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**Difficulties Encountered by EFL Learners in Using and  
Comprehending Phrasal Verbs:**

**The Case of English 3rd Year LMD Students, University of Jijel**

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirement for Master Degree  
in Didactics of Foreign Languages

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at the English Language Department

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# *Dedication*

*I dedicate this humble effort to;*

*My beloved parents for their sacrifices, love, and care in order to make me the man I am*

*today,*

*My brothers and sisters for their unconditioned love and support,*

*My friends and beloved ones for standing by my side,*

*My partner for his contribution in this interesting experience,*

*My class mates who walk the road with me from day one till the end,*

*My book friends for being such a source of inspiration, uniqueness, and development,*

*My teachers for their guidance in all the steps of my schooling studies,*

*The memory of **Hichame** and **Imene**, “**Though you fall apart, you always in my heart**”.*

*Adel*

# *Dedication*

*In the name of ALLAH, the Most Gracious, Most Merciful, All praise to Him alone, the  
Sustainer of the entire world.*

*I dedicate this work to:*

*The pillars of my life; my sympathetic **MOTHER** and my thoughtful **FATHER** whose love  
and support guided me all the way to success.*

*To all my Brothers and Sisters who always believed in me and pushed me forward and  
helped me in all possible ways.*

*To all my nephews and nieces, and all the extended family.*

*To my friends and classmates each one by his /her name, and the previous classmates with  
whom I shared the university life with all its lights and shadows.*

***Fawzi***

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### **Abstract**

Despite the fact that phrasal verbs are essential linguistic items that native speakers of English constantly use in their daily conversations, informal situations, and even in their writings, EFL learners find them difficult to learn and use them less frequently. In order to tackle this issue, the present study aims at investigating EFL learners' difficulties in comprehending and using phrasal verbs properly. It has been hypothesized that EFL learners at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia face difficulties in comprehending and using phrasal verbs due to their semantic and syntactic properties. In this respect, a test was administered to 25 third year LMD university students of the academic year 2018/2019 to find out which semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs are more problematic for learners, and a questionnaire was mainly assigned to 15 teachers of oral and written expression as well as those of grammar at the same university to explore their views and perceptions on learning phrasal verbs and the main difficulties learners encounter when learning them. The findings reveal that most of EFL learners misunderstand and misuse phrasal verbs due to their idiomatic meaning. Moreover, the position of the particle and the use of the wrong verb and particle are considered to be the most syntactic problems to EFL learners. This implies that EFL learners at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia face difficulties in comprehending and using phrasal verbs because of their semantic and syntactic properties.

### **List of Abbreviations and Symbols**

**EFL:** English as a foreign Language

**EModE:** Early Modern English

**LMD:** Licence, Master, Doctorate

**L1:** First Language

**L2:** Second Language

**N:** Number of students

**OE:** Old English

**PVs:** Phrasal Verbs

**List of Tables**

Table 1.1. Phrasal Verbs: The Basics .....	21
Table 1.2. Phrasal Verbs and their Equivalent One-word Verbs .....	22
Table 1.3. Distinctions of the Types of Phrasal Verbs .....	27
Table 2.1. Group-verbs in present-day English.....	39
Table 3.1. Teachers' Gender.....	50
Table 3.2. Teachers' Teaching Experience .....	50
Table 3.3. Teachers' Opinions about the Importance of Phrasal Verbs.....	51
Table 3.4. Teaching Phrasal Verbs as a Whole Lesson/ Lessons to the Learners.....	52
Table 3.5. The Frequency of Phrasal Verbs' Use in Oral Productions by Learners .....	53
Table 3.6. The Frequency of Phrasal Verbs' Use in Writing by Learners .....	54
Table 3.7. The Use of Phrasal Verbs as a Criterion of Good Mastery of English.....	54
Table 3.8. Teachers' Notice of the Difficulties Faced by Learners in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs .....	55
Table 3.9. The Main Difficulties Faced by Learners in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs .....	56
Table 3.10. The Learners' Focus While Learning Phrasal Verbs .....	57
Table 3.11. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Fall down" .....	60
Table 3.12. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Climb up" .....	61

Table 3.13. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Come across" .....	61
Table 3.14. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Walk away from" .....	62
Table 3.15. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Wash up" .....	62
Table 3.16. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Work on" .....	63
Table 3.17. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Read up on" .....	63
Table 3.18. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Meet up with" .....	64
Table 3.19. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Make out" .....	65
Table 3.20. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Wait on" .....	65
Table 3.21. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Chew out" .....	66
Table 3.22. Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Put up with" .....	66
Table 3.23. Learners' Performance in Using the Right Particle.....	67
Table 3.24. Learners' Performance in Using the ight verb .....	68
Table 3.25. Learners' Performance in Using the Right Position of the Particle .....	68

Table 3.26. Learners' Performance in Using the Right Position of the Particle .....	69
Table 3.27. Learners' Performance in the Transitivity and Intransitivity of Phrasal Verbs	69
Table 3.28. Learners' Performance in the Transitivity and Intransitivity of Phrasal Verbs	70
Table 3.29. Learners' Performance in the Recognition of the Prepositional Verb .....	71
Table 3.30. Learners' Performance in the Recognition of the Prepositional Verb .....	71
Table 3.31. Frequency of Learners' Difficulty in the Semantic Features .....	72
Table 3.32. Frequency of Learners' Difficulty in the Syntactic Features .....	73

## Table of Contents

Dedication.....	1
Acknowledgements.....	3
Abstract.....	4
List of Abbreviations.....	5
List of Tables.....	6
Table of Contents.....	9
<b>General Introduction</b> .....	13
Introduction.....	13
1. Review of Previous Research.....	13
2. Statement of the Problem.....	15
3. Aim of the Study.....	16
4. Research Questions.....	16
5. Hypothesis of the Study.....	17
6. Means of Research.....	17
7. Structure of the Study.....	17
<b>Chapter One: Overview on Phrasal Verbs</b> .....	19
Introduction.....	19
1.1. Multi-Word Items.....	19
1.2. Definitions of Phrasal Verbs.....	20
1.3. Construction of English Phrasal Verbs.....	21
1.4. Phrasal Verbs and One Word Synonyms.....	22
1.5. Importance of English Phrasal Verbs.....	23

1.6. The Historical Rise of Phrasal Verbs.....	24
1.6.1. Phrasal Verbs in Old English.....	24
1.6.2. Phrasal Verbs in Middle English.....	25
1.6.3. Phrasal Verbs in Early Modern English.....	25
1.6.4. Phrasal Verbs in Present-Day English.....	25
1.7. Syntactic Features of Phrasal Verbs.....	26
1.8. Semantic Features of Phrasal Verbs.....	28
1.8.1. Literal Phrasal Verbs.....	29
1.8.2. Semi-transparent Phrasal Verbs.....	29
1.8.3. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs.....	30
1.9. Approaches to Teaching and Learning Phrasal Verbs.....	31
1.9.1. Focus on the Verb.....	31
1.9.2. Focus on the Particle.....	32
1.9.3. Contextualization.....	32
Conclusion.....	33
<b>Chapter Two: Difficulties in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs.....</b>	<b>34</b>
Introduction.....	34
2.1. Difficulties with Syntactic Properties of Phrasal Verbs.....	34
2.1.1. Problems in Using the Right Verb and Particle.....	35
2.1.2. Problems in the Transitivity of Phrasal Verbs.....	35
2.1.3. Problems in the Position of the Particle.....	36
2.1.4. Problems in the Recognition of the Prepositional Verb.....	36

