

The Problem of Using the Phrasal Verbs by 3rd year Students of English Department

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Abstract

The Iraqi students who learn English for several years face some difficulties in learning grammar of the target language “English language”. For that reason, this study tries to investigate the syntactic problems of learning the phrasal verbs that faced the 3rd year students in the Department of English, the students do not know the difference between prepositional verbs and phrasal verbs.

Keywords: Phrasal Verbs, Prepositional Verbs.

1. Introduction

A phrasal verb is a special kind of verb that consists of two (or three) parts. The first part is always a verb. The next part is a word such as across, after, away, back, down, in, into, off, on, out, over, or up. In a phrasal verb, this second part is called a particle.

Phrasal verbs are a rather complex piece of language, and language learners often have trouble connecting some phrasal verbs to their meanings.

Phrasal verbs are word combinations which consist of a verb and a morphologically invariable particle, such as *look up*, *make out*, or *go through*. They are considered formulaic because they are composed of at least two orthographic units (many are composed of three, the verb and two particles, e.g. *make up for*) which act as a single lexical unit. Some phrasal verbs are fairly transparent in meaning (e.g. *stand up*), while others are non-compositional (e.g. *make up*). Their status of single semantic units is evidenced by the fact that they can often be replaced by a one-word verb equivalent, for instance (*put off* by *postpone* and *turn up* by *arrive*.) Many are polysemous in nature. For instance, the phrasal verb *bring up* will acquire radically different meanings depending on the context in which it is used (*bring up the tools from the basement* means ‘carry them up’; *bring up children* means ‘nurture’; *bring up a suggestion* means ‘mention’) (Aarts, et al., 2014).

2. Types of Phrasal Verbs:

2.1. *Intransitive Phrasal Verbs*

Intransitive verbs **cannot** have a direct object after them.

The subject is doing the action of the verb, and nothing receives the action. An intransitive verb does not pass the action to an object.

- We **smiled**.

Here we cannot have an object after the intransitive verb **smile**.

- You cannot “**smile** something” (incorrect).

An intransitive verb expresses an action that is complete in itself and it doesn't need an object to receive the action.

The same rule applies to intransitive phrasal verbs. You cannot have an object after an intransitive phrasal verb.

- My car **broke down** on the way to work.

Broke down in the past tense of **break down**. *Break down* means to stop working.

You cannot “**break down** something”. **Break down** is an intransitive phrasal verb.

- Can you **sit down** please?
- You cannot “**sit down** something”.

Some more example sentences with intransitive phrasal verbs:

- I **grew up** in New Zealand.
- You are driving too fast. Can you **slow down**?
- We should **dress up** for the party.
- Nobody **found out** that I didn't have an invitation.
- I **get up** at 7 every morning.
- What time do you think he is going to **show up**?

A phrasal verb can be **transitive** or **intransitive**. The best way to understand the difference between these two types of verbs is by trying to find the **direct object**. The direct object is a **noun** or **noun phrase**

referring to a person or thing which is receiving the action of a transitive verb.

Intransitive phrasal verbs have no direct object:

- Example Francesco said he would meet us at 6pm, but he never **showed up**.
- Katy **grew up** in Brighton, England.

Phrasal verbs, which do not take a direct object, are called intransitive phrasal verbs. They normally consist of a verb and an adverb as its particle. Therefore, free combinations of verb plus adverb need to be distinguished semantically. (Anggraeni D., 2019).

Examples of intransitive phrasal verbs: John *turned up*.

The examples clearly show the idiomatic meaning of the phrasal verbs by bounding the verb and the adverb into a unit. The words cannot be interpreted individually as you can only predict the meaning of the whole combination. In comparison to free combinations, it is possible to interpret the meaning of the verb and the particle in isolation while the utterance still makes sense.

2.2. *Transitive Phrasal Verbs*

Transitive verbs require an object to complete their meaning.

Imagine that I say **I need**.

This sentence is **incomplete**. There is information that is missing.

You are probably wondering what I need.

Why is this sentence incomplete?

Because **NEED** is a **transitive verb**, and a transitive verb needs an object after it to complete the sentence. The object after a transitive verb can be a **noun** or a **pronoun**.

- **I need** *a dictionary*.

Now the sentence is complete, and we can understand it. We added the object "*a dictionary*" after the verb.

Subject + **transitive verb** + *object*

We can see that transitive verbs need an object after them.

The same rule applies to transitive phrasal verbs.

If someone says: “I’m looking for”

You would automatically think “Looking for *what*? Looking for *whom*?”

