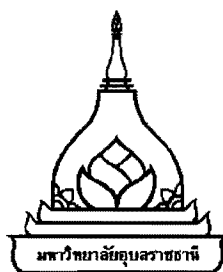


**USING COMIC STRIPS TO PROMOTE PHRASAL VERB LEARNING:  
THE CASE OF MATHAYOM SUKSA SIX STUDENTS  
AT THUNGTHOENGYINGWATTANA SCHOOL,  
UBON RATCHATHANI**

**WATTANA CHANASRI**

**AN INDEPENDENT STUDY SUBMITTED IN PARTIAL FULFILLMENT OF  
THE REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS  
MAJOR IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE  
FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS  
UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY  
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**INDEPENDENT STUDY APPROVAL**  
**UBON RATCHATHANI UNIVERSITY**  
**MASTER OF ARTS**  
**MAJOR IN TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE**  
**FACULTY OF LIBERAL ARTS**

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             THUNGTHOENGYINGWATTANA SCHOOL, UBON RATCHATHANI

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### บทคัดย่อ

ชื่อเรื่อง : การใช้การ์ตูนสั้น (comic strip) เพื่อส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้คำกริยาของ  
นักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 โรงเรียนทุ่งเทิงยั้งวัฒนา จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี

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สาขาวิชา : การสอนภาษาอังกฤษเป็นภาษาต่างประเทศ

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ศัพท์สำคัญ : การ์ตูนสั้น คำกริยา

การวิจัยครั้งนี้มีจุดประสงค์เพื่อศึกษาว่า การ์ตูนสั้น (comic strip) สามารถส่งเสริมการเรียนรู้คำกริยาของนักเรียนได้มากเพียงใด กลุ่มประชากรที่ใช้ในการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้คือ นักเรียนชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6/1 โรงเรียนทุ่งเทิงยั้งวัฒนา อำเภอเดชอุดม จังหวัดอุบลราชธานี จำนวน 30 คนที่กำลังเรียนในภาคเรียนที่ 2 ปีการศึกษา 2554 เครื่องมือที่ใช้ในการศึกษาค้นคว้าครั้งนี้คือ แบบทดสอบก่อนเรียน แบบทดสอบหลังเรียน คำกริยา 10 คำ จากหนังสือเรียนวิชาภาษาอังกฤษพื้นฐาน และ ภาษาอังกฤษเพิ่มเติม ระดับชั้นมัธยมศึกษาปีที่ 6 การ์ตูนสั้น (comic strip) ที่มีคำกริยา 10 คำ จำนวน 30 เรื่อง ข้อมูลที่ได้ถูกนำมาวิเคราะห์เพื่อหาความแตกต่างทางสถิติ โดยใช้โปรแกรม SPSS

ผลจากการศึกษาพบว่าการใช้การ์ตูนสั้น (comic strip) ช่วยส่งเสริมนักเรียนในการเรียนรู้คำกริยาได้ดีขึ้นในระดับหนึ่ง เพราะคะแนนเฉลี่ยของแบบทดสอบหลังเรียน (3.43) สูงกว่าคะแนนเฉลี่ยของแบบทดสอบก่อนเรียน (0.83) โดยมีความต่างอย่างมีนัยสำคัญที่ค่า  $P < 0.01$  อย่างไรก็ตาม คะแนนเฉลี่ยของแบบทดสอบหลังเรียนยังไม่ผ่านเกณฑ์ครึ่งหนึ่งของคะแนนเต็ม (10)

## ABSTRACT

**TITLE** : USING COMIC STRIPS TO PROMOTE PHRASAL VERB  
LEARNING: THE CASE OF MATHAYOM SUKSA SIX  
STUDENTS AT THUNGTHOENGYINGWATTANA SCHOOL,  
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**DEGREE** : MASTER OF ARTS

**MAJOR** : TEACHING ENGLISH AS A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

**CHAIR** : SAISUNEE CHAIMONGKOL, PH.D.

**KEYWORDS** : COMIC STRIP / PHRASAL VERB

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which comic strips could promote students' phrasal verb learning. The subjects of this study were 30 Mathayom Suksa 6/1 students, who were studying in the academic year 2011 at Thungthoengyingwattana School, Det Udom District, Ubon Ratchathani Province, Thailand. The research instruments were a pretest and a posttest containing 10 phrasal verbs chosen from Mathayom Suksa six textbooks for the Fundamental English and the Supplementary English courses and 30 comic strips with phrasal verbs. The pretest and the posttest scores were analyzed by using Statistical Package for the Social Sciences (SPSS).

The results indicated that using comic strips to teach the phrasal verbs could somewhat enhance the students' achievement since the mean score of the posttest (3.43) was significantly higher than that of the pretest (0.83) at  $P < 0.01$ . However, the mean score of the posttest was still lower than half of the total (10).

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## **CHAPTER 1**

### **INTRODUCTION**

This chapter includes the rationale, purpose of the study, research question, hypothesis and definitions of terms.

#### **1.1 Rationale**

Obviously, English has been an international language because it is the most widespread medium of international communication (Sasaki, Suzuki, & Yoneda, 2006). The language is also the official language of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) (Kirkpatrick, 2008). The Kingdom of Thailand is one of the ASEAN members (Association of Southeast Asian Nations, 2008) and regards English as its foreign language. Thai learners at all educational levels are required to take some English courses in order to communicate in various situations, seek knowledge, engage in a livelihood and pursue further education (Ministry of Education in Thailand, 2008). However, most Thai learners are still not successful in learning English. According to the National Institute of Education Testing Service (2009), the results of Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) in the academic years 2008 and 2009 showed that the subject the students were poorest in was English. The mean scores of English of Mathayom Suksa three students in these two academic years were 32.42% and 22.54% respectively and those of Mathayom Suksa six students were 30.68% and 23.98% respectively. Although the results were from only two academic years, they revealed the low English proficiency of Thai students, so we should reconsider our English teaching and learning more seriously.

As an international language and a medium of knowledge transfer, English is normally used in books, texts or other printed materials of several fields in various countries. Grabe & Stoller (2002) and Ozek & Civelek (2006) claimed that if students were required to read English texts, they needed to rely on English knowledge to help

them understand the texts. Hence, English is undeniably very important for acquiring knowledge. In other words, English reading skills are considered very essential because they can help students acquire different areas of knowledge at various levels of study. According to Aegpongpaow (2008) and Yimwilai (2008), if students have good reading skills, they will be better able to understand the texts and to complete their reading. Unfortunately, some students fail in reading tasks, especially when encountering unknown words, idioms, and complex structured sentences.

According to Aegpongpaow (2008), one factor that hinders students' reading ability is the use of materials that are beyond their understanding and do not match their needs. Such materials include those containing unfamiliar words, complex structures, or contents that are not relevant to their daily life. Concerning language, students may encounter new difficult words, phrasal verbs or complex sentences while reading.

A phrasal verb is normally composed of a verb followed by an adverb or a preposition and sometimes both such as "look up" and "take up with" (Hornby, 2005). In terms of semantics, a phrasal verb may have either literal or figurative meaning or sometimes both (McArthur, 1992). In most cases, the figurative meaning often causes problems for students because it cannot be derived from the meaning of the two or three words combined. Although phrasal verbs are not simple for students, they are vital and useful for students in learning English. They constitute an important aspect of the English language and form part of everyday English (Walter, 1997: 7). They are not only used in spoken and informal English, but also a common feature of written and formal English. Students often see or hear phrasal verbs in such media as English newspapers, songs, movies and other printed or recorded materials such as "I must be strong and carry on" in the song "Tears in heaven." "Carry on" in the song has a figurative meaning which is "continue doing something." However, some students might translate "carry" as "hold" and "on" as "a preposition of place," and "hold something on" could be the whole meaning of this phrasal verb. According to Hasitavej (2004), if students do not learn the meanings of phrasal verbs, they will not understand or use English properly. Similarly, as stated by Denail (2010), one who has an abundance of phrasal verb knowledge can read, speak and write English

effortlessly. In fact, a phrasal verb is one important factor that can help students succeed in learning English. Therefore, it is necessary to familiarize the students with phrasal verbs because they can be found frequently in all forms of language.

Furthermore, Ostroska (2008) states that phrasal verbs are often used in TOEIC and TOEFL as demonstrated respectively in (1) where all alternatives contain phrasal verbs and (2) where “broken off” and “made of” are used

(1) \_\_\_\_\_ and check out the competition.

- |             |                 |
|-------------|-----------------|
| a. Look out | b. Look around  |
| c. Look for | d. Look through |

(Lougheed, 2004: 121)

(2) What can be inferred from the information in paragraph 4 about the Easter Island statues?

- They were broken off in the statue-toppling wars.
- They were not made of the same kind of stone as the other parts of the statues.
- They were long like those of the Hanan Eepe.
- They were not made of stone but of wood from palm trees.

(Rogers, 2007: 24)

To correctly answer the two items above, students need to know the phrasal verbs. Moreover, the students occasionally see phrasal verbs on the Ordinary National Educational Test (O-NET) as in (3) below where all alternatives contain phrasal verbs.

(3) At an interview

Mrs. Jones : Come in. I believe you're Peter J. Davis.