2.2. Difficulties with Semantic Properties of Phrasal Verbs.....	37
2.2.1. Idiomaticity of Phrasal Verbs.....	37
2.2.2. Multiple Meaning of Phrasal Verbs.....	37
2.2.3. Complexity of the Phrasal Prepositional Verbs.....	38
2.2.4. Idiomaticity of the Particle.....	38
2.3. Phrasal Verbs and Prepositional Verbs.....	39
2.4. Formality and Informality of Phrasal Verbs.....	41
2.5. Register of Phrasal Verbs.....	42
2.6. Phrasal Verbs Avoidance.....	43
Conclusion.....	45
<b>Chapter Three: Field Work.....</b>	<b>46</b>
Introduction.....	46
3.1. Research Methodology.....	46
3.1.1. Population and Sampling.....	46
3.1.2. Research Instruments.....	47
3.2. The Teachers Questionnaire.....	48
3.2.1. Description and Administration of Teachers Questionnaire.....	48
3.2.2. Analysis of Teachers Questionnaire.....	49
3.2.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Teachers Questionnaire Results.....	58
3.3. The Students Test.....	59
3.3.1. Description and Administration of Students Test.....	59
3.3.2. Analysis of Students Test.....	60

3.3.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Students Test Results.....	72
3.4. Overall Analysis of the Results.....	74
Conclusion.....	76
<b>General conclusion.....</b>	<b>77</b>
Pedagogical Recommendations.....	78
Limitations of the Study.....	78
Suggestions for Further Research.....	79
References	
Appendices	
Résumé	
ملخص	

# **General Introduction**

## Introduction

1. Review of Previous Research
2. Statement of the Problem
3. Aim of the Study
4. Research Questions
5. Hypothesis of the Study
6. Means of Research
7. Structure of the Study

## **General Introduction**

### **Introduction**

In the process of second language acquisition, learners of second language (L2) acquire the capacity to comprehend language, as well as to produce and use sentences to communicate. An adequate command of English as a foreign language (EFL) largely depends on the mastery of its different aspects. One of these aspects is phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb is a combination of a lexical verb and a particle that can be either a preposition or an adverb. These items are very important to comprehend and communicate in both formal and informal situations. Cornell (1985), stated that phrasal verbs are notably essential to comprehend and communicate with native speakers since they are commonly used in spoken and in informal written language. Fletcher (2005) stressed that phrasal verbs can also be used in all types of texts, even in formal texts, when they are the most appropriate way to convey an idea. However, it is widely observable that the majority of EFL learners encounter difficulties in understanding and using the phrasal verbs. There is no doubt that phrasal verbs are considered to be an important feature of English and one which presents the learner with considerable difficulty (Crystal, 1995). Alexandra (2001) stated that phrasal verbs, as lexical items, are undoubtedly one of the most difficult tasks in learning a second language. All researchers admit that English phrasal verbs are one of the most puzzling items of the English language to be learned by EFL learners because of their features.

### **1. Review of the Previous Research**

Identifying the difficulties and problems EFL learners face when using and comprehending phrasal verbs was considered as an interesting topic in the language teaching area, studies were carried out to investigate the common errors and the main sources of difficulties and problems faced by EFL learners in different contexts.

Liao and Fukuya (2004) investigated avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Chinese learners. They took into account learners' level (intermediate, advanced) and phrasal verbs types (figurative, literal). Participants were divided into seven groups including six groups of Chinese learners and the control group of native speakers. Each of the six groups was asked to choose one of the three types of tests (multiple choice, translation, or recall) whereas the control group of native speakers took the multiple-choice test. The results indicate that intermediate learners avoided using phrasal verbs and preferred to use single word synonyms because their first language (L1) lacks phrasal verb structure. In contrast, advanced learners did not adopt avoidance strategy, but they used phrasal verbs less than native speakers did. Further, advanced, as well as intermediate learners tended to use literal phrasal verbs more than figurative ones.

Al- Qudah (2012) identified the main errors committed by English major undergraduates at all levels at Yarmouk University in Jordan in the acquisition of some selected phrasal verbs. The researcher designed a forty-item test to be distributed to 120 students at the department of English to assess their acquisition of the selected phrasal verbs in four areas: semantics, structure, collocations, and phonology. The findings of the study indicate that 67.5% of the participants scored above the average whereas 32.5% of them scored below the average. The students did best in the area of structure with a mean of 78.3%. Therefore, they proved to have difficulties in the acquisition of semantic and collocational features of phrasal verbs. Fadanelli (2012) conducted a corpus study to examine the similarity between the most common phrasal verbs used by Brazilian EFL learners and native speakers of English. The study also investigated the tendency of Brazilian EFL learners to avoid using phrasal verbs. The results revealed that Brazilian learners tend to adopt the strategy of avoidance in the phrasal verb usage. Moreover, a

large number of phrasal verbs found in the corpus used by Brazilian EFL learners were not the same as the phrasal verbs used by native speakers.

In addition, GarElzain (2012) tackled the uses of phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs by EFL students at Sudan University of science and technology (faculty of languages). The study is also oriented to examine learners' attitudes towards using phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs. A test and a questionnaire were administered to collect data. The results of the study revealed that university EFL students were not able to use phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs due to their limited vocabulary. This keeps them away from getting access to the meaning of these English items. The findings also displayed that the majority of students have negative attitudes towards using English phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs. They considered phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs the most problematic part of language to be learned because of their figurative meaning.

Recently, Bronshteyn and Gustafson (2015) tackled the challenges facing EFL learners including mastery problem and avoidance. In addition, they provided a proposed approach to go beyond teaching the syntactic level and look for ways to teach the semantic understanding of these structures. They concluded with a review of literature, which proposed some innovations in teaching phrasal verbs. According to the studies they reviewed, they found that teaching phrasal verbs through using pictures and working in pairs increases interaction, talk, and feedback. This may help EFL learners to better identify and interpret phrasal verbs.

Numerous studies have been carried out to investigate the main difficulties and problems EFL learners face in learning and using phrasal verbs in different contexts. The main causes behind these problems are explained in relation to their semantic features and their context in which EFL learner' native language is overused. The current study is an

attempt to investigate the main difficulties that EFL learners encounter in comprehending and using PVs in accordance with their semantic and syntactic features.

