbs are presented in the book for the use of both students and teachers. The



forty-seven items in the Book are presented in three main ways: in 'real' context, in 'partial' context (stand-out sentences) and in isolation. As could be gathered from the table, only fifteen (15) of the phrasal verbs representing 32% is presented in 'real' context with as many as thirty-two (32) of them representing 68% presented in isolation (out of context). What is classified as presented in context are those that are used to typify real usages and those are presented in passages and in dialogues which are likely to be encountered in real life instances. In the Book, those fifteen items (phrasal verbs) are used in just six interchanges between two people (characters). It is obvious that those interchanges may be far different from real life usages since they are constructed from intuition. However, that helps a little by helping students to familiarise themselves with somewhat authentic usages. One would have expected all the forty-seven (47) phrasal verbs to be in context. Unfortunately, as presented in the Table 1 above, a greater number of the items is presented in 'stand out' sentences.

Of the thirty-two (32) items used out of context, as many as twenty-seven (27) of them are presented in 'stand out' (individual) sentences which have no linkages whatsoever with one another. Our reason of classifying them as 'partial' contextual presentation is to differentiate them from those that are in real isolation as those in isolation are ordinary phrasal verbs. Those termed 'partial' contextual presentation are those that are used in a list of sentences to denote their meanings. Those phrasal verbs are randomly presented and are used in sentences. For some of them are real testing items which demand students to pick an appropriate phrasal verb from a number of phrasal verbs as equivalence of a particular lexical verb. That clearly shows that our educational system appears to prepare students for testing/examinations more than preparing them to be able to face the task (using language in real context) ahead of them.

The remaining five phrasal verbs are just a list of items which is followed by five sentences with which main verbs have been used and students are expected to find which of the main verbs in the sentences are equivalent to the listed phrasal verbs (the five phrasal verbs). Once again, that is an indication of the test/examination oriented system of education being ran in our educational structure. The educational structure appears to lay more emphasis on testing and examinations than expecting students to know and use what they are taught. Many teachers at both the junior and senior high schools have made testing and examination a priority at the detriment of their knowledge and ability to use what they know. It is thus not surprising that the book is structured in that respect.

One would agree that the situation does not in any way guarantee students' understanding of the topic. What the situation indicates is just like presenting items in abstraction since students are not facilitated to perceive the words' usages in context but rather are to perceive them as independent sentences which make learning very independent from the reality. The five items in isolation are presented as single items at one column with their bare meanings presented at the opposite column. It is surprising that those items are just listed in the book because there is no way a student will understand those words even with their meanings presented in a different column. This is because words are always to be used in context and not in isolation.

It is not sufficient for a student to be just aware of a number of phrasal verbs which are not related to real usages. For that, they could easily rely on even ‘ordinary dictionaries’ which could equip them with a number of examples of the concept. This situation directly defeats the purpose of teaching grammar and teaching English language as a whole; teaching language items in context to enable students familiarise themselves with how words are used and to make teaching authentic is paramount in teaching. Also, the essence of students’ course books is to help them to be acquainted with how words are used and not just a number or a list of words. As has been advocated by many educationists and curriculum designers, items (topic) presented to students should be in context since language is never used in isolation and that underpins the emergence of the Communicative Language Teaching (Hymes, 1972). It is in that regard that the importance of presenting learners with authentic language examples has been stressed by a number of scholars such as Fox (1987), Kennedy (1992) and Romer (2004b & 2005).

Though there are just three repeated items, there is the need to consider the essence of those repetitions and their distributions in the Book. The repeated word to consider firstly is *get on with* which appears twice; one in real context presentation and the other, in a stand-out sentence (context). The contextual one appears as,

*Efua: Can't you finish it off quickly? I'll give you a hand!*

*Amina: It's very good of you to offer-but I think I'll have to **get on with** it on my own.*

The one in the ‘stand-out’ sentence is,

*He always found other people very easy to **get on with**.*

Clearly, the two instances of the same phrasal verb denote different meanings and it could be said that it will be easier for any person who might not have come across the phrase before to easily deduce the meaning of the one in the dialogue (in real context) since the surrounding or the background information greatly contributes to its meaning extraction. To know the meaning of the second instance of the phrase may be challenging for learners because no background information is provided. The contextual one is equivalent to the lexical verb, *handle* and the one in the sentence is equivalent to *associate*.