Mr. Davis : That's right.

Mrs. Jones : Just for the record, what does J (3) \_\_\_\_\_?

Mr. Davis : Joseph...Peter Joseph Davis.

Mrs. Jones : Thank you. Do have a seat.

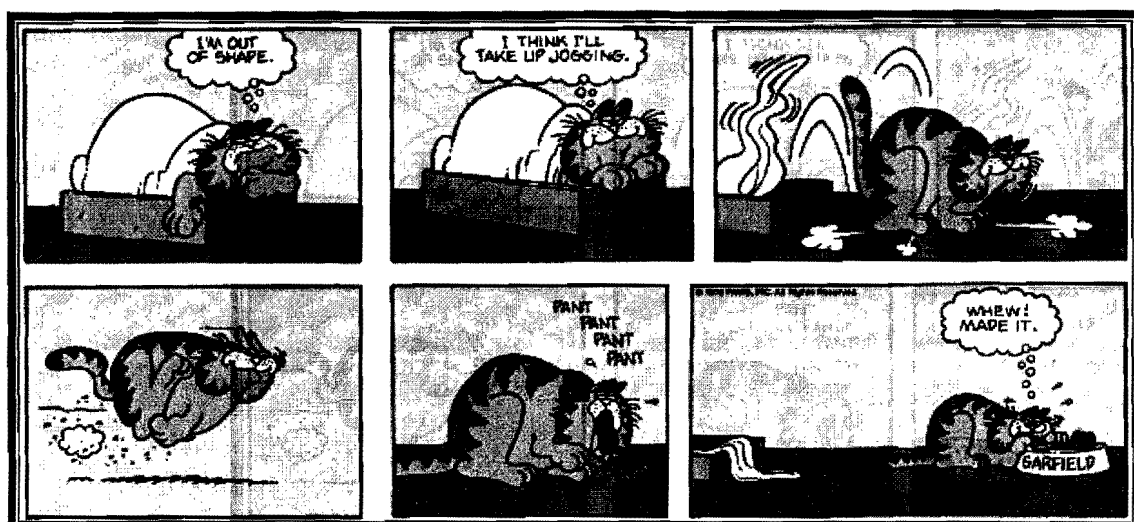
- |             |              |
|-------------|--------------|
| a. stand in | b. stand for |
| c. stand up | d. stand by  |

(Kanjapan and Rattanasi, 2010: 3)

As phrasal verb knowledge can help students better understand English texts, they should be presented in a language classroom. One way to help students acquire phrasal verbs is learning them in context. Ostrosaka (2008) mentioned that if the context was clear, we could often figure out the meaning of phrasal verbs. Likewise, DeCarrico (2001: 290) suggested that “new words should not be presented in isolation and should not be learned by simple rote memorization.” She also emphasized that new vocabulary items should be presented in contexts rich enough to provide clues to meaning, and students should be given multiple exposures to items they should learn. Therefore, teachers should find or produce instructional materials that can provide clues and contexts to present new vocabulary. Television, motion pictures, animations, cartoons and comic strips are candidates for such a matter as students can rely on visual clues to help them understand what they are watching or reading.

Comic strips are one of the affordable media which the teachers can employ in the classroom. According to Hutchinson (1949) and Watterson (1995), comic strips are considered beneficial as they are introduced in the form of words and pictures together. This can help poor readers understand what the writers want to convey more easily. In fact, the nature of comic strips makes them good teaching materials as they allow teachers and students to explore language in a creative way and can attract students’ interest in learning (Davis, 1997). Furthermore, as phrasal verbs are used in all registers, from comic books to the most academic forms of the language (Cornell, 1985; Gabriel, 1985; Thornbury, 2002), comic strips seem to be an effective mean for phrasal verb introduction.

A comic strip often contains a common phrasal verb as can be observed below:



(Davis, 1978)

In the comic strip above, the phrasal verb “take up” which has a figurative meaning is employed. Some students may translate “take” as “move something from one place to another” and “up” as “in a higher position,” literally translated as “move something higher” instead of “start to do something.” This can lead them to text misinterpretation.

Due to the significance of phrasal verbs coupled with the fact that the students are required to learn some phrasal verbs which they usually find difficult, it seems interesting for the researcher to explore whether comic strips are effective materials for teaching phrasal verbs to Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoengyingwattana School, Det Udom District, Ubon Ratchathani Province.

## 1.2 Purpose of the study

The purpose of the study is to investigate whether comic strips can be effective materials for teaching phrasal verbs to Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoengyingwattana School, Det Udom, Ubon Ratchathani.

### 1.3 Research question

The research question for this study is “To what extent can comic strips enhance students’ knowledge of phrasal verbs?”

### 1.4 Hypothesis

It is hypothesized that comic strips can greatly help enhance the phrasal verb knowledge of Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoenyingwattana School.

### 1.5 Definitions of terms

The two key terms used in this study are defined below:

**1.5.1 A comic strip** refers to a set of drawings inside boxes that tells a story (Hornby, 2005).

**1.5.2 A phrasal verb** in this study is a combination of a verb followed by an adverb or a preposition or both an adverb and a preposition whose meaning cannot be derived from the meaning of the two or three words. It is also called a figurative phrasal verb (Darwin & Gray, 1999 ; McArthur, 1992).

The next chapter will provide the information related to this study.

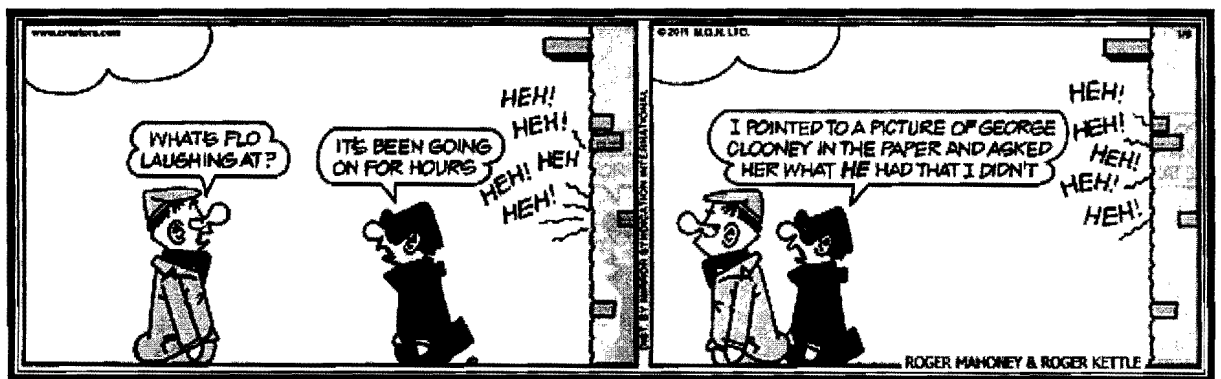
## CHAPTER 2

### LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter contains the definition of a comic strip and its components, comic strips in the classroom, definitions and types of phrasal verbs, problems of learning phrasal verbs and previous studies.

#### 2.1 Definition of a comic strip and its components

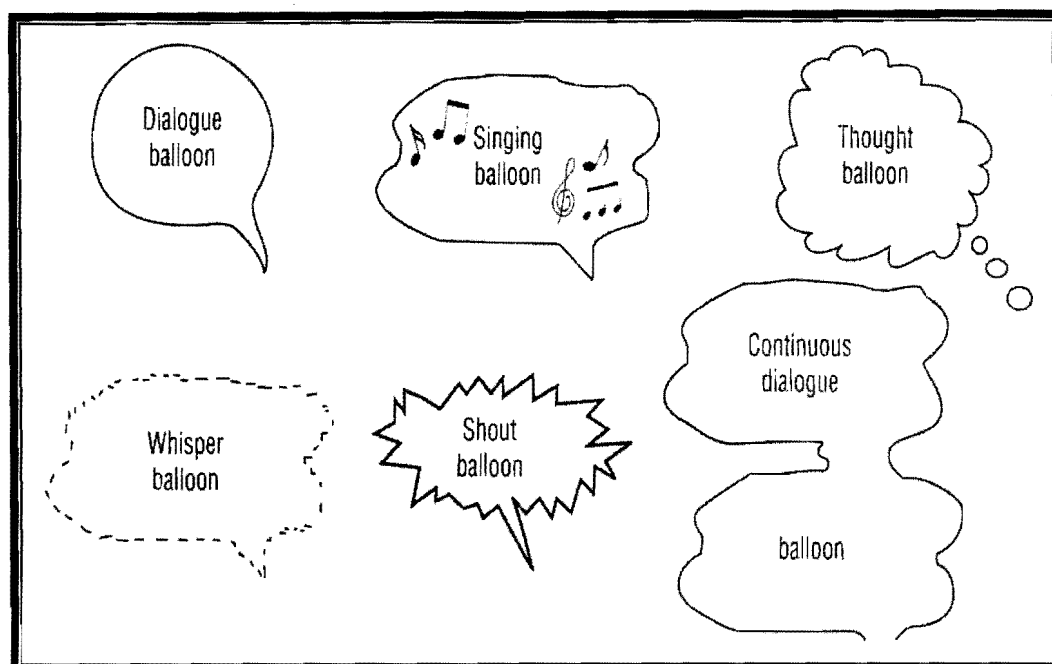
As defined in the introductory chapter, a comic strip is a set of drawings inside boxes that tells a story (Hornby, 2005). It contains words, phrases, or sentences in balloons with pictures or graphics as in the example below:



(Smythe, 2011)

Each balloon expresses the speaker's different feelings. Figure 1 below, taken from Morrison, Bryan & Chilcoat (2002: 763), shows some examples of balloons normally used in comic strips.