## **2. Statement of the Problem**

Phrasal verbs are one of the distinctive features of native speakers. They use them in their every day conversations effectively and purposefully. However, phrasal verbs are considered to be an area of difficulty for EFL learners. The main problem in comprehending phrasal verbs is that their meaning could be too ambiguous to guess even though the learners might know the meaning of their individual parts. Moreover, restrictions in the construction of phrasal verbs could cause a problem for EFL learners in their use. In light of what is indicated above, the researchers in this study were pushed to wonder whether the semantic and the syntactic features pose difficulties for EFL learners in the comprehension and the use of phrasal verbs.

## **3. Aims of the Study**

The aim of this study is to shed light on the difficulties faced by EFL learners when using and comprehending phrasal verbs in relation to their semantic and syntactic properties. Second, it aims at identifying the most difficult semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs for EFL learners. It also aims at exploring the teachers' views and perceptions about the English phrasal verbs.

## **4. Research Questions**

The present research raises the following main questions:

- To what extent are learners at the department of English aware of the use and comprehension of phrasal verbs?
- Do syntactic and semantic properties of phrasal verbs cause any difficulty for Algerian EFL learners?

- How much time or lessons are devoted to teach and learn phrasal verbs at the department of English?
- To what extent are phrasal verbs used by learners at the department of English in oral and written productions?

### **5. Hypothesis of the Study**

Considering the above research questions, the following hypothesis is formulated: EFL learners at the department of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel University, face difficulties in using and understanding phrasal verbs due to their semantic and syntactic features.

### **6. Research Methodology**

Beiske (2002) claims that: “while factors such as time and costs certainly play an important part in deciding how to approach a particular research problem, the subject of the research itself should ultimately determine the methods used” (p.1). In line with the above statement, the researchers have opted for a quantitative method, strongly believing that it is the most suitable for conducting this research. For the purpose of data collection and in order to find some acceptable answers for the questions of this research, a questionnaire will be assigned to EFL teachers at the department of English at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel University. Likewise, an exploratory test will be addressed to third year students of English. The choice of third year students is based on the assumption that being advanced learners, and supposed to have a large vocabulary in the target language. The main reason behind the use of the questionnaire and the test is to investigate the students’ difficulties in using and understanding phrasal verbs in accordance with their semantic and syntactic properties.

## **7. Structure of the Study**

The research presented is divided into two parts, in addition to a general introduction which presents an overview about the topic, and a general conclusion that summarizes the whole study.

The theoretical part includes two chapters. Chapter one “Overview on Phrasal Verbs” provides definitions of multi-word items and phrasal verbs. Also, it emphasizes on the construction and one word synonyms as well as on the importance of phrasal verbs and its historical rise. In addition to that, it sheds light on the semantic and the syntactic features of phrasal verbs and refers to approaches to teaching and learning these items.

The second chapter entitled “difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs” focuses on the difficulties related to both semantic and syntactic features and distinguishes between phrasal verbs and other multi-word items specifically prepositional verbs. Then, it tackles the issue of formality and informality of phrasal verbs and their register and ends with discussing the problem of learners’ avoidance of using phrasal verbs.

The Practical part “Fieldwork” presents the population and the sample besides the description of the research tools used. It also presents the analysis and interpretation of the teachers questionnaire and students test and ends with an overall discussion as an attempt to answer the research questions.

# **Chapter One: Overview on Phrasal Verbs**

## Introduction

### 1.1. Multi-Word Items

### 1.2. Definitions of Phrasal Verbs

### 1.3. Construction of English Phrasal Verbs

### 1.4. Phrasal Verbs and One Word Synonyms

### 1.5. Importance of English Phrasal Verbs

### 1.6. The Historical Rise of Phrasal Verbs

#### 1.6.1. Phrasal Verbs in Old English

#### 1.6.2. Phrasal Verbs in Middle English

#### 1.6.3. Phrasal Verbs in Early Modern English

#### 1.6.4. Phrasal Verbs in Present-Day English

### 1.7. Syntactic Features of Phrasal Verbs

### 1.8. Semantic Features of Phrasal Verbs

#### 1.8.1. Literal Phrasal Verbs

#### 1.8.2. Semi-transparent Phrasal Verbs

#### 1.8.3. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

### 1.9. Approaches to Teaching and Learning Phrasal Verbs

#### 1.9.1. Focus on the Verb

#### 1.9.2. Focus on the Particle

#### 1.9.3. Contextualization

## Conclusion

## **Chapter One: Overview on Phrasal Verbs**

### **Introduction**

Phrasal verbs are one of the distinctive features of the English language. They are widely used in spoken discourse by native speakers, and can also be a common part of written and formal English. Given the fact that phrasal verbs are important patterns of English language, a considerable amount of literature has been published in the area of phrasal verbs, notably in the field of EFL, such as Littlemore (2001), Fletcher (2005), and Littlemore (2006) who stress out the importance of phrasal verbs to language learners. This chapter provides an overview of phrasal verbs. First, it begins with a definition of multi-word items, of which phrasal verbs are a subtype as well as some definitions of phrasal verbs. Then, it deals with the importance of phrasal verbs and their historical rise. In addition to that, it includes a more detailed description of English phrasal verbs by discussing their syntactic and semantic features. Last but not least, the chapter sheds light on the different approaches to teaching and learning phrasal verbs.

### **1.1. Multi-word items**

Grammar has been taken as an important part of language. One constituent of grammar is verbs. However, verbs are divided into two categories; single word verbs and multi-word verbs. Multi-word verbs (also known as multi-word items) is the general term in which the structure of phrasal verbs is one type. Before dealing with phrasal verbs in detail, it is worthwhile to shed light on the three classes proposed by Lindstromberg (2010) into which multi word verbs can be divided. He explained that these elements consist of a verb and one or two additional elements, which are either prepositional adverbs (also known as adverbial prepositions) or prepositions. Thus, multi-word items can be broken down into three broad categories; phrasal verbs, phrasal prepositional verbs, and prepositional verbs.

- *Phrasal Verbs*: for example, Look up a word, in which up is considered to be a preposition whose grammatical object is a word. Considered to be particle rather than a full-blooded preposition.
- *Phrasal-prepositional Verbs*: for example, Put up with bad behavior, each of which is considered to consist of a phrasal verb put up followed by a prepositional phrase with bad behavior.
- *Prepositional Verbs*: for example, Look after a cat, in which after is considered to be preposition whose grammatical object is a cat.

## 1.2. Definitions of phrasal verbs

A Phrasal verb is the kind of verb that operates more like a phrase than a word. McArthur (1992) noted that these verbs are also referred to by many other names such as: verb phrase, discontinuous verb, compound verb, verb-adverb combination, and verb-particle construction. Crystal (1995) called this linguistic phenomenon a “Multi-word verb” that is best described as a lexeme, a unit of meaning that may be greater than a single word.