*Go in for* is another repeated phrase, both of which appear in ‘stand-out’ sentences. The two sentences are presented below:

*She didn't **go in for** wearing expensive clothes.*

*I want to **go in for** that competition they announced on TV.*

Once again, since the phrasal verbs appear in mere sentences (out of context) understanding them might pose a challenge. In the first, its equivalent is *like* which is among the options that were provided for students to pick from (it is presented in a form of testing); the second usage, the phrasal verb means *enter*. The repetition of the same item to denote different meanings appears a good thing since it teaches learners that the same phrasal verb may have different meanings.

The last repeated phrasal verb, *live up to*, is found in a sentence (context) and in isolation and the second is supposed to be a testing item. It is used in the sentence as,

*The boy always tried to **live up to** his father's high ideals.*

An equivalent to the phrase verb, *live up to*, in the sentence above could be *fulfill*. In all the instances, the rationale behind the authors' repetition of those phrasal verbs cannot be easily inferred. Probably, it provides evidence of the effect of relying on intuition which resulted in random selection of the phrasal verbs and thus they might not even be aware of those repetitions. That indicates a typical situation which calls for the use of corpus to teach language items or at least to use it (corpus) as the basis for language teaching (Romer, 2004b).

**Table 2: Presentation of Phrasal Verbs in the Book Three**

In the table 2 below are all the phrasal verbs presented in varied ways in the Book Three of the books (New Gateway to English for Senior High Schools) under consideration.

	IN CONTEXT (sentences)	PARTIAL IN ISOLATION
1	<b><i>Look up to</i></b>	Put off
2	Put up with	Taken on
3	Taken in by	Turn up
4	put down to	<b><i>Look into</i></b>
5	Made up for	Look in
6	Get up	Get over with
7	Turned up	Expand on
8	<b><i>Looked into</i></b>	Sleep on
9	Went off	Take in
10	Take to	Take after
11	Turned into	Make up
12		Make out
13		Put down
14		Turn down
15		Carry on

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16	Get on with
17	Stand up to
18	Stick up for
19	Look down on
	Come down
20	with
21	Come up with
22	<b>Look up to</b>

In the Book 3, the topic is once again treated and this is in accordance with the expectation of the English Language Syllabus for Senior High Schools. In the Book, a total of thirty-three (33) phrasal verbs are presented. Of the thirty-three, none of them is presented in context, eleven (11) of them, representing 33%, are presented in ‘stand out’ sentences of which there are no linkages of one sentence with another. As many as twenty-two (22) of them, representing 67%, are listed phrasal verbs at one column with their accompanying lexical verbs (proposed meanings) which are jumbled at another column for students to pick the correspondent lexical verb of each of the phrasal verbs. From the way the topic is presented in the book, it could be speculated that the writers expected learners to just ‘imagine’ the meanings of the phrasal verbs and not to assist them to understand them before knowing their corresponding lexical verbs. It seems somewhat weird and obnoxious for a language book written in the 21<sup>st</sup> Century to present topics in isolation since that defeat the quintessence of language teaching: using language to communicate in a fluent manner.

The situation explains students’ inability to be acquainted with the topic and thus their failure to use them (phrasal verbs) in their interactions. Probably, the writers presented the items in the Book Three in that sketchy manner because they thought the topic had been already treated in Book Two. We do not expect that to be the writers’ motive since they even introduced the topic in that book as though students had not been introduced to the topic in the earlier book (Book Two). We quote below, their introductory statement:

*Someone may ask you:*

*What time do you **get up** in the morning?*

***get up** is an example of a phrasal verb. It has the same meaning*

*in this context as ‘rise’ (Pg 107).*

Clearly, the statement does not give any indication that the students had been introduced to the topic in the Book Two yet the same authors wrote the two books (Books Two and Three). It is surprising the authors did not in any way link the topics in the two books (Books Two & Three). That loose introductory statement is followed by a number of items of the topic presented in isolation. For the writers to relate the meaning of the phrasal verb, *get up*, to ‘context’ of use to mean *rise* implies they are much aware of the invaluable role context plays in meaning extraction. Apart from the reason given, the topic appears in both the second and the third years’ syllabi and

thus there was the need for a better presentation of them in the Book Three than the way it was presented. This is because students were introduced to more phrasal verbs and somehow complex ones in the Book Two and thus commenting that "... is an example of phrasal verb" (ibid) is not important in any way.