**Figure 1** Example of balloon designs

When reading comic strips, readers are required to combine the graphics and/or pictures and the print to comprehend the text (McVicker, 2007). That is, graphics and/or pictures can facilitate readers' comprehension of the text.

Due to their nature, comic strips are frequently used in the classroom, which will be discussed in the following section.

## **2.2 Comic strips in the classroom**

Since a comic strip possesses a number of advantages, it has been widely used in the language classroom. Strang (1943) claimed that the comic strip could be an initial interesting thing in reading and led to positive reading habits because it provided adventure, surprise, lifelike characters, humor and action. Similarly, Botzakis (2009), Cleaver (2008), Csabay (2007) and Davis (1997) confirmed that one of the teaching materials with which teachers were able to spark students' interest in reading and learning was the comic strip. Moreover, McVicker (2007) and Norton (2003) found that many students were interested in comic strips because they increased their motivation in reading.

Furthermore, a comic strip is also a good source for teaching some reading strategies. According to McVicker (2007: 85), “a comic strip as a text structures provides the perfect vehicle for teaching children reading strategies by using visual literacy abilities.” Comic strips containing texts with visual representations, therefore, offer teachers a good tool for helping readers develop their reading skills. While reading comic strips, readers are required to blend the print and graphics to make sense of the intended message. Moreover, using comic strips is a concise and quick way to teach and practice reading skills.

According to Davis (1997), comic strips can be used to teach all the four English skills, namely, listening, speaking, reading and writing. For example, students can improve their listening skills by listening to their friends who read a provided comic strip and then answer questions concerned. They can also describe characters using adjectives, identify social, political, economic, or environmental problems facing the world today, practice writing direct speech, form different verb tenses, tell the story of a sequentially-ordered comic strip that has been scrambled up, practice basic rules of pronunciation, etc. Furthermore, comic strips provide authentic cultural information, help students practice language items in genuine contexts and generate a happy classroom (Medgyes, 2002).

More importantly, since comic strips do not use long sentences or complex structures as in usual textbooks, students would prefer reading comics instead of general books. This is supported by Gabriel (1985) that a short narrative or dialogue is simpler to use in a variety of ways to strengthen the students’ acquisition of vocabulary. Reading comics thus appears to be a simple and preferable task when compared to reading ‘real’ books (Tilley, 2008).

To conclude, comic strips have several advantages. Thus, it seems very interesting to prove how much they can be a useful instructional aid to promote students’ phrasal verb learning.

## 2.3 Phrasal verbs

### 2.3.1 Definition

A phrasal verb is a verb followed by at least one particle which can be an adverb or a preposition such as *get up* etc., but sometimes a phrasal verb can be followed by both an adverb and a preposition, namely, *take up with*. (Bolinger, 1971 ; Darwin & Gray, 1999 ; Denail, 2010 ; Dirven, 2001 ; Hornby, 2005 ; Larsen-Freeman, 2001 ; Loughheed, 2004 ; Walter, 1997).

### 2.3.2 Types of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are classified in several ways by several scholars. For example, Hook (1981) and Walter (1997) syntactically categorize them into two major types: intransitive phrasal verbs that do not need an object, e.g. “She closed her eyes and drifted off,” and transitive phrasal verbs that need an object for complete meaning, e.g. “Drink up your coffee.” On the other hand, in terms of meaning, phrasal verbs are grouped into literal and figurative/idiomatic uses with some phrasal verbs having both literal and figurative meanings (McArthur, 1992) as follows:

- (1) She *put down* the book. (literal meaning)
- (2) The army *put down* the rebellion. (figurative/idiomatic meaning= “stop something by force.”)

Generally, a phrasal verb with literal meaning does not cause problems for readers because they can directly decode its meaning. On the contrary, a phrasal verb which gives the figurative meaning seems to be more difficult because the meaning cannot be derived from its components.

According to Walter (1997: 208), some phrasal verbs have a variety of different meanings depending on the contexts. For example, a phrasal verb “pick up” is differently used in different contexts as follows:

- (1) If she starts to cry, *pick her up* and give her a cuddle. (to lift something or someone by using your hands)
- (2) I’m just off to *pick Stella up* from the station. (to collect someone who is waiting for you, or to collect something that you have left somewhere)

In this study, the researcher focuses only on phrasal verbs with

figurative meaning which readers cannot derive or guess from their components, thus causing problems for students.

## **2.4 Problems of learning phrasal verbs**

As mentioned earlier, phrasal verbs can have either literal meaning or figurative meaning or both. Those with figurative meanings usually cause students problems in interpretation. Polackova (2008), Schmitt (2000) and Thornbury (2002) stated that some phrasal verbs were like idioms; therefore, students could not easily recognize their meanings. According to Choen (2006: 1), “such idiomatic meanings make learners feel that they are difficult to learn and to use although learners of English recognize their importance.” Neagu (2007) further supported that phrasal verbs were believed to be an extremely difficult section of the lexicon; foreign language learners did not enjoy learning them.

Another reason why phrasal verbs cause difficulty for EFL/ESL students is that very few languages outside of the Germanic group have such verbs (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Thai is one of those without phrasal verbs; therefore, it is no doubt Thai students face difficulty learning them.

Previous studies conducted on teaching and learning phrasal verbs and using comic strips in the classrooms will be described in the following section.

## **2.5 Previous studies**

This section will talk about research conducted on teaching and learning phrasal verbs and the use of comic strips in the classroom.

Hasitavej (2004) investigated the effectiveness of using songs to teach phrasal verbs to 30 second year accounting students at Ubon Ratchathani Vocational College. The researcher employed four songs with ten chosen phrasal verbs, the pretest and the posttest as the research tools. The researcher used four steps of teaching. First, the students listened to each song three times and completed the incomplete song lyric by using the phrasal verbs they heard. Second, the teacher and students discussed the meanings of phrasal verbs and songs. Third, the students were asked to study the song lyric to see “how” and “when” phrasal verbs could be used.

Fourth, the students practiced singing the four songs. Then, the students took the posttest by translating the ten target phrasal verbs without any context clues into Thai. The result revealed that using songs could promote students' phrasal verb learning. However, the mean score was still lower than half (3.37 out of 10).

Choen (2006) studied the effect of two different learning conditions, which were inferring the meaning of targeted phrasal verbs from context and presenting L2 – L1 pairs of phrasal verbs, for 11 Arabic and 16 Korean speakers studying at the English Language Institute in the summer term of 2006 at the University of Pittsburgh. This study was conducted by using a pretest, the treatment and a posttest. The students were divided into low and high proficient groups based on their pretest scores. The participants in each language group were randomly assigned to one of four groups, namely, Arabics' context learning, Arabics' translation, Koreans' context learning and Koreans' translation respectively. The students used the computer programs, *Revolution* to learn phrasal verbs in context, meaning translation of phrasal verbs from English to Arabic and meaning translation of phrasal verbs from English to Korean versions. It was found that the context learning condition was more beneficial to Arabic participants, whereas the translation learning condition was more beneficial to Korean participants.

Nassaji and Tian (2010) conducted research on the effectiveness of two types of output tasks, namely, reconstruction cloze tasks requiring students to put the correct phrasal verbs in the sentences and reconstruction editing tasks requiring students to edit sentences using the correct phrasal verbs. They also investigated whether doing the tasks collaboratively could help students gain knowledge of the target phrasal verbs than doing the tasks individually and also whether the type of task made a difference. The participants were two classes of 26 low intermediate international students in a university in Canada. Their ages ranged from 18 to 32. The study involved a pretest, the treatment and a posttest. Students were required to edit the sentences by using the correct phrasal verbs in that context in the editing task. The result revealed that students could gain more knowledge of phrasal verbs from doing the editing tasks than the cloze ones. Students could carry out the two output tasks collaboratively more successful than carrying them out individually. However, it was found that the collaborative tasks could slightly improve knowledge of the

phrasal verbs than the individual tasks, but the difference was not statistically significant. This meant that there was no significant difference between the collaborative and the individual tasks in terms of their effects on learning the phrasal verbs.

Yasuda (2010) studied phrasal verb learning through conceptual metaphors of 115 Japanese EFL university students who enrolled in the English Language Program at the School of Liberal Arts in a private university in Tokyo, Japan. The students were divided into two groups: a control group and an experimental group. The former group was told the meanings of 21 phrasal verbs in Japanese directly by the teacher and then was instructed to memorize the phrasal verbs using a 21 phrasal verb checklist listed alphabetically together with their Japanese translations. The latter was explained the target phrasal verbs according to the conceptual metaphors which were embedded in the adverbial particles, such as “changing is into” (turn into, burst into), “completion is up” (use up, dry up) and etc. After that, the students were instructed to memorize the meanings of these phrasal verbs categorized under the headings of their underlying conceptual metaphors, together with their Japanese translations; for instance, “into” means either changing (turn into, burst into) or involvement/mixing (enter into, mix into). Then, both groups of students were required to take the posttest by completing sentences with the missing adverbial particles of phrasal verbs. The result indicated that the students in the experimental group could better learn the target phrasal verbs than those in the control group.