The term “phrasal verb” is still debatable among grammarians and researchers and many researchers define phrasal verbs differently. However, the term phrasal verb is broadly used to refer to a combination of verb with an adverb or a preposition to form a new word category that functions together as a whole. According to Murcia and Freeman (1999), a phrasal verb consists of two or more parts, a verb + an adverb or/and a preposition called a particle which functions as a single word (p.426).

Riguel (2014) claimed that verb-particle construction might be “semantically more figurative” i.e. it is difficult to guess the meaning of phrasal verbs (p.113). Moreover, Wyatt (2006) mentioned that the meaning of phrasal verbs can sometimes be easy to

obtain. However, in most cases the meanings are very different from those of the basic verb they are composed of (p.4).

Schmitt and Siyanova (2007, p. 119) proposed that multi-word verbs consist of two or more orthographic words acting as a single lexical unit whose meanings sometimes are quite easy to figure out from its separable parts. For Bolinger (1971), a PV is a combination of a verb and a particle which can be either an adverb or preposition, functioning together as a new lexical unit.

From the previously mentioned definitions of the term phrasal verb, it is obviously noticed that the PV is defined from two angles which are syntactic and semantic.

### 1.3. Construction of English phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs on the whole are formed from a small number of common verbs and a small number of prepositions or adverbs. “About, (a) round, at, up, to, through, over, out, on, off, into, in, for, down, back, away” are some of the most common phrasal verb particles. In addition, there are common verbs which form part of useful, everyday phrasal verbs including; “break, bring, call, come, cut, give, get, go, keep, knock, look, make, pass, pick, pull, put, run, set, take, turn”(McCarthy & O’Dell, 2004, p.6; Wyatt, 2006, p.4). The table below represents some key verbs of phrasal verbs and common particles and how they are combined together to construct a single unit with a different meaning.

**Table 1.1**

*Phrasal verbs: the basics*

Verb	Particle	Example	Meaning
look	up	You can <b>look up</b> any new words in your dictionary.	You can find the meaning of any new words in your dictionary.
get	through	I tried to phone her but I	I tried to phone her but I couldn’t get

		couldn't <b>get through</b> .	a connection.
make	out	I just can't <b>make Jim out</b> at all.	I just can't understand Jim's behavior.

Retrieved from: "English phrasal verbs in use" by McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004, p. 6

The above mentioned table shows how the meaning of verbs and particles as separate units differs from the meaning of the whole phrasal verb as one unit. For example, *look* means to use your eyes and *up* means the opposite of down. However, the phrasal verb *look up* in the sentence "you can *look up* any new words in your dictionary" means to search for information in the dictionary. Moreover, the same phrasal verb can have various meanings as it is illustrated in the following examples of the phrasal verb *look up* (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004, p.6):

- (5) I will *look you up* next time I am in London. (*Look up* = visit someone that you have not seen for a long time)
- (6) Things are *looking up*. (*Look up* = improve)

#### 1.4. Phrasal Verbs and One-Word Synonyms

Phrasal verbs usually have one-word synonym that sounds more formal and preferred in formal contexts than their equivalent phrasal verbs but both can replace each other and exist in language structure. The table below shows some of phrasal verbs and their equivalent one-word verbs (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008).

**Table 1.2**

*Phrasal Verbs and their Equivalent One-word Verbs*

Phrasal verb	Synonym (one-word verb)	Example
Put forward (idea, opinion,	Present	In her latest article, Kaufman <i>puts forward</i> a theory which is likely to

view)		prove controversial.
Carry out	Conduct	I intend <i>carry out</i> a series of experiments.
Make up	Constitute	Children under the age of 15 <i>made up</i> nearly half of the country's population.
Make up of	Consist of	Parliament is <i>made up of</i> 2 houses.
Point out	Observe	Greme <i>points out</i> that the increase in life expectancy has led to some economic problems.
Point up	Highlight	The study <i>points up</i> the weakness in the current school system.

Retrieved from: "Academic vocabulary in use" by McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008, p. 20

### 1.5. Importance of English phrasal verbs

It is said that phrasal verbs are mainly used in spoken rather than written form and they are very common in informal rather than formal language, while their one word equivalents are more often used in formal contexts. However, De Cock (2005) argues that the usage of PVs by native speakers to be greatest in conversations with over twice the frequency in academic writing. This suggests that PVs are not completely absent from formal settings and there are many instances in formal occasions in which the use of PVs is more appropriate and sound more natural in expressing certain ideas (Fletcher 2005). Apart from that, most PVs are idiomatic in meanings; and it is believed that 'metaphoric intelligence' has an important role to play in all areas of communicative competence and can contribute to language learning success (Littlemore 2001, 2006). This further suggests the importance of PVs to language learners and without having good knowledge of PVs

and an ability to use them appropriately, it is almost impossible for learners to gain fluency in English. Thus, it is clear that this particular language form deserves equal attention and better treatment in language teaching and learning.

### **1.6. The historical rise of phrasal verbs**

It is well known that phrasal verbs are one of the most frequent forms in spoken and written English. They are developed throughout history to create the final combination of verb +particle used in present day English. This combination is traced back to Old English.

#### **1.6.1. Phrasal verbs in Old English**

According to Lamont (2005), phrasal verbs of the present-day English are not generally found in the same form as they are existed in OE and they are rarely used. The forms that were much more common in OE are known as “inseparable-prefix verb”, a form in which the particle was attached to the beginning of the verb. These Old English prefixed verbs are comparable to current phrasal verbs. For example, OE had the verb *baernan* (to burn) and the phrasal verb *fbrbaernan* (to burn up). Phrasal verbs of the present-day English are two separate units, whereas the old form is inseparable in which the prefix “for” is connected to the verb and could not take other position as particles of Modern English can. Akimoto (1999) stated that Old English prefixes preceded the verb for the reason that “Old English had strong object-before-verb (OV) tendencies”, meanwhile, Present-Day English is largely a VO (verb-before-object) language. Affectingly, particles become able to shift to “post-verbal positions”. In other words, Old English prefixes are attached to the verb. In contrast, the verbs and particles of the phrasal verbs of present day English form two separate units (as cited in Lamont, 2005).

### **1.6.2. Phrasal verbs in Middle English**

Middle English witnessed the emergence of new forms of phrasal verbs. Denison (1986, p. 47) argued that the construction of “prefixes-verbs” in OE suffered from the loss of productivity. As a result, certain authors direct their attention toward adding post-verbal particles to prefixed verbs believing probably that the prefix was no longer meaningful. In addition, Fischer (1992, p. 386) indicated that the French language contributed intensely and directly to the development of phrasal verbs through the rapid borrowings of French verbs into Middle English.