Considering the reasons assigned, it could be concluded that the topic was expected in the Book Three as well since it is crucial for students' language fluency and success and that sketchily treating the item in the book appears real shirking of responsibility on the part of the writers.

As has been said earlier, generally, the phrasal verbs are not presented in context and the majority presented is meant to test students' knowledge instead of providing them the chance to be acquainted with their usages in order to be fluent in their usage. On the distribution of the various items, just two, *look into* & *look up to*, out of the thirty-three phrasal verbs are repeated. In both instances, one of the phrasal verbs is used in a sentence and the other is presented in isolation. The isolated ones are presented with their meanings (lexical verbs). The presentation of those instances is presented below.

In isolation

*look into* - examine carefully

*look up to* - respect

In sentences

*This matter has to be **looked into**.*

*My brothers **look up to** me. (pg. 107 & 108)*

It could be inferred that the two repeated phrases have the same meanings as they are used in isolation and in the 'stand out' sentences. The reason for the repetition is thus not necessary.

**Table 3: Assessment of phrasal verbs in the two books (Books 2 & 3)**

In table 3 below are the phrasal verbs and their representations in the two books (Books 2 & 3).

S/N	Book	IN PARTIAL		
		IN REAL CONTEXT	CONTEXT (stand-out sentences)	IN ISOLATION
1	2	Call off	Turned on	Live up to
2	2	Left behind	Handed in	Run out of
3	2	Finish off	Wrapped up	Fall back on
4	2	<b><i>Get on with</i></b>	Put on	Stand up to
5	2	Wash up	Ask over	Getting on for
6	2	Cut up	Live up to	
7	2	Tidy up	Caught up with	



8	2	Clean out	<b><i>Get on with</i></b>	
9	2	Sweep away	Made up for	
10	2	Sort out	Go in for	
11	2	Cut out	Stood up for	
12	2	Fill in	Put up with	
13	2	Wear out	Went along with	
14	2	Tired out	Keep away from	
15	2	Look through	Drop out of	
16	2		Stand up for	
17	2		Get around to	
18	2		Go in for	
19	2		Lead up to	
20	2		Face up to	
21	2		Look down on	
22	2		Get away with	
23	2		Look out for	
24	2		Grow out for	
25	2		Charge with	
26	2		Blame for	
27	2		Exonerate from	
28	3		Look up to	Put off
29	3		Put up with	Taken on
30	3		Taken in by	Turn up
31	3		put down to	Look into
32	3		Made up for	Look in
33	3		Get up	Get over with
34	3		Turned up	Expand on
35	3		Looked into	Sleep on
36	3		Went off	Take in
37	3		Take to	Take after
38	3		Turned into	Make up
39	3			Make out
40	3			Put down
41	3			Turn down
42	3			Carry on
43	3			<b><i>Get on with</i></b>
44	3			Stand up to
45	3			Stick up for
46	3			Look down on

		Come down
47	3	with
48	3	Come up with
49	3	Look up to

Comparing the items in the two books (Books 2&3), the only phrasal verb that appears in both is *get on with* which is presented one, in context and two, in a ‘stand out’ sentence in the Book Two, and once in isolation in the Book Three (Pls. refer to the Table 3 above).

### In the Book 2

*In context: It's very good for you to offer-but I think I'll have to **get on with** it on my own (pg. 39).*

*In 'stand-out' sentence: He always found other people very easy to **get on with** (pg.40).*

### In the Book 3

*In isolation: **get on with** –to be friends with (pg. 108).*

From the Book 2, it could be inferred that the repetition is essential since the two instances provide different meanings and thus different lexical verbs of the same phrasal verb. In the Book 3, however, the repetition appears superfluous since learners encountered similar meaning of that phrasal verb in the Book 2. The isolated presentation of that is an indication that the writers just presented the phrasal verbs based on their intuition; a situation which many linguists frown upon (Sinclair 1991; Kennedy 1998; Romer 2005).

It is uncertain the criteria employed by the writers to select the very items they presented in the books. Was it based on items that are often used in real contexts or was it based on items that often appear in West Africa Examinations Certificate (WAEC) examinations or was it based on the items students have problems familiarizing themselves with? This study attempts to provide response to the first question: are the items presented based on frequently used items? We believe a similar study may probe further to find responses to the other questions. We believe whatever one's responses to those questions might be, it cannot be disputed that, ideally, language study is to focus on the commonest lexical items in the language (Sinclair and Renouf, 1988).