A number of researchers have also conducted research on comic strips and their uses in the classroom. Using comic strips has been found to yield good results in terms of students’ interest, motivation and reading abilities as presented below:

Davis (1997) used comic strips to have his students predict the beginning and the outcome of a story about sports. He used an uncaptioned comic strip which was comprised of four panels. He assigned students to work in small groups. Students had to take turns discussing the action in the panels by paying attention to facial expressions, gestures, setting, etc. Then, each student had to write down his or her own predictions on how the story began and ended in three sentences. The students exchanged papers in their groups, read each other's ideas and helped

one another to conclude the story. Then, they were asked to draw the first and the final panels with captions. Therefore, comic strips could help students predict the story by relying on pictures and graphics. And comic strips were found to hook students' interest and participate in the activities.

Synder (1997) employed the comic strip "Gil Thorp" which was about athletics in a suburban high school to teach sociology of sports. He assigned the students to analyze and share their ideas on sports and social values, education, appropriate behavior, genders' roles, etc. It was found that "Gil Thorp" was a useful teaching tool in sociology of sport classes. The students became interested in the content of the comic strips either because they could relate the episodes of the comic strips or because they felt that sports at Milford High School in the comic strips were different from their own high school background. He also suggested that the comic strips provided good materials for class assignments and discussion that supplemented the usual studies of sports and society.

Liu (2004) investigated effects of comic strips on L2 learners' reading comprehension. The participants were undergraduate and graduate students who registered in various EFL courses in an ESL center for the summer language program at a southwestern university, the United States. They were Hispanics, Arabs, Japanese, Chinese and Korean, totaling 107 students who were of both low and high intermediate proficiencies. The participants were divided into four treatment groups which were required to read a low level text, a low level text with comic strips, a high level text and a high level text with comic strips. The participants were required to write what they understood about those different texts. The results showed that low proficient students apparently relied on comic strips when reading difficult texts, but did not need them when they read easier ones. This indicated that comic strips helped students better understand the texts. They were able to link what they were reading with the attached comic strips. However, for high proficient students, comic strips did not have a significant effect on their understanding of both easy and difficult texts.

Manowong (2004) used dialogues from comic strips to promote English pragmatic comprehension and vocabulary recognition of 43 Mathayom Suksa 5 students at Nawamindhrachudhit Payap, Chiang Mai. The research tools were a pretest, the treatment and a posttest respectively. For the treatment, the researcher

designed six lesson plans, which employed comic strips to teach the conversational rules of quality, relevance and manner and conversational implicatures. The findings showed that the students could increase their pragmatic understanding and their word recognition ability.

Nevertheless, comic strips were also found not to have a significant effect on learners' reading comprehension. For instance, Khoil and Forouzesh (2010) examined the effect of using reading passages with and without comic strips to develop elementary learners' reading comprehension. The participants were 62 Iranian students, who were 13-16 years of age. They received instruction in reading for three months. The experiment group read texts accompanied with comic strips whereas the control group read the same texts without comic strips. After the treatment, both groups of participants were required to do the same posttest. The result revealed that there was no significant difference between the mean scores of the two groups.

Based on the previous studies above which concern teaching and learning phrasal verbs through several methods and the use of comic strips in learning and teaching settings regardless of subject matters with different results, it is interesting to examine the extent to which comic strips can promote phrasal verb knowledge of Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoenyingwattana School, if any.

The next chapter will describe how the study was conducted.



## **CHAPTER 3**

### **METHODOLOGY**

This chapter presents subjects of the study, research instruments, duration of the study, procedures and data collection and analysis.

#### **3.1 Subjects of the study**

The subjects of this study were all Mathayom Suksa 6/1 students (30) who were taking Fundamental English (E 33102) in the second semester of the academic year 2011 at Thungthoenyengwattana School, Det Udom District, Ubon Ratchathani Province. The subjects were 12 males and 18 females. All of the students in this group received zero to five out of ten points on the phrasal verb pretest.

#### **3.2 Research instruments**

The research instruments used to collect the data were comic strips, the pretest and the posttest.

##### **3.2.1 Comic strips**

Thirty comic strips collected from <http://www.creators.com>, [www.dilbert.com](http://www.dilbert.com) and <http://gocomics.com> were used in this study. These websites are for language teachers recommended by Eastment (2009). They are well-known websites owned by United Feature Syndicate, including a variety of comic strips such as *Dilbert*, *Heathcliff*, *Marmaduke*, *Peanuts*, *the Wizard of Id* and many more.

Each selected comic strip consisted of at least one phrasal verb. Ten phrasal verbs with figurative meanings found in “Speed up” and “Super Goal,” which were the subjects’ textbooks for the Fundamental English and the Supplementary English courses respectively, were chosen. Eight of them were also found in the journal article entitled “The Most Frequently Used English Phrasal Verbs

in American and British English: A Multicorpus Examination” (Liu, 2011). And each phrasal verb was instructed through three comic strips.

### **3.2.2 Pretest and posttest**

The pretest and the posttest were the same to assure exactly comparable assessment. They were composed of ten sentences requiring the participants to fill in the blanks with the most appropriate target phrasal verbs provided. The subjects were given half an hour to complete the test. The purpose of the pretest was to select the participants of the study and to assess the participants’ knowledge of phrasal verbs before the treatment whereas that of the posttest was to determine the effectiveness of the treatment.

### **3.3 Duration of the study**

This study was conducted during the second semester of academic year 2011, lasting five periods of 50 minutes with the introduction of two phrasal verbs in each period.

### **3.4 Research Procedures**

#### **3.4.1 Pre-testing**

A week before the treatment, the participants were required to take the pretest requiring them to fill in the blanks with the most appropriate phrasal verbs. (See Appendix A.)

#### **3.4.2 Treatment**

Ten phrasal verbs were taught through thirty comic strips according to the following steps:

##### **3.4.2.1 Warm-up (applicable only in the first period)**

- 1) The teacher activated the students’ schema by eliciting information concerning whether they had read comic strips in English and what the components of the comic strip were.

- 2) The teacher asked the students whether or not they knew what the term “phrasal verb” meant. Then, the teacher explained what the phrasal

verb was. After that, the teacher told the students that they would read comic strips and learn new vocabulary.

#### 3.4.2.2 Presentation

1) The teacher introduced two phrasal verbs in each class by distributing four comic strips to each student. (See Appendix A.) The students had to identify and underline the phrasal verbs which were used in the comic strips and then to write those phrasal verbs in their notebooks.

2) The students were required to read and try to understand the underlying meaning of phrasal verbs from graphics, pictures, words and sentences in the comic strips. The students could ask the teacher for the unknown words and what was going on in each comic strip except for the meaning of target phrasal verbs but were not allowed to use any dictionaries. They could share ideas with friends.

3) The teacher asked the students about the meaning of the phrasal verbs and the overall meaning of the comic strips such as “What does ‘give up’ mean?”

4) The students wrote down the meaning of phrasal verbs they had learned from comic strips in their notebooks.

#### 3.4.2.3 Production

1) The teacher used new comic strips where the phrasal verbs were deleted. Then, the students were required to complete the comic strips by using the two phrasal verbs they had learned at the beginning of the class. (See Appendix C.)

The phrasal verbs having introduced in the previous class were reviewed in the following class. Both the students and the teacher discussed the meaning of the phrasal verbs and the overall meaning of comic strips which were presented in the production step.

#### 3.4.3 Post-testing

To find out the extent to which comic strips could help students learn phrasal verbs, the students took the posttest a week after the treatment.

### **3.5 Data collection and analysis**

The data were from the scores on the pretest and the posttest. The correct item was worth one point, totaling ten.

The scores from the pretest and the posttest were analyzed to find the mean scores, standard deviation and p-value by the Statistical Package for Social Science (SPSS) program.

**CHAPTER 4**

**RESULTS**

In this chapter, the findings of the study are presented.

**4.1 The results**

After the treatment, the collected data were statistically analyzed. The total scores of the pretest and the posttest are shown in Table 1 below.

**Table 1** The pretest and the posttest scores

Subjects	Pretest scores (out of 10)	Posttest scores (out of 10)	Gain scores
1	1	3	2
2	1	1	0
3	0	6	6
4	1	5	4
5	0	0	0
6	1	4	3
7	1	1	0
8	0	2	2
9	1	7	6
10	0	6	6
11	0	1	1
12	0	6	6
13	0	2	2

**Table 1** The pretest and the posttest scores (continued)

Subjects	Pretest scores (out of 10)	Posttest scores (out of 10)	Gain scores
14	1	1	0
15	3	6	3
16	0	0	0
17	0	4	4
18	0	6	6
19	3	6	3
20	4	8	4
21	0	3	3
22	1	2	1
23	2	5	3
24	1	2	1
25	0	5	5
26	1	3	2
27	2	2	0
28	0	3	3
29	0	2	2
30	1	1	0
Mean	0.83	3.43	2.60
SD	1.05	2.25	-
t-test	6.80		-
	P<0.01		

Table 1 shows that most of the students (23 out of 30, or 76%) gained higher scores on the posttest. Out of 10, the pretest scores ranged from 0 to 4 with one student getting the highest score of 4 and fourteen students gaining no score (0). All of them, therefore, failed the pretest. In contrast, the posttest scores ranged from 0 to 8 with one student gaining the highest score of 8 and two students gaining no score (0). The gain scores ranged from 0 to 6 with five students gaining the highest score of

6 and seven students performing the same on both tests. Although most of the students gained higher scores on the posttest, about one-third of the students (11) passed the posttest and two-thirds (19) still failed it.