- I am **looking for** *my keys*.

My keys is the object (that you are looking for). Now the sentence is clear.

We need to add an object to make the sentence complete.

More examples of transitive phrasal verbs in sentences:

- He’s **looking for** *his passport*.
- You should **put on** *a jacket* because it’s cold outside.
- Can you **turn off** the light when you leave the room please?

Now look at this sentence.

- Please **take off** *your shoes* before entering the house.

The object appears after the transitive verb as we have seen so far.

However, sometimes the object goes in the MIDDLE of the transitive phrasal verb. For example

- Please **take** *your shoes* **off** before entering the house.

Both sentences are correct.

With some phrasal verbs you can put the object in the middle but that is not always the case.

We will see more about the position of objects with phrasal verbs in another lesson.

phrasal verbs consist of two parts: a verb and the adverb particle. Phrasal verbs can be either transitive or intransitive, plus they can differ by having literal or idiomatic meaning.

If a phrasal verb has a literal meaning, the verb and the particle represent their own semantic meanings. But in the case of idiomatic phrasal verbs, you have to read and interpret the two words as one unit as they together form the figurative or metaphorical meaning.

By taking a direct object, the phrasal verb can be defined as transitive. There are many examples of transitive phrasal verbs. (Alangari, et. al.,2020)

Examples:

- 1) Laura *turned on* the heater.
- 2) Tom will *find out*.

Considering the combinations of verb and particle, the word order can differ. In free combinations, the particle can either follow or precede the direct object. This is to be found in the first example, where it is possible to say “Laura turned on the heater” as well as “Laura turned the heater on.”

In the case of a personal pronoun as the object, the word order is normally restricted to mostly having the particle following the object. In the case of a long object, the particle is usually preceding it. Thus, there are some verbs, which simply do not allow the particle to precede or follow the object respectively.

A transitive phrasal verb usually consists of the verb and its adverb particle. Both are followed by a noun phrase, for example in:

- Abbildung in dieser Leseprobe nicht enthalten

If we have a fully idiomatic transitive phrasal verb, then the lexical verb and its particle cannot be separated by any other word except the object.

Transitive: It is important to **look up** any new vocabulary in a dictionary.
– Here, ‘look up’ means to search for something.

Intransitive: It has been a difficult year, but things are starting to **look up**. –
Now, ‘look up’ means to get better or improve. (Coe, et, al., 2006)

Transitive phrasal verbs **have a direct object**:

e.g., I will set up a meeting with the manager.

What is being ‘set up’? The meeting with the manager.

John gave up smoking 5 years ago.

What did John ‘give up’ 5 years ago? Smoking.

Some phrasal verbs can be both transitive and intransitive, with different meanings: e.g. look up (Hart, C.W. 2017).