The main difference between the ways the concept, *phrasal verb*, is presented in the two books is that, in the Book Two, the items are presented in three forms: in context (real contexts), in ‘stand-out’ sentences (context) and in isolation. Unfortunately, those presented in sentences (context) are far more than those presented in context (real context) and those presented in isolation; in fact, just a few are found in isolation (pls. refer to Table 1). In the Book Three however, none of the items is presented in context. Of the total, only eleven are presented in ‘stand out’ sentences (context) with a greater number presented in isolation. The authors' reason for presenting the concept in isolation, especially in the Book Three, could not be directly concluded as we earlier indicated.

However, one might not be wrong to suggest that, probably, it was somewhat difficult for the authors to generate or create instances of usage of the phrasal verbs.

Another probable reason could be that they were just being lackadaisical in their work; it was easy just compiling the phrasal verbs with their equivalent lexical verbs. This appears worrying since the meanings of items presented out of context are really difficult to extract; meanings of words are inferred from the context in which they occur. It is based on this that a number of researchers have stressed on the importance of presenting learners with authentic language occurrences (Kennedy, 1992 & Romer, 2005). Presenting items in isolation violates the essence of language teaching which is communication; after all, language is always used in context and not as single units (isolated forms).

From the Table, it could be concluded that only fifteen (15) of the phrasal verbs in both Books representing 12% are presented in context. A greater number of those phrasal verbs, sixty-five (65) representing 88%, are presented out of context. With this, it could easily be concluded that the authors of the course books do not present items in authentic way and that is likely to hinder better understanding and subsequent fluency development in learners.

In the Table 5 below are the phrasal verbs found in the TBC and the first fifty frequently used ones in the BNC. In the discussion that follows, we establish the relationship between the phrasal verbs used in the two corpora. As indicated earlier, only the top fifty (50) frequently used phrasal verbs in the BNC was used to find the relationship between them (phrasal verbs in BNC) and those presented in the students' course books (TBC). Indicated in the Table are the repeated items in the two corpora (TBC and BNC).

**Table 5: Phrasal verbs in the two (BNC & TCB) corpora**

<b>CORPUS</b>	<b>PHRASAL VERBS</b>	<b>REPEATED ITEMS</b>
TBC	Ask over	
TBC	Blame for	
BNC	build up	
TBC	Call off	
TBC	Carry on	
BNC	carry on	r
BNC	carry out	
TBC	Caught up with	
TBC	Charge with	
TBC	Clean out	
BNC	come along	

BNC	come back	
BNC	come down	
	Come down	
TBC	with	
BNC	come in	
BNC	Come on	
BNC	come out	
BNC	Come up	
TBC	Come up with	
TBC	Cut out	
BNC	cut out	r
TBC	Cut up	
TBC	Drop out of	
BNC	end up	
TBC	Exonerate from	
TBC	Expand on	
TBC	Face up to	
TBC	Fall back on	
TBC	Fill in	
BNC	fill in	r
BNC	find out	
TBC	Finish off	
BNC	follow up	
TBC	Get around to	
TBC	Get away with	
BNC	get back	
BNC	get on	
TBC	Get on with	
TBC	Get on with	
TBC	Get on with	
BNC	get out	
TBC	Get over with	
TBC	Get up	
BNC	get up	r
TBC	Getting on for	
BNC	give up	
BNC	go along	
BNC	go back	
BNC	go down	

BNC	go in
TBC	Go in for
TBC	Go in for
BNC	go on
BNC	go out
BNC	go up
TBC	Grow out for
BNC	grow up
TBC	Handed in
BNC	Hang on
BNC	Hold on
	Keep away
TBC	from
TBC	Lead up to
TBC	Left behind
TBC	Live up to
TBC	Live up to
BNC	look back
TBC	Look down on
TBC	Look down on
TBC	Look in
TBC	Look into
BNC	Look out
TBC	Look out for
TBC	Look through
TBC	Look up to
TBC	Look up to
TBC	Looked into
TBC	Made up for
TBC	Made up for
TBC	Make out
TBC	Make up
BNC	make up r
BNC	move on
BNC	Pick up
BNC	point out
TBC	Put down
TBC	put down to
TBC	Put off