The mean pretest score was 0.83 out of 10 while that of the posttest was 3.43. The difference is statistically significant at  $P<0.01$ . Therefore, it can be concluded that comic strips could somewhat improve the students' phrasal verb learning.

The problematic phrasal verbs are shown in Table 2 below.

**Table 2** The number of correct answers for each phrasal verb

Test item No.	Phrasal verb	No. of correct answers on the pretest (out of 30)	No. of correct answers on the posttest (out of 30)	Difference
1	<i>put off</i>	1	2	1
2	<i>hang out with</i>	4	15	11
3	<i>give up</i>	1	13	12
4	<i>take over</i>	1	15	14
5	<i>run out of</i>	3	11	8
6	<i>cut down on</i>	1	16	15
7	<i>break up with</i>	3	14	11
8	<i>take up</i>	2	4	2
9	<i>come up with</i>	1	2	1
10	<i>get into</i>	8	11	3

On the pretest, the students seemed to have problems with all the phrasal verbs as only a few of them could correctly choose the right phrasal verb to fill in each item. For example, only one student correctly answered items 1, 3, 4, 6 and 9 which required the phrasal verbs “put off,” “give up,” “take over,” “cut down on” and “come up with;” only two students knew the meaning of “take up,” and three students knew “run out of” and “break up with.” In contrast, about half of the students could figure

out the meaning of such phrasal verbs as “hang out with,” “take over” and “cut down on.” However, it is noticeable that “put off,” “come up with” and “take up” were still most problematic for them.

The next chapter will discuss the results presented in this chapter.



## **CHAPTER 5**

### **DISCUSSION**

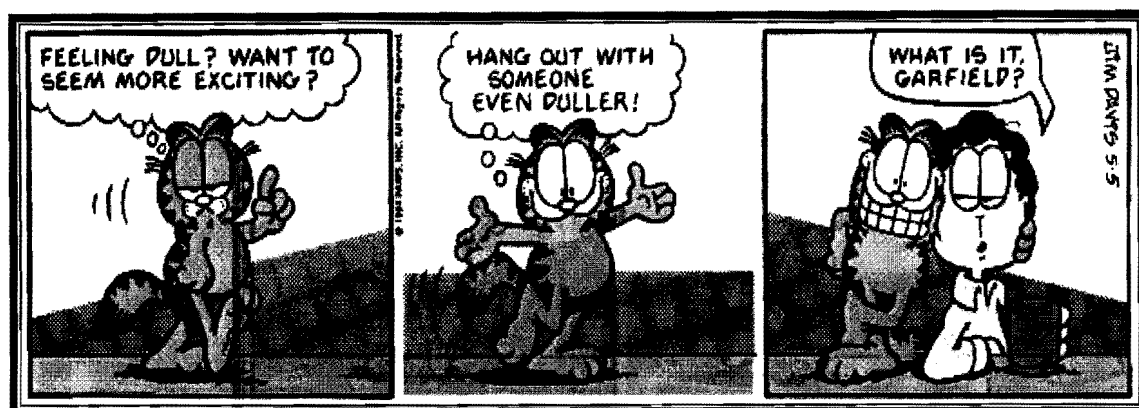
This chapter discusses the findings presented in the previous chapter and provides pedagogical implications.

#### **5.1 Discussion**

The purpose of this study was to examine the extent to which comic strips could enhance phrasal verb knowledge of Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoenyingwattana School. It was found that after the students had been taught phrasal verbs through comic strips, their mean score of the posttest was significantly higher than that of the pretest. This showed that the students had more phrasal verb knowledge after being taught through comic strips. However, the mean score of the posttest was still lower than half. This finding was similar to that of Hasitavej (2004) who used songs to teach phrasal verbs and found that the posttest mean score was 3.37 out of 10.

The reasons why most students got higher scores on the posttest might be due to the following factors. First, when learning phrasal verbs, the students could figure out their meaning from contexts such as words, sentences, graphics and pictures (DeCarrico, 2001 ; Ostrosaka, 2008), as supported by Liu (2004) that comic strips helped students better understand the texts. They were able to link what they were reading with the attached comic strips. That is, the students relied on contexts in comic strips to help them better understand their reading.

For instance, contextual words, sentences and pictures could help students figure out the meaning of “hang out with” in the comic strip as illustrated below:



(Davis, 1994)

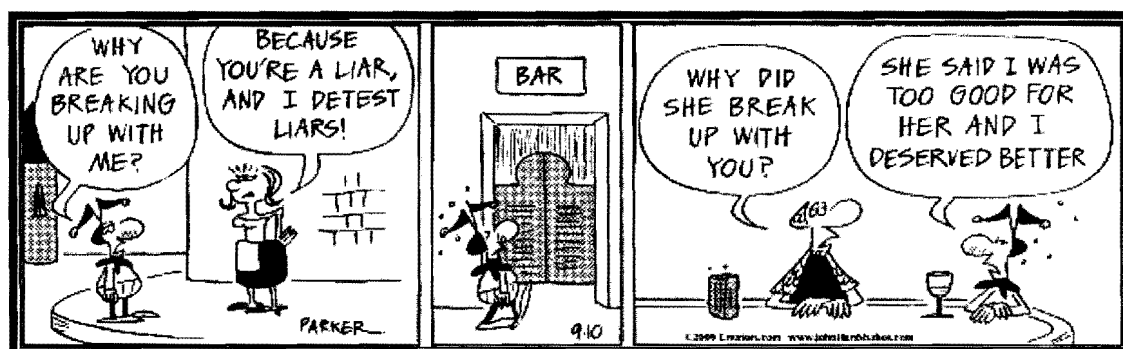
According to the result of the posttest, half of the subjects (50%) correctly chose “hang out with” as the answer for test item 2. (See Table 2) Students could know that Garfield was having some thoughts by observing the balloons in the first two frames. (See Figure 1) Garfield thought that he was feeling dull and would like to be more excited. He had an idea to hang out with someone who seemed duller than he. He then went to Jon who looked so, and he became more excited. Garfield’s face looked unhappy in the first two slots until he hung out with Jon. When the students attempted to understand the underlying meaning of the phrasal verb, they would combine the contextual words, sentences, balloons and pictures all together to help them figure out the meaning of the target phrasal verb.

Second, since one phrasal verb was presented through three comic strips, the students were exposed to each phrasal verb in different contexts for three times. In other words, the students were provided with clues to the meaning with multiple exposures to the items they were learning, leading to knowledge enhancement (DeCarrico, 2001).

Third, from the researcher’s observation, students were more motivated and interested in learning phrasal verbs through comic strips because of their features such as colorful graphics, pictures, etc (Botzakis, 2009 ; Csabay, 2007 ; McVicker, 2007 ; Norton, 2003). Similarly, Davis (1997) who used comic strips to help his students predict the beginning and the outcome of a story about sports found that comic strips could draw students’ interest to participate in the activities. Also, Synder (1997) discovered that students became interested in the content of the comic strip “Gil

Throp” when employing it to teach sociology of sports. These showed that motivation and interest could help the students study well.

Furthermore, the comic strip could also be an interesting text for students because it provided lifelike characters, humor and action (Strang, 1943). As shown in the comic strip below, the whole story is concerned with terminated relationships of a couple because the man tells a lie to his girlfriend. When his friend asks him why, he tells him a lie as well. This comic strip involves lifelike characters and a possible real-life situation, leading to better understanding of the story.



(Parker & Hart, 2009)

Nevertheless, when considering the raw scores of the posttest, 19 students gained higher scores than those of the pretest, but they still failed. Those students gained less than fifty percent although one phrasal verb was presented through three comic strips. This indicated that three times of exposure might not be sufficient for the students to acquire those phrasal verbs. It has been estimated that words would be remembered well if they have been encountered at least seven times over spaced intervals (Thornbury, 2002). Consequently, it could be said that three exposures to each phrasal verb was not sufficient for the students to learn its meaning. Moreover, all the phrasal verbs contain figurative meanings; therefore, the students could not easily recognize their meanings and might feel that they were difficult to learn. This corresponds with what other scholars (Choen, 2006 ; Neagu, 2007 ; Polackova, 2008 ; Schmitt, 2000 ; Thornbury, 2002) have found.