### **1.6.3. Phrasal verbs in Early Modern English**

In Early Modern English, phrasal verbs witnessed an explosion in their use. Hiltunen (1999) noted that phrasal verbs were highly used in EModE dramatic texts because of their variable feature in their meaning and their “productive capacity to be expanded to form new idioms”(as cited in Lamont, 2005). Akimoto (1999) also approved that phrasal verbs are used more frequently in letters and dramas than in essays or academic writing in the 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> centuries (as cited in Lamont, 2005). This confirms that phrasal verbs occupied a lower social position in EModE than, perhaps, single verbs.

### **1.6.4. Phrasal verbs in Present-Day English**

The number of phrasal verbs continued to increase since the 19th century and particularly in the mid 20th century (Olson, 2013, p.14). Thereafter, because of the productive criteria of phrasal verbs, new complex forms of verb particle combinations are constructed and created (Lamont, 2005). In present day English, the phrasal verb is a “lexeme” that takes a separable adverbial particle (Wild & Mphil, 2010, p.14), and it is more restricted by specific semantic and syntactic features (Thim, 2012, p.10).

### 1.7. Syntactic features of phrasal verbs

Like one-word verbs, phrasal verbs have some distinctive characteristics that differentiate them from other classes of verbs. The combination of phrasal verbs is not random; it has some restrictions on their composition. To make it clearer, types of phrasal verbs were discussed by scholars and researchers such as Wyatt, Courtney, and McCarthy and O'Dell.

Phrasal verbs are of two types: transitive and intransitive. Wyatt (2006, p.4) provided a clear definition of transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs.

- *Intransitive phrasal verbs:* Phrasal verbs that do not require an object, such as in: You're driving too fast, you ought to *slow down*.
- *Transitive phrasal verbs:* phrasal verbs that require an object to come after the verb or after the particle as in: I think I'll *put* my jacket *on* or I think I'll *put on* my jacket.

If the object is a pronoun, however, it must come between the verb and the particle, as it is displayed in the following example. I think I'll *put* it *on* (not I think I'll put on it). However, transitive phrasal verbs may include the following cases:

- **Transitive phrasal verbs:** phrasal verbs that require an object to come between the verb and the particle, such as look up in the example below. The student *looked* the word *up*.
- **Transitive phrasal verbs:** phrasal verbs that require an object to come after the particle: The baby *takes after* his mother (not the baby takes his mother after). Why do you *put up* with the way he treats you? (Not why do you put with the way he treats you up).

- Phrasal verbs with two objects: one comes after the verb and the other after the particle. They *put* their success *down* to good planning.

Courtney (1983, p. 85) distinguished three types of phrasal verbs including verb+ adverb, as in my car *broke down* on the way to work. Verb+ preposition as in she *set about* making a new dress. And verb+ adverb+ preposition as in I cannot *put up with* him because he is always complaining.

Further, McCarthy and O'Dell (2004, p. 6) make another more detailed distinction of the types of phrasal verbs. They provide seven different grammatical patterns of phrasal verbs based on the transitivity of these verbs. These patterns are displayed in the table below:

**Table 1.3**

*Distinctions of the Types of Phrasal Verbs*

<b>Grammar pattern</b>	<b>comment</b>	<b>example</b>
<b>Eat out</b>	The verb is used without an object	We were too tired to cook at home so we decided to <b>eat out</b> . (eat in restaurant). Not: we decided to <b>eat out</b> <del>a meal</del> .
<b>Bring back sth</b> or <b>bring sth back</b>	The verb must have a non-human object	This photograph <b>brings back</b> <u>happy memories</u> . (makes me remember or think about sth in the past). Not: this photograph <b>brings back</b> <del>my sister</del> .
<b>Ask out sb</b> or <b>ask sb out</b>	The verb must have a human	I'd love to <b>ask</b> <u>Sally</u> <b>out</b> . (Invite Sally to go to a place like a cinema or restaurant). I'd love to

	object	<del>ask</del> <i>my dog</i> <b>out</b> .
<b>Look after sb/sth</b>	The object can be human or non-human.	I'll <b>look after</b> <i>the baby</i> while you're cooking. Will you <b>look after</b> <i>my bike</i> while I'm away?
<b>Ring sb back</b>	The object must come before the particle.	I'll <b>ring</b> <i>you</i> <b>back</b> later (phone you again) Not: I'll <del>ring back</del> <i>you</i> .
<b>Look after sb/sth</b>	The object must come after the particle	Can you <b>look after</b> <i>the dog</i> while I'm away? Not: Can you <del>look</del> <i>the dog</i> <del>after</del> while I'm away?
<b>Drop off sb/sth</b> <b>Drop sb/sth off</b>	The object can be before or after the particle.	I <b>dropped off</b> <i>the package</i> at her house (delivered/left). I <b>dropped</b> <i>the package</i> <b>off</b> at her house.

Retrieved from: "English phrasal verbs in use" by McCarthy & O'Dell, 2004, p. 6

### 1.8. Semantic features of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs possess not only syntactic features but also have semantic features. Hussein (2015, p. 285) stated that the combination of a verb followed by a preposition or an adverb bestows phrasal verbs various meanings. The meaning of phrasal verbs tends to be uncompositional. Although learners may understand both components forming a phrasal verb in isolation, once they are presented together a new meaning is derived. Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999) provided an account for the categorization of phrasal verbs in three different layers in relation to the degree of transparency that these entail.

- *Literal* (also called transparent, directional, and systematic).
- *Semi-literal* (also called semi-transparent and semi-idiomatic).
- *Idiomatic* (figurative) (Celce -Murcia & LarsenFreeman1999).

The division of phrasal verbs into three types is very helpful because the difficulty of the phrasal verb depends on its type.

### 1.8.1. Literal Phrasal Verbs

This category is composed of phrasal verbs that appear to be a combination of a verb and a directional preposition as *climb up*. However, they are classified as phrasal verbs, because they function syntactically like verb-particle constructions.

The particle retains its prepositional meaning and, therefore, the phrasal verb meaning is a straightforward product of their semantic components. Literal phrasal verbs are highly guessable by knowing the basic literal meaning of the component words. Thus, the meaning can be derived from the meaning of its constituent parts.

According to (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Dagut and **Laufer** 1985) here are some examples of literal phrasal verbs: *sit down, stand up, hand out, and throw away*.

### 1.8.2. Semi-Transparent Phrasal Verbs:

This is the second category where the meaning of the phrasal verb is neither literal nor idiomatic. This category consists of verbs to which certain particles describe the result of the action or reinforce the degree of the action denoted by the verb (Celce -Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999). The particles in this category appear to modify the meaning of the verb rather than serve as adverbials (Fraser, 1976).

This category can be subdivided into four semantic classes, depending on the semantic contribution of the particle:

- *Inceptive* (to signal a beginning state) as in *John took off*.
- *Continuative* (to show that the action continues) as in *His speech ran on*.
- *Iterative* (use of *over* with activity verbs to show repetition) as In :

*He did it over and over again until he got it right.*

- *Completive* (uses particles *up*, *out*, *off*, and *down* to show that the action is complete.)