TBC	Put on
TBC	Put up with
TBC	Put up with
TBC	Run out of
BNC	set off
BNC	Set out
BNC	Set up
BNC	Shut up
BNC	sit down
TBC	Sleep on
TBC	Sort out
BNC	stand up
TBC	Stand up for
TBC	Stand up to
TBC	Stand up to
TBC	Stick up for
TBC	Stood up for
TBC	Sweep away
TBC	Take after
TBC	Take in
BNC	take on
BNC	Take out
TBC	Take to
BNC	take up
TBC	Taken in by
TBC	Taken on
TBC	Tidy up
TBC	Tired out
TBC	Turn down
BNC	turn out
TBC	Turn up
TBC	Turned into
TBC	Turned on
TBC	Turned up
BNC	WAKE UP
TBC	Wash up
BNC	Watch out
TBC	Wear out
BNC	welcome back

	Went along
TBC	with
TBC	Went off
BNC	Work out
TBC	Wrapped up

In the table above, the letter 'r' indicates the repeated items in the two corpora (TBC & BNC). Comparing the entire phrasal verbs in the TBC with those in the BNC (the 50 top frequently used ones), only five (5) of them which constitute 10% in the TBC are found among the 50 top frequently used list of the BNC. This implies that just 10% of the items in the students' course books, *New Gateway to English for Senior High Schools*, epitomises phrasal verbs that are often used in real contexts. These five phrasal verbs are *carry on*, *cut out*, *fill in*, *get up* and *make up*.

The situation clearly shows that there is a wide gap between what students are taught and what the reality is. Considering the numerous studies that have been done to bridge the gap between language-teaching materials and their relevance to real situation usages, the situation should have improved now. Unfortunately, it remains the same; there seems not to be any attempt taken by stakeholders of education to curtail the situation. Romer (2005) expresses the same situation that recent language-teaching materials are still very much different from real language use that are found in corpora.

Even of the five items found in both the BNC and the TBC, the very first one of them, *make up*, which happens to appear on the top of the hierarchy of the BNC, occupies the 8<sup>th</sup> position. This implies that none of the items in the first seven of the top frequently used phrasal verbs (*come on*, *go on*, *come back*, *hang on*, *shut up* and *go out*) in the BNC is presented in the students Course Books. The one that appears on the 8<sup>th</sup> position (Pls. refer to the Table 5) is used just once in the TBC and it is even not used in context for students to familiarise themselves with its usage. It might be that the writers of the books considered the first top seven phrasal verbs in the BNC very simple and basic and thought students might be familiar with them. It would be very unfortunate if that were the thought of the writers. This is because language needs not be sophisticated before its use will be needed; a good and meaningful language needs not be complex and entirely infrequent since language is basically meant for communication.

The next phrasal verb which is found in both 'corpora', *carry on*, occupies the 14<sup>th</sup> position on the top frequently used phrasal verbs in the BNC. That second item is followed by *get up* which is 21<sup>st</sup> on the BNC list, followed by *cut out* which occupies the 35<sup>th</sup> and *fill in* taking the 40<sup>th</sup> positions, on the top 50 frequently used items on the BNC list (Please refer to appendix 'A'). Apart from the wide gap that characterises the position occupied by these few words, the phrases are used in just few instances and even out of context situations. The fact that those phrasal verbs are used just once in the TBC is evidence that students would hardly be acquainted with their usages; a situation which directly defeats the purposes for which books are written and for which language is taught.

What the situation demonstrates is that many of the phrasal verbs presented in the students' course books are not items that learners frequently encounter in real-life instances and that may result in students' abysmal performance in both spoken and written aspects of the language. Romer (2005) makes similar submission on the disparity between items in course books and the reality as,

...learners will find it easier to develop both their receptive and productive skills when confronted with the most common lexical items of a language (and the patterns and meanings with which these items typically occur) than when the language teaching input they get gives high priority to infrequent words and structures that the learners rarely encounter in real-life situations (pg. 208).

To bridge the gap between what is presented in students' course books and what pertains to reality is to rely on corpora. It is basically through corpora that authentic language items can be presented to learners. Unfortunately, that has not been the trend. Considering the phrasal verbs found in the books studied, *New Gateway to English for Senior High School Books 1&2*, it could be confidently said that the writers did not use corpora as the basis of their write-ups. Evidence of that is the numerous presentation of the concept in isolation as against the little instance of contextual presentation. This finding thus seems to support the findings by many other researchers that "few developments have been seen in the use of corpora in writing course books" (Carter, Hughes & McCarthy 2000; McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford 2005 and Barlow & Burdine 2006 quoted in Romer 2011: 210). The question then is what is the essence of what students are taught? Are they taught just to accumulate vocabulary and phrases in the language or are they taught to know and use language as the aim of teaching English language spells out in the English Language syllabus? Getting responses to these questions is to set language experts thinking over the need to depend on corpora in course book writings.