Based on the posttest result, the phrasal verbs that appeared difficult for the students were “come up with,” “take up,” and “put off” because after the treatment

only two students knew the meaning of “come up with” and “put off” and four students, of “take up.” The causes for this result may be that the students might have a few opportunities to be exposed to them outside the class and that some comic strips containing these phrasal verbs were culturally bound, which could be problematic for the students to understand their overall meaning such as the example below where they might not be acquainted with “stale message cookies” since they are not popular in Thailand. When the students did not understand the mentioned noun phrase, they might misunderstand the whole story.



(Parker & Hart, 2003b)

In contrast, phrasal verbs “cut down on,” “take over,” and “hang out with” were shown not to be difficult for the students since about half of them knew their meaning. This may be because “take over” and “hang out with” are generally used as borrowed words in Thai and the figurative meaning of “cut down on” is simple to figure out.

## **5.2 Pedagogical implications**

Based on the results of the study, the students could gain higher scores when phrasal verbs were presented through comic strips. However, English teachers who are interested in employing comic strips as teaching tools should select comic strips that have clear contexts especially words around target phrasal verbs, which can be clues to help the students better understand the meaning of phrasal verbs. The comic strips should also be appropriate for the students’ levels to help them better understand the reading tasks.

Although comic strips can interest and motivate students to learn phrasal verbs, cartoon animations may be used as well because they present meanings in contexts with both pictures and sounds. Moreover, those who would like to conduct research related to phrasal verbs might choose the ones which are frequently used in real-life and/or found in several sources so that students would have more opportunities to be exposed to them outside the classroom. As well, the teacher might have students produce their own comic strips, which can help students develop their writing and creative thinking skills.

To summarize the study, the conclusion will be shown in the next chapter.

## **CHAPTER 6**

### **CONCLUSION**

In this chapter, the conclusion, limitations of the study and recommendations for further studies will be provided.

#### **6.1 Conclusion**

The purpose of this study was to examine how much Mathayom Suksa six students at Thungthoengyingwattana School, Det Udom District, Ubon Ratchathani were able to learn phrasal verbs through comic strips. To answer the research question, 30 comic strips with ten target phrasal verbs were selected and employed as the teaching tool. Two phrasal verbs were introduced in each period, totaling five periods. Each phrasal verb was found in three different comic strips. The pretest and the posttest were used to collect the data and scores on both tests were compared and statistically analyzed. The results revealed that the posttest scores were significantly higher than the pretest ones at  $P < 0.01$ , but the mean score was still lower than half, indicating that comic strips could be somewhat effective materials for teaching phrasal verbs.

#### **6.2 Limitations of the study**

Although the study gives a satisfactory result, it is necessary to be aware of some limitations. First, the treatment of the study was conducted in a short period of time, only five days. Second, the amount of exposure was too limited. Third, the number of participants was also small, only 30 students.

### **6.3 Recommendations for further studies**

Because of the limitations mentioned in the previous section, further studies should be, first, conducted in a longer period of time. Second, the greater amount of exposure is recommended. Third, the larger number of students should be experimented in order for the study to be more generalizable.

Moreover, it might be useful to investigate whether other aspects of English can be promoted students' learning through comic strips such as cultural awareness, idiomatic expressions, verb tenses, etc.

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**APPENDICES**



**APPENDIX A**  
**THE PRETEST AND THE POSTTEST**

Name:.....No.....

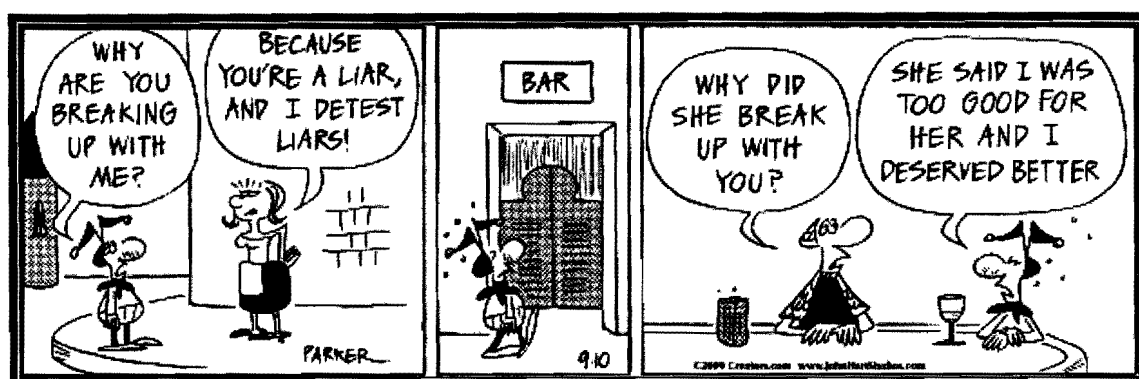
**Directions:** Fill in the blanks with the most appropriate phrasal verbs provided in the box.

break up with	come up with	cut down on	get into	give up
hang out with	put off	run out of	take over	take up

- 1. If we do not use less energy, we may \_\_\_\_\_ fuels soon.
- 2. We should \_\_\_\_\_ the meeting because we are not ready.
- 3. I can \_\_\_\_\_ you all day because I already finished my work.
- 4. Tom will stop working tomorrow. I want you to \_\_\_\_\_ his job.
- 5. You should \_\_\_\_\_ smoking because it is not good for your health.
- 6. Last summer, I learned the guitar. This summer, I will \_\_\_\_\_ the drum.
- 7. You are getting too fat. You should \_\_\_\_\_ fatty food and do more exercise.
- 8. John dated Ann for a couple of years, but he finally decided to \_\_\_\_\_ her last week.
- 9. The company is getting low profits. As a marketing manager, I need to \_\_\_\_\_ interesting ideas to increase sales.
- 10. My sisters \_\_\_\_\_ studying the Korean language because they like Korean movies and want to understand Korean words.