Turns an activity verb into an accomplishment as in:

*He drank the milk up.*

Reinforces the sense of goal orientation in accomplishment verbs as in:

*He closed the suitcases up.*

Adds durative to a punctual achievement verb as in:

*He found out why they were missing.*

These completive phrasal verbs are normally equivalent to the corresponding simplex verb and an expression such as *to the end*, *completely*, and *all of it* (Brinton, 1988).

### 1.8.3. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

This is the third category where the meaning of the phrasal verb is idiomatic.

It is difficult and may be impossible to figure out the meaning of the verb by combining the separate meanings of its parts because a new meaning has resulted from a metaphoric shift of the meaning and the semantic fusion of the individual components. Thus, idiomatic phrasal verbs have lexicalized meanings. For example, *He ran up the bill*. Therefore, knowing the common senses of *ran*, and the spatial sense of *up* is unlikely to help a learner guess that *ran up the bill* means increased the amount of money (Dagut and Laufer, 1985; Laufer and Eliasson, 1993; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

However, someone can understand idiomatic phrasal verbs by understanding the underlying logic of the language. For example there is a contradiction between a phrase with a verb + preposition sequence as in *He ran up the hill*, and with a phrasal verb as in *He ran up the bill*. In each sentence, *run* contributes a sense of motion entailing change and *up* contributes the meaning of higher vertical direction on some path.

The listener can use logic to infer that if *one is running up a bill* and something is going to change, then what is going to change is the amount of money. Because the direction is up, it means that *the amount* of money will increase (Celce Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999). Bolinger (1971) stated that the primitive directional meaning of *up* is modified to the aspectual one by the direction that most physical acts of completion take and, therefore, *up* is associated with increase in the example of *He ran up the bill*.

### 1.9. Approaches to teaching and learning phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are considered to be one of the difficult areas for EFL learners. Different approaches were introduced and developed in order to solve problems related to teaching and learning phrasal verbs. Marks (2006) proposed several approaches to be used by teachers and learners.

#### 1.9.1. Focus on the Verb

This approach helps learners to identify the basic relationship of meaning shared by some phrasal verbs that contain the same verb. In this case, teachers are supposed to push learners to use the meaning of the basic verb in order to guess the meaning of the phrasal verb. For example, learners should be able to find out the meanings of these phrasal verbs from the meaning of the basic verb *put*.

- Television can be a useful way of putting across health messages. (Convey)
- One option is to put back the wedding. (Rearrange for a later time)
- Why can't you put your past behind? (Forget)

According to the examples above, phrasal verbs are composed of the same basic verb *put* carried different meanings when combined with different particles such as *across*, *back* and *behind*. Learners would infer the meanings of these phrasal verbs from the meaning of the verb *put* and they should be aware of the position of the particle.

### 1.9.2. Focus on the Particle

The focus in this approach is on the particle rather than the verb. Learners are supposed to look for the systematic characteristics of the particle's meaning according to its usage and its physical movement. The coming examples will show how the particle up when combined with different verbs expresses different meanings such as: beginning to happen, exist, or appear.

- The newspapers have been accused of whipping up hysteria against migrant workers. (Beginning to happen)
- The two boys cooked up a plan to steal the bike. (Exist)
- Several problems cropped up just as we were finishing. (Appear)

### 1.9.3. Contextualization

In this approach phrasal verbs are linked to the context they are used in. It will allow teachers to provide learners with further practice which helps them memorize common phrasal verbs used in native contexts. Some phrasal verbs are mainly used according to their regional variation. For instance, speakers of British English, or even speakers from other regions of USA might understand some expressions differently because they are used in different contexts. Examples of this could be:

- An American might *call you up* on your cell phone. (*Call up*= American equivalent of crush).
- A British would *ring you up* to tell you he needed you to keep down (to stay temporarily) in your apartment. (*Ring up*= associated with telephone).

According to the examples above even though the meaning of the phrasal verbs *call up* and *ring up* is associated with telephone, the phrasal verb *call up* is used in the American

context to indicate a meaning that is different from the first one. It has the meaning of crush in the American context.

In addition to these three approaches, another approach is concerned with “combining the same phrasal verb with its different meanings” where learners will be able to identify the different meanings that one phrasal verb may have in different situations. For example, the phrasal verb *take off* can extend to more than one meaning such as:

- To *take off* clothes (to remove).
- To *take off* a person (to imitate).
- To *take off* £5 (to reduce £5).

### **Conclusion**

As a conclusion and with regard to the points that have been covered in this chapter, phrasal verbs are thought to be an important feature of the English language. They play a large part in English today, particularly in spoken English. As such, being able to use them correctly is a sure way to reaching an advanced speaking level. Although they are defined differently by researchers, there is a common agreement that the term refers to a combination that consists of a lexical verb plus a particle. Based on the fact that most phrasal verbs have idiomatic meanings, their idiomaticity is believed to be the most important aspect of the English phrasal verbs; a few simple words are used to give a large number of different meanings by adding prepositions or adverbs. Phrasal verbs are also characterized by their productive capacity to invent new phrasal verbs and new meanings. The next chapter introduces the different problems and difficulties related to phrasal verbs.

## **Chapter Two: Difficulties in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs**

### Introduction

#### 2.1. Difficulties with Syntactic Properties of Phrasal Verbs

##### 2.1.1. Problems in Using the Right Verb and Particle

##### 2.1.2. Problems in the Transitivity of Phrasal Verbs

##### 2.1.3. Problems in the Position of the Particle

##### 2.1.4. Problems in the Recognition of the Prepositional Verb

#### 2.2. Difficulties with Semantic Properties of Phrasal Verbs

##### 2.2.1. Idiomaticity of Phrasal Verbs

##### 2.2.2. Multiple Meaning of Phrasal Verbs

##### 2.2.3. Complexity of the Phrasal Prepositional Verbs

##### 2.2.4. Idiomaticity of the Particle

#### 2.3. Phrasal Verbs and Prepositional Verbs

#### 2.4. Formality and Informality of Phrasal Verbs

#### 2.5. Register of Phrasal Verbs

#### 2.6. Phrasal Verbs Avoidance

### Conclusion

## **Chapter Two: Difficulties in Using and comprehending Phrasal Verbs**

### **Introduction**

Phrasal verbs are considered to be an important element of vocabulary in the English language. Their large number and the various meanings they carry have made English a rich and unique language in terms of vocabulary. They are classified as a distinctive feature of native speakers and mastering them will enable EFL learners to reach native like fluency or proficiency. However, phrasal verbs are very problematic and cause a high degree of difficulty for EFL learners, especially in their use and comprehension. Restrictions in the formulation of phrasal verbs and their idiomatic meaning are two of the most common factors that increase the difficulty of mastering phrasal verbs. This chapter emphasizes the problems related to syntactic and semantic properties, includes a distinction between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, and elaborates the formality and informality, register, and learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs.