### **Responses to the research questions**

This section is devoted to using the findings made to provide responses to the research questions that guided this study.

*Research Question One: What is the correlation between the phrasal verbs used in the British National Corpus and those found in students' course books?*

In reference to Table 5, only five of the items in the course books are found in the top 50 phrasal verbs in the BNC which gives a percentage of just 12 marks. There is, therefore, no relatedness between the phrasal verbs found in students' course books and those found in reality. It thus brings to the fore whether or not learners are really taught what they need to be useful in the society as

much as language is concerned. It might be argued that the language items students need are not necessarily what frequently appear in a language. To that, Hunston (2002: 189) argues that "... it makes sense to teach the most frequent words in a language first." So, teaching words that are seldom used in a language is tantamount to just helping learners to accumulate knowledge of the language in their bid to just add to their repertoire of vocabulary. Such learners might be acquainted with certain phrases all the same, but they will be deficient in how to use those accumulated vocabulary thus defeating the purpose for which language is learnt.

*Research Question two: How are phrasal verbs presented in students' course books?*

Referring to Table 4, the items in the students' course books are presented in three main ways: in real context (in dialogue), in partial context (in stand-out sentences) and in isolation (just the phrasal verbs). The items (phrasal verbs) were treated in two (books 2 & 3) of the three books (Books 1, 2 & 3) that serve the three year programme (SHS one, two and three respectively). The topic is not treated in the year one book because the English Language syllabus which directs what to teach, does not give that directive.

In the two books, a total of eighty (80) phrasal verbs with few repeated ones were presented. The Book Two contains relatively higher number of the phrasal verbs than the Book Three (Pls. refer to Table 3 for the details). On the presentation of the items, only fifteen (15) of the items in the two books representing 18% are presented in context. As high as thirty-eight (38) of them which represent 48% are presented in partial context as they are found in 'stand-out' sentences which do not have any link in any respect with one another. The remaining twenty-seven (27) of the items, that is 34%, are presented in isolation; a number of them as test items and few are just compilation of the items. In many of the test items, students are to match certain phrasal verbs in one column with their right lexical verbs which have been jumbled in another column. We present example below:

*In pairs, match the complex phrasal verbs in column A with their meanings in column B.*

<b>Column A</b>	<b>Column B</b>
1. <i>get on with</i>	<i>become sick</i>
2. <i>stand up to</i>	<i>despise</i>
3. <i>stick up for</i>	<i>respect</i>
4. <i>look down on</i>	<i>resist</i>
5. <i>come down with</i>	<i>to be friends with</i>
6. <i>look up to</i>	<i>support</i>

7. *come up with*

*suggest* (Book Three pg. 108)

The general presentation of the items in the books, we could say, is substandard. This is because just 18% percent of the items are presented in context and that is even intuitive based context since it is a piece of dialogue. That dialogue could have been picked from any authentic material (newspapers, novels and magazines) since the relevance of using authentic materials to teach helps in ensuring a communicatively rich classroom (Kennedy, 1992; Romer, 2011 & Okoh, 2017).

It is evident in the presentation of the concept that not only do the writers shun the attempt to provide learners with authentic materials but they also emphasise on testing as a means of presenting their materials. Many of the items presented in the books, especially, the Book Three are meant to test the students rather than to expose them to many uses of the items. Ghana's educational system appears to be test and examination oriented as students are always seeking past questions instead of seeking to be acquainted with what they have been taught. So, for authors of course books to highlight more on test items than learning items in students' course books defeats the purpose of language learning which is to help achieve both linguistic and performance competences.

*Research question three: In what way could corpora be employed to improve students' performance on the topic, phrasal verbs?*

Though the confines of this study was not to determine students' performance on phrasal verbs, the researchers' experience with language students at different levels for a number of years, can speculate that students' performance on phrasal verbs is below average expectation. We believe the issue of ascertaining students' performance could be carried out in a different study. That notwithstanding, some studies have confirmed students' abysmal knowledge on the topic (Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003 and Dempsey, McCarthy & McNamara, 2007).