**APPENDIX B**  
**COMIC STRIPS FOR TEACHING**

# 1. break up with



Source: Parker & Hart, 2009

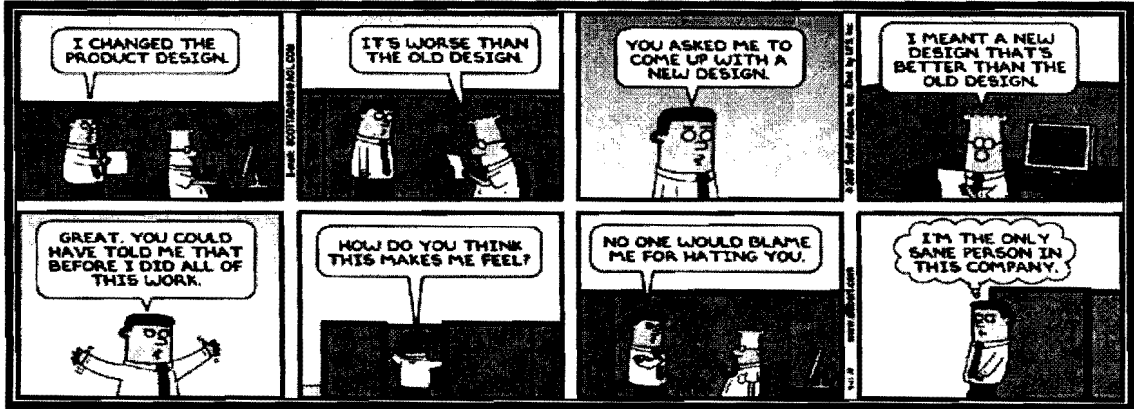


Source: Forgetta & Rose, 2011

2. come up with

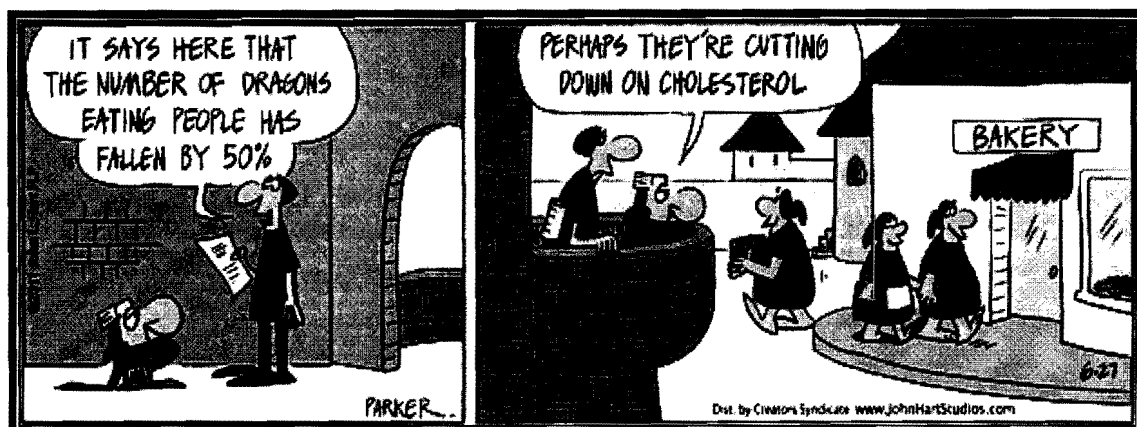


Source: Parker & Hart, 2003a

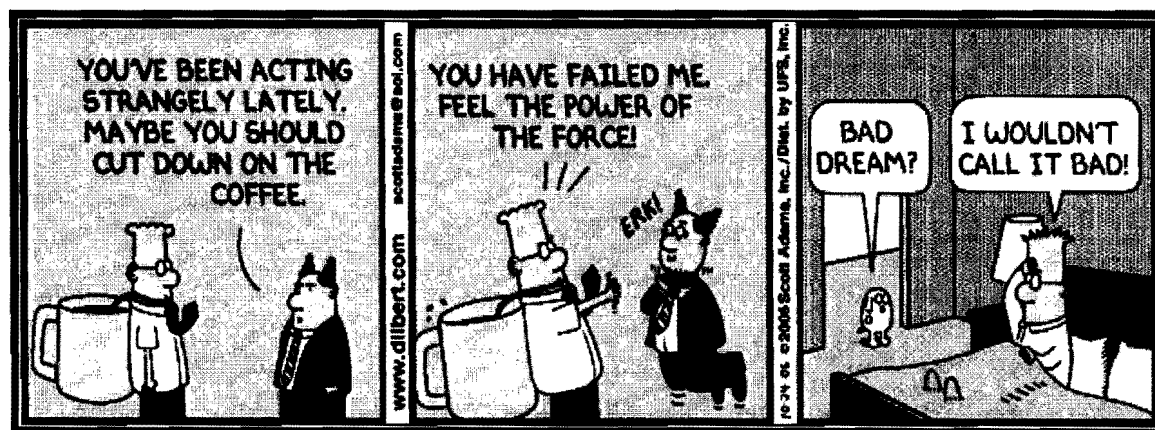


Source: Adams, 2007

## 3. cut down on



Source: Parker &amp; Hart, 2011a



Source: Adams, 2006

4. get into

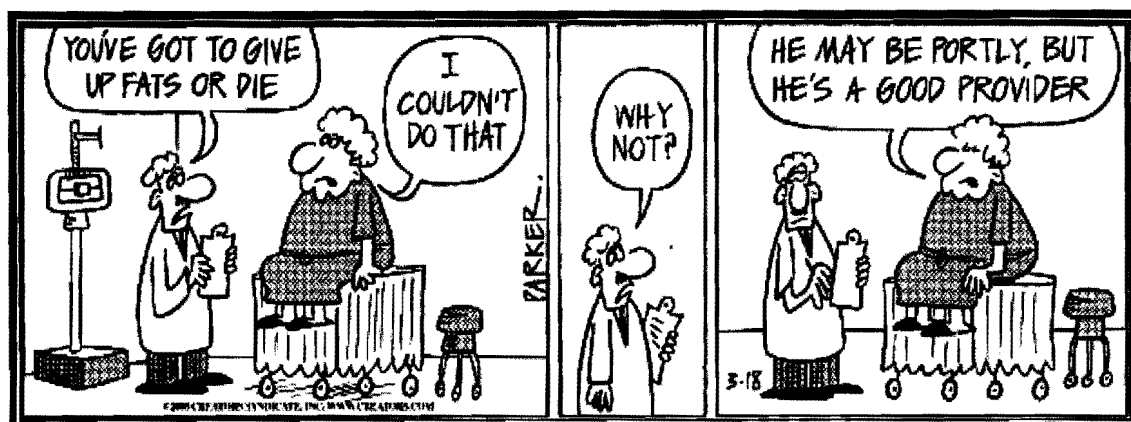


Source: Parker & Hart, 2011b

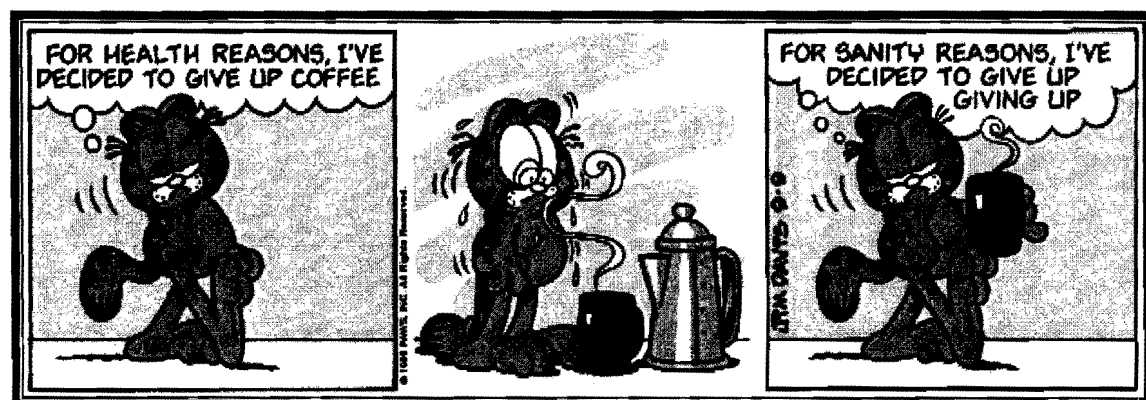


Source: Borus & Feinstein, 2011

## 5. give up



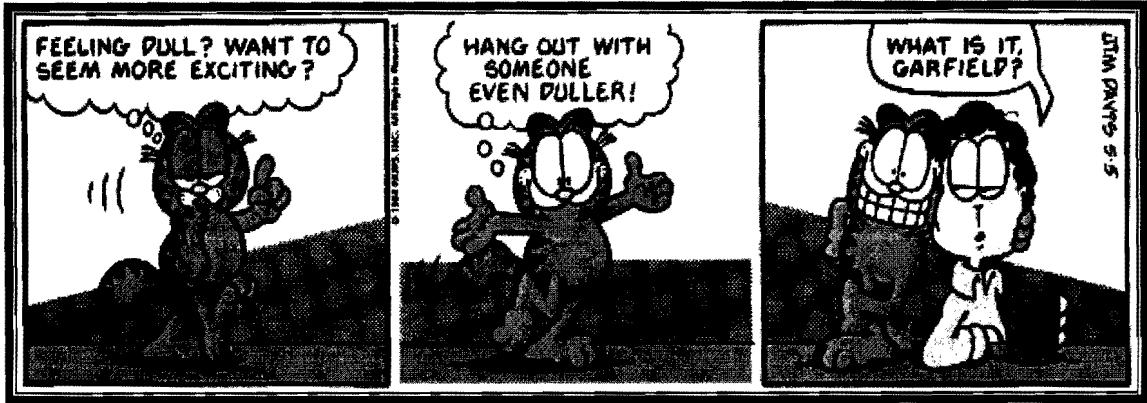
Source: Parker &amp; Hart, 2008a



Source: Davis, 1999



6. hang out with



Source: Davis, 1994



Source: Rubino & Markstein, 2011

## 7. put off



Source: Davis, 1988



Source: Smythe, 2009

## 8. run out of

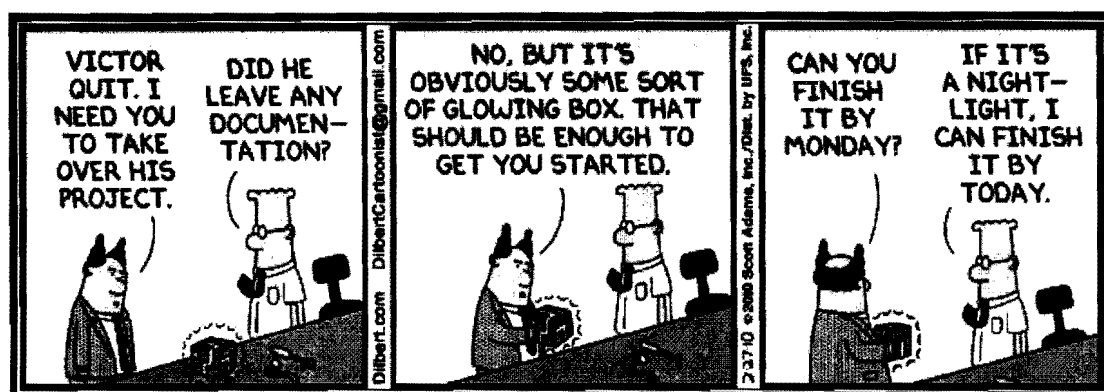


Source: Davis, 2007



Source: Davis, 1992

## 9. take over



Source: Adams, 2010a



Source: Adams, 2010b

## 10. take up



Source: Smythe, 2010



Source: Parker &amp; Hart, 2008b

**APPENDIX C**  
**COMIC STRIPS FOR PRODUCTION AND REVIEW**

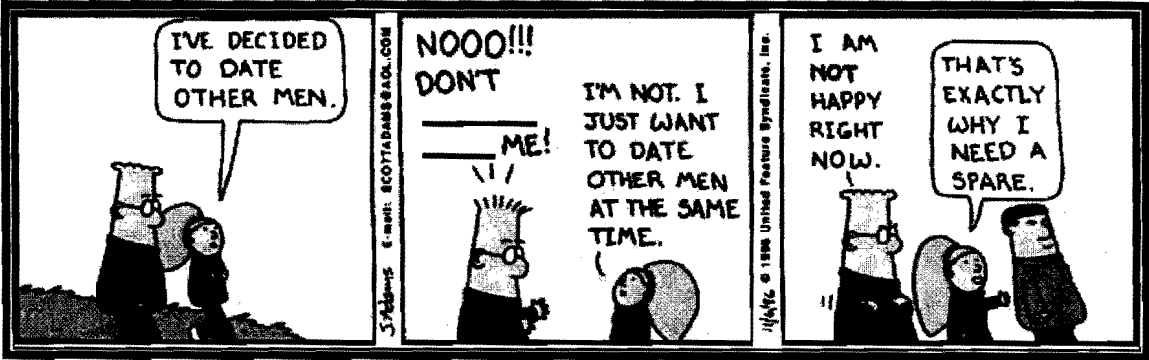
Directions: Fill in the blank of each comic strip with the most appropriate phrasal verb in the box.