Types of phrasal verbs

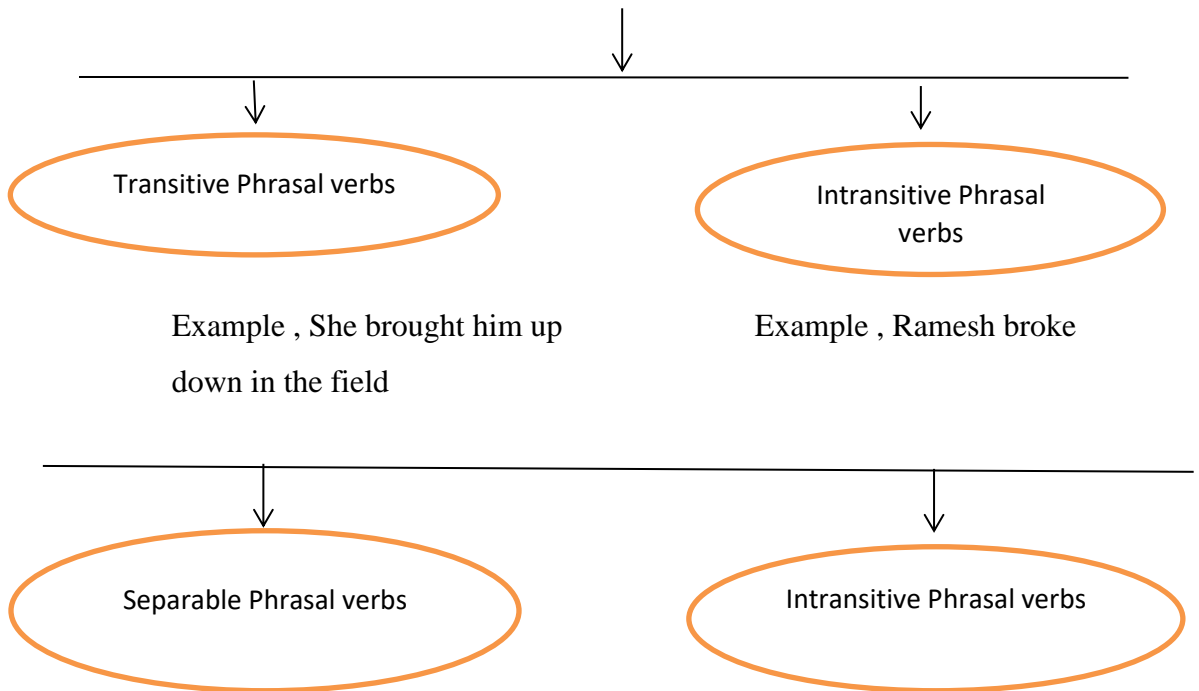


Figure (1): Types of Phrasal Verbs

3. Prepositional Verbs:

A prepositional verb is a verb that is followed by a preposition. The meaning of these two words together is usually very similar to the original meaning of the verb. Prepositional verbs have two parts: a verb and a preposition which cannot be separated from each other:

For example,

To worry

To worry about (someone or something)

There are some prepositional verbs that we use very often, so it's useful to try to remember them. Here they are with their meanings and an example:

PREPOSITIONAL VERB	EXAMPLE
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<i>agree with</i>	<i>"I agree with you 100%."</i>
<i>approve of</i>	<i>"My parents didn't approve of me leaving university."</i>
<i>university."</i>	

*believe in
tooth fairy.”*

“He’s 11 years old but he still believes in the

*care for
consist of*

“She’s a nurse. She cares for the elderly.”

“What does your course consist of?”

decide on

“We need to decide on the budget for next year.”

Prepositional verbs with an object

There are a few prepositional verbs that have an object which can be put between the verb and the preposition. For example,

Remind + object + of

You remind me of my cousin.

Provide + object + with

They provided us with the material we needed.

Thank + object + for

I’d like to thank you for coming today.

Prepositional verbs are really useful to know because using the right preposition after a verb makes you sound very fluent. So when you learn new verbs, pay attention if they need to be followed by a particular preposition. As you can see from the examples above, the meaning often changes according to the preposition you use.

4. Application of Phrasal Verbs in Daily Life:

- a. When someone wants to express the idea of continuation by using the phrasal verb “went on”, Murphy and Smalzer (1985:276) .as in: the party went on until 4 o’clock in the morning.
- b. When someone wants to express the idea of movement or change of state, they use the phrasal verb “come apart”, McCarthy and O’Dell (2004:16) .as in: the party went on until 4 o’clock in the morning.
- c. . When the speaker has health problem that they want to get rid of, they use the phrasal verb “fight off”, McCarthy and O’Dell (ibid:116) .for example: I’m fighting off lung cancer.
- d. When a person tries to express the idea of seeing, observing, or noticing something, they use “look through” meaning read quickly, Workman (1993:9) like:. can you look through my homework?
- e. When someone wants to express the idea of physical actions, like “put up” meaning build in this context , Hart (2017:109) as in : we need to put up a fence to keep the rabbits out of our garden.
- f. When a person wants to express the idea of completing or finishing up a business, they use the phrasal verb “sort out”, Errey (2007:119) .for example: they sorted out everything before the seminar.

5. Data Analysis and Discussion

The researchers made a test for twenty students at third year from Al-Noor college university at English department. The test is made of two questions (recognition and production) to increase the test's reliability.

It's clear that students face a great deal of difficulty in dealing with phrasal verbs in the English language. In the production question, students were particularly weak, because the results for it are drastically worse than those for the recognition question, which is not to say are good by any means, but the results for the first question fared better than the second. Still, the results for the first question are below average. Looking at the results of the production question lets us know that students don't know the difference between prepositional verbs and phrasal verbs, or even what the correct particles are, and that's a major problem for the students.

6. Conclusion and Recommendations

Students confuse phrasal verbs with prepositional verbs for two reasons: first, the obvious similarities between the two in terms of structure, second, lack of general knowledge in this area of the language. Phrasal verbs can be difficult for students of EFL, so we recommend including more of the subject in the curriculum, and constant use of phrasal verbs in authentic contexts. Students should try to notice phrasal verbs when they occur in different place. Students should try and learn the differences in meaning and structure between phrasal and prepositional verbs.

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