Corpora can greatly help to improve students' performance on phrasal verbs since learners will have the opportunity to encounter real instances of language use. Their encounter with the authentic use of the language will first, stimulate their curiosity and interest and second, acquaint them with examples of the frequently used phrasal verbs as well as the instances of their usages. As discussed earlier, only five (5) of the phrasal verbs in the course books (TBC) representing 6% are part of the top frequently used phrasal verbs in the native speakers' language (see Table 5). This is woefully inadequate and it supports Dempsey, McCarthy and McNamara's (2007) findings that students are not familiar with many phrasal verbs and thus they avoid their uses by replacing them (phrasal verbs) with 'Latin verb forms' when the need arises. However, learning phrases such as phrasal verbs can serve "...as a short-cut to fluency before going on to a more analysed and accurate command of the language" (Hunston 2002: 138).

Employing corpora in the teaching and learning activity may appear a herculean task since their (corpora) use is highly dependent on the availability of computers, teachers and students' familiarity with the corpus tools as well as availability of ample time for corpora manipulation.



Such requisite materials and skills for the successful use of corpora make the approach seem difficult to employ. Following that, we propose the indirect use of corpora to teaching as proposed by Leech (1991). According to Leech (ibid), the indirect use of corpora evades the use of computers in the classroom for learners to come up with learning outcomes by themselves; students are not directly involved in exploring huge data (corpus) to make their own discoveries. Rather, with the indirect use, corpora could be explored by language teachers and course book writers to discover authentic use of language and present that in students' course books for further use as learning materials by students. Such exploration of the corpora positions teachers as discoverers and learners as consumers of corpora outcomes unlike the direct use of corpora with which much exploration may be done by the students before discoveries could be made. The indirect use of corpora proposed here does not in any way defeat the purpose of language teaching since learners will still encounter real instances of language use which fulfill the aim of language teaching and learning. The point then is that corpora can indirectly be used to teach phrasal verbs in order to help improve learners' performance specifically on the topic and generally in the English language. *The study therefore argues strongly that corpora appears the only means ESL course book writers can rely on to present authentic material in course books.*

## Conclusion

This study has established that the information or notes provided on the topic, *Phrasal Verbs*, in the English Language course book (*New Gateway to English for Senior High Schools*) is intuitive-based. Evidence to this effect is reflected in the fact that the frequently used phrasal verbs in real context (BNC) are not exactly what is presented in the students' course books. Also the many instances of the concept in isolation and in 'stand-out' sentences are evident that the language items are just compiled in the book with no specific pattern. That can result in presenting less needed language items to students and that might lead to waste of students' time. McEnery and Wlison (2001: 120) show their disapproval about presentation of intuitive-based material in course books as, "... non-empirically based teaching materials can be positively misleading ... corpus studies should be used to inform the production of materials."

Another observation made is that the books, instead of serving as a means of students encountering many instances of language practice, serve as a testing material. Many instances of the phrasal verbs in the books require students to answer questions; finding appropriate lexical verbs that correspond to certain phrasal verbs. The situation seems to support the kind of educational system that touts the line of just assessment with less attention to what students know and can do. It should be noted that the core expectation of language knowledge is one's communicative competence (fluency) and not just what can be scored in examinations. Primarily, language is to be spoken and not to be written and corpora have proven to be an invaluable resource in the design of language teaching syllabi that emphasise communicative competence (Hymes, 1972). Unfortunately, only a few developments have been realised in the reliance of corpora in producing course books (McCarthy, McCarten & Sandiford, 2005 & Barlow & Burdine, 2006 quoted in Romer, 2011)

The indirect use of corpora in language teaching could serve as a panacea for presenting students with authentic language data so they could come across relevant language items in the language and also to be conversant with the uses of those language items. It is only through the use of authentic materials in language teaching that the goal of language teaching: developing linguistic and performance competences would be achieved. Though this proposal has been made, it will not be strange to know that many teachers and course book writers in Ghana are not aware of the existence of corpora and their relevance to language teaching and learning. We thus recommend that the Ghana Association of Teachers of English (GATE), language curriculum designers as well as course book writers of the language should be introduced to corpus linguistics. Until these stakeholders of education are abreast of the concept, corpus linguistic, little can be achieved in the teaching and learning of English language in Ghana.

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