break up with

come up with



Source: Parker & Hart, 2003b



Source: Adams, 1996

**Directions:** Fill in the blank of each comic strip with the most appropriate phrasal verb in the box.

cut down on

get into



Source: Adams, 1990



Source: Davis, 2006



**Directions:** Fill in the blank of each comic strip with the most appropriate phrasal verb in the box.

give up

hang out with



Source: Parker & Hart, 2010

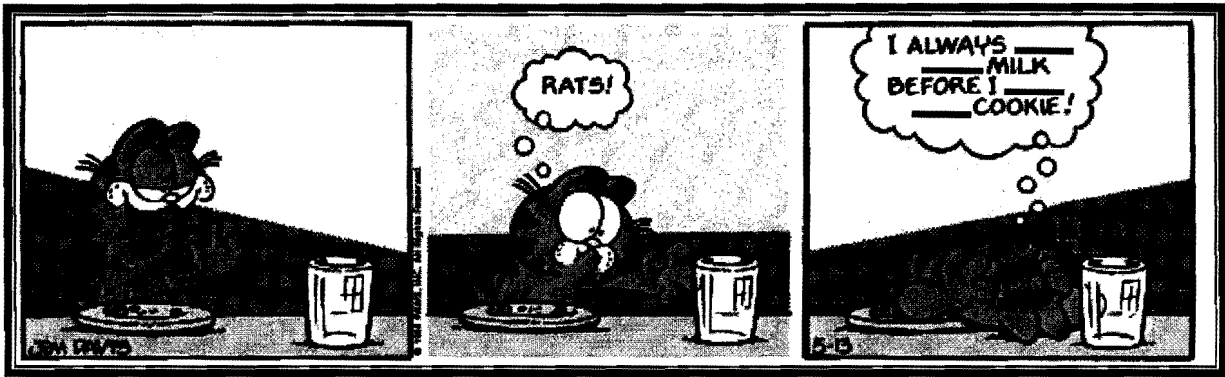


Source: Thomas, 2011

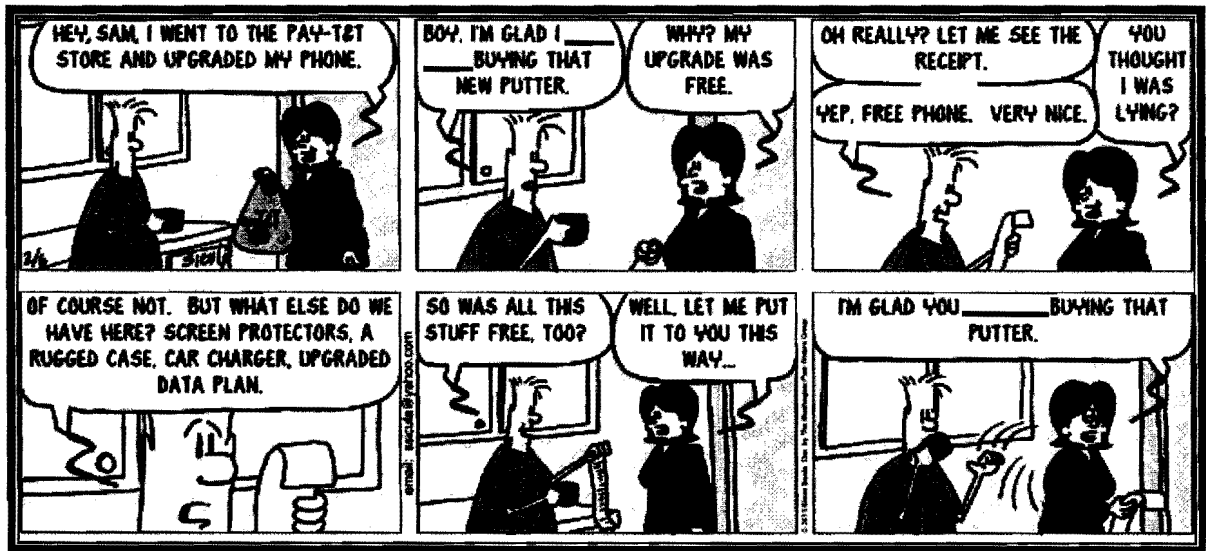
**Directions:** Fill in the blank of each comic strip with the most appropriate phrasal verb in the box.

put off

run out of



Source: Davis, 1985

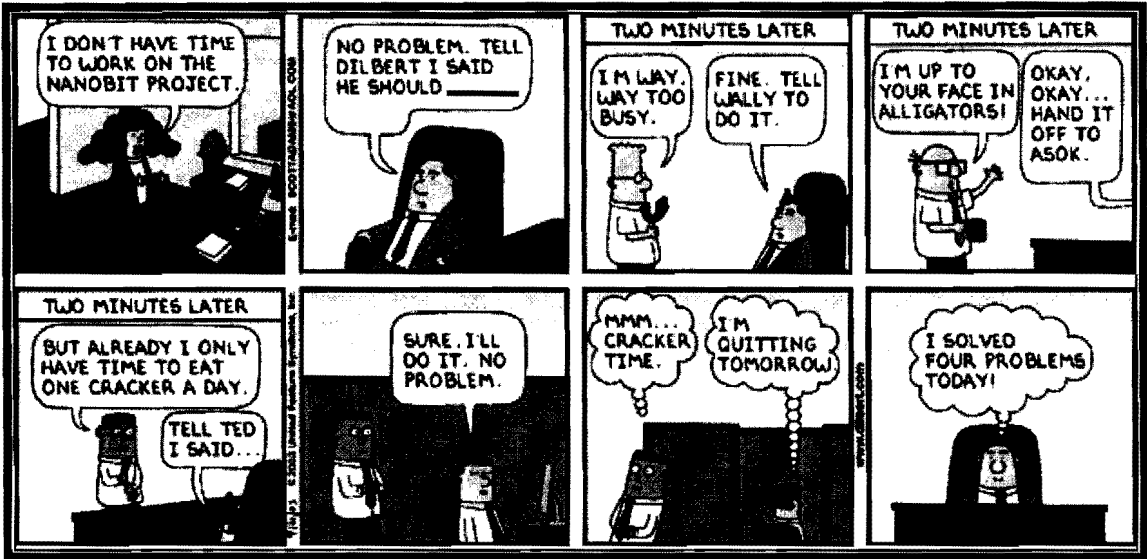


Source: Sicula, 2011

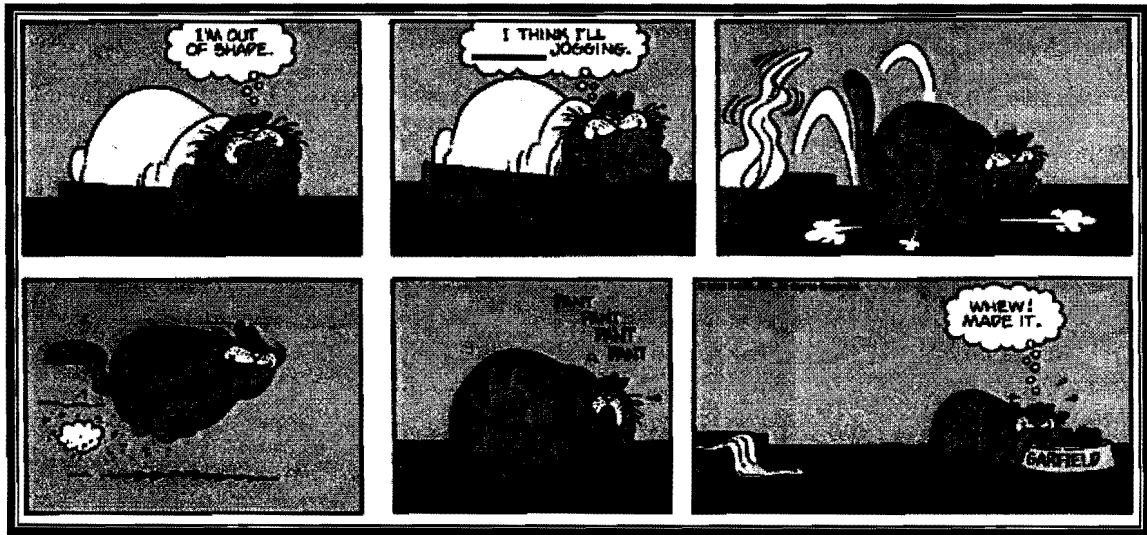
**Directions:** Fill in the blank of each comic strip with the most appropriate phrasal verb in the box.

take over

take up



Source: Adams, 2003



Source: Davis, 1978

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