### **2.1. Difficulties with Syntactic Properties of Phrasal Verbs**

Due to the syntactic properties of English phrasal verbs, their use presents one of the difficulties experienced by learners of English as a foreign language. Based on this fact, it is very important to shed light on the difficulties related to syntactic properties of English phrasal verbs. De Cock (2006) describes the difficulties learners of English as a foreign language encounter when using phrasal verbs. These include mainly the confusion in using the right verb as well as the right particle, transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs, and the confusion with prepositional verbs.

### 2.1.1. Problems in using the right verb and particle

In some cases, learners tend to use the right verb but the wrong particle. For example:

- You must *fill up* this form before we let you in. (Instead of You must *fill in* this form before we let you in)
- It is a task which must be *carried on* using the brain. (Instead of it is a task which must be *carried out* using the brain)

In other cases, learners tend to use the right particle but the wrong verb as in:

- We tried to *come back to* (instead of *go back to*) Los Angeles.
- Saddam Hussein had the power to *shut off* (instead of *turn off*) the heat in millions of homes.

### 2.1.2. Problems in the transitivity of phrasal verbs

EFL learners sometimes make errors in using transitive phrasal verbs intransitively or vice versa. The following sentences illustrate the learners' confusion, using transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs:

- The state should help parents to *grow up* better generations. (Incorrect)
- He or she begins to look for another love, *splitting up* the relationship. (Incorrect)

The above-mentioned examples indicate that intransitive phrasal verbs *grow up* and *split up* do not require an object but they are used inappropriately as transitive. Whereas, the appropriate use of these intransitive phrasal verbs is expressed in the following examples:

- Oh do *grow up*! You're acting more like children. (Intransitive)
- Jane and Shane have *split up*. (Intransitive)

### 2.1.3. Problems in the position of the particle

Phrasal verbs can also cause problems for EFL learners because of the different positions particles take. As a result, learners get confused in putting the particle in the appropriate place, especially with separate phrasal verbs (Olteanu, 2012, p.82). The following examples display how the particle can possess different positions.

- The soldiers *blew up* the bridge, or the soldiers *blew* the bridge *up*.
- *Leave off* working.
- She *kept* the door *open*.

The particle in phrasal verbs *blew up*, *leave off*, and *kept open* took different positions in the examples above. First, it is correct to use the particle *up* of the phrasal verb *blew up* in two different positions either to follow the basic verb *blew* or to come after the object. In contrast, the phrasal verb *leave off* must be used inseparably. However, the phrasal verb *kept open* has always to be used separately.

### 2.1.4. Problems in the recognition of the prepositional verbs

De Cock (2006) claims that phrasal verbs with prepositional particles, also known as prepositional verbs, are considered as a frequent source of difficulty for EFL learners. This is because learners may not recognize that a verb is a prepositional verb that needs to be followed by a preposition. The coming examples illustrate the misuse of the verbs *comment*, *pay*, and *listen*. They are used alone while they require the preposition *on*, *for*, and *to* respectively.

- I would also like to *comment* (instead of *comment on*) the second part of the title.
- We don't have enough money to *pay* (instead of *pay for*) a flight.
- I am used to using computers or *listening* (instead of *listening to*) the radio.

## 2.2. Difficulties with Semantic Properties of Phrasal Verbs:

Phrasal verbs can be difficult to understand and use by EFL learners due to their idiomatic meanings as whole units, the various meanings that one phrasal verb may have, and the different figurative meanings that particles contain.

### 2.2.1. Idiomaticity of phrasal verbs

The idiomatic meaning that phrasal verbs possess poses serious problems for foreign learners to predict. When learners encounter unfamiliar phrasal verbs they are able to identify what the basic verb means and what the particle means. Nevertheless, putting the two together creates a meaning that is completely different from the literal meaning of the two components. For instance, learners are aware of the meaning of the verb *put* and the particle *off* but this would not help them to deduce the meaning of the whole phrasal verb *put off*. Moreover, one may find it easy to understand the meaning of the sentence *he put off his hat* while it seems difficult to have a clear idea of the meaning of the sentences *the plane took off* (the plane rose into the air) or *he took off his teacher* (he imitated his teacher) (Rundell, 2005; Olteanu, 2012, p. 82).

### 2.2.2. Multiple meaning of phrasal verbs

The fact that many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning used in different contexts complicates understanding and using these forms for EFL learners. For example, the phrasal verb *put down* is extended to have different meanings as in:

- He finished the book and *put it down* on the table. (Literal meaning)
- You are always *putting me down*. (Criticize/humiliate)
- The police quickly *put down* the fights. (Stop/crush)
- I had to have my dog *put down*. (Kill)

### 2.2.3. Complexity of the phrasal prepositional verbs

Some phrasal verbs, also known as phrasal prepositional verbs, have three components instead of two, as *put up to*, *put up with*, and *go in for*. This category is considered problematic for learners of English to understand due to its complex combination (Olteanu, 2012, p.82). These are some examples:

- What have you been *getting up to* lately?(To do)
- I can't *put up with* his rudeness anymore.(To tolerate)

### 2.2.4. Idiomaticity of the particle

Among the difficulties faced by foreign learners is the shift of the particles from their literal to figurative meaning. According to Rundell (2005), “most of the common phrasal verb particles are in their basic meanings words describing positions in space: *up*, *down*, *in*, *out*, *on* and *off*, and all have literal uses that relate to spatial orientation”. But most of these particles also have abstract meanings. For instance, the ideas of *up* and *down* are often associated metaphorically with high and low quantities, with status and power, and with person's mood (happy or sad). That is, the idea of *up* and *down* can describe an amount *goes up* to become larger or *goes down* to become smaller.

Combining these particles with common verbs to form phrasal verbs affects learners' understanding of the whole verb because of their metaphorical meaning. When someone *steps down* means that he leaves a powerful position, and if a dictator is removed from office he is *brought down*. In each case, the choice of particle is organized and governed by rules; the particle *down* has a negative meaning. This meaning is associated with loss of power.

As a whole, the difficulty in learning and using phrasal verbs can be summarized in relation to the unpredictability of their metaphorical meanings and the rules describing their combination and position in the sentence.

### 2.3. Phrasal Verbs and Prepositional Verbs

According to Olteanu (2012, p. 27), multi-word verbs are grouped into three main categories: prepositional verbs, phrasal verbs (transitive and intransitive), and phrasal prepositional verbs. Nevertheless, EFL learners find it difficult to identify the difference between these types because “the forms of particles and prepositions are identical” (Olteanu, 2012, p. 27). In addition, some verb + particle combinations can function as both phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs. The following examples illustrate how the phrasal verbs *turn on* and *came across* can function as phrasal verbs and as prepositional verbs. (Quirk, 1973, as cited in Olteanu, 2012, p. 29)

- His former friends *turned on* him. (Prepositional verb).
- They *turned on* the right. (Phrasal verb)
- I *came across* these letters by chance. (Prepositional verb)
- Her voice *comes across* very well. (Phrasal verb)

Accordingly, EFL learners need to learn how to make a clear distinction between phrasal verbs and other multi-word expressions (Abdul Sattar, 2004, p. 8). The table 2.1 below, introduced by Denison (1998, as cited in Thim, 2012, p. 37), presents the differences between phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal prepositional verbs:

**Table 2.1**

*Group-verbs in present-day English*

(Note: Od: direct object, Oprep: prepositional object, 2ndprt: second particle)

Label	Od	Oprep	2ndprt	Examples
<b>1 intransitive phrasal verb</b>	--	--	--	<b>EAT <i>out</i>, WISE <i>up</i></b>
<b>2 transitive phrasal verb</b>	+	--	--	<b>CLEAN <i>sth. out</i>, MES <i>sth. up</i></b>
<b>3 prepositional verb</b>	--	+	--	<b>INSIST <i>on sth.</i>, DEAL <i>with sth</i></b>
<b>4 phrasal-prepositional verb</b>	--	+	+	<b>HANG <i>up on sb</i>, GET <i>away With sth</i></b>
<b>5</b>	+	+	+	<b>TAKE <i>sth. out on sb.</i>, PUT <i>sth. over on sb.</i></b>

6	+	+	--	<b>TAKE <i>sb. for sth.</i>, SUSPECT <i>sb of sth</i></b>
7	--	--	+	<b>(COME <i>on over</i>, GET <i>back in</i>)</b>
8	+	--	+	<b>GET <i>sth. over with</i>, (READ <i>sth. back out</i></b>

Retrieved from: “Phrasal verbs: the English verb-particle construction and its history” by S. Thim, 2012, p. 37.

According to the table above, intransitive phrasal verbs do not require a direct object, a prepositional object, nor a second particle (as in *eat up*), while transitive phrasal verbs need a direct object (as in *clean sth out*). Therefore, these two types of phrasal verbs do not have prepositional objects and second particles. Otherwise, “Prepositional verbs are those verbs that are followed by a preposition and a noun phrase representing the complement of the preposition but not the direct object of the verb” (Hussein, 2015, p. 285). That is, prepositional verbs always require a prepositional object, which comes immediately after the preposition as in:

- Jim *looked at* the picture. (Hussein, 2015, p. 285)
- I *came across* these letters by chance. (Olteanu, 2012, p. 29)

The third category known as phrasal prepositional verb is generally composed of three parts: verb, first particle, and second particle. However, phrasal prepositional verbs may vary to have:

- A prepositional object and second particle without a direct object (as in *hang up on sb*).
- A direct object, prepositional object, and second particle (as in *take sth out on sb*).
- A direct object and prepositional object without a second particle (as in *take sb for sth*).
- A second particle with a direct object and without prepositional object (as in *come on over*).

- A direct object and a second particle without a prepositional object (as in *get sth over with*).

#### 2.4. Formality and Informality of Phrasal Verbs

A further problem concerning phrasal verbs appears in their style. Therefore, after shedding the light on the different problems concerning semantics and syntax of phrasal verbs, there remains one single difficulty in use.

Phrasal verbs are extremely common in English, especially in the spoken form. They are more frequently used rather than their equivalent one-word verbs synonyms. They are part of daily English use, and largely appear in spoken and casual English. Some grammarians such as McCarthy (1992, p. 774), described them as “informal, emotive, and slangy” (as cited in Blake, 2002). He mentions that such phrasal verbs could be easily replaced by their Latinate synonyms. Despite the fact that phrasal verbs occur mostly in informal contexts, they are widely spread i.e. phrasal verbs have become a part of everyday use of English; they appear in broadcast news, novels, and even in lectures.

Although phrasal verbs are used most frequently in both spoken informal and written formal contexts; yet, they are also common in the academic contexts. We usually hear them used in lectures and read them in serious journals (McCarthy & O' Dell, 2008).

Using phrasal verbs in our writing does not mean that it is too informal or wrong. Nevertheless, it is preferable to use one- word verb. However, this type does not always fit; it means there are some exceptions when phrasal verbs are likely to be the most natural sounding way of expressing ideas. For example, the verb *put on* looks too natural rather than its single word synonym *don*. For example:

1. Hurry up! *Put* your coat *on*! *Put* something *on* to dress yourself in something (Oxford, 2000, p. 1032).

2. He *donned* his jacket and went out. To *don* verb (formal) to put clothes (Oxford, 2000, P. 373).

We mean by this illustration that despite the fact that the verb *don* is a formal verb of English, it is neither mostly used nor does it sound natural in use. Yet, the phrasal verb *put on*, on the other hand, is much more used and considered as the most natural one in application.

It is not always true that multi-word verbs are informal and their one-word verb synonyms are natural sounding. However, there are certain cases where phrasal verbs sound more likely natural than one-word verbs which seem to be so exaggerated formal.

Most phrasal verbs have their one-word equivalents which sound more formal than phrasal verbs themselves; yet, they are both suitable whenever used in spoken or written forms and in academic subjects (McCarthy & O'Dell, 2008). Therefore, it is better to color and refresh our style of writing by using the two types together.

## 2.5. Register of Phrasal Verbs

The word register means the level of formality of language. However, register in linguistics has three variables: *Mode*, *Tenor*, and *Field*.

- **Mode:** has to do with the channel of communication, whether the language is written or spoken.
- **Tenor:** is reflected in the roles and relationships of interlocutors. For example, the choice of sentence type to express a request is governed by the nature of the relationship between the person who makes the request and the person being asked to fulfill it.
- **Field:** is concerned with the choices of content words (Halliday, 1994, as cited in Celce Murcia & Larsen- Freeman, 1999). Consequently, the register of phrasal

verbs should be then covered in light of these variables including the level of formality.

Although many phrasal verbs have their single-word counterparts which derived from Latin, English speakers prefer to use phrasal verbs such as put off, call off, and show up instead of their Latinate postpone, cancel, and arrive which is a matter of register. One-word verbs tend to have a slightly more formal register, and are mainly used in less colloquial contexts, for example, in academic discourse and official written reports (Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007), but phrasal verbs are common in informal registers, although they are not completely absent from formal discourse. There are many examples of phrasal verbs which traditionally have been felt to be colloquial and informal, but they have become accepted in formal contexts to Cornell, it is generally true that phrasal verbs occur more frequently in the spoken rather in the written language.

Additionally, Side (1990), argued that direct equivalents of phrasal verbs do not always exist. For example, *I'm done* would be used in different social context from *I'm exhausted*. Those phrasal verbs are associated with a particular field for which there are no concise alternatives. For example: the phrasal verb *to check out* as in *I need to check out by 1:00 pm* will be understood as *to check out of a hotel room*. Thus, it is difficult to describe the same action using any other verb (as cited in Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

## 2.6. Phrasal Verbs Avoidance

Students who know what phrasal verbs are, and know how to make them up, and they are part of their knowledge, should perform and produce them in one way or another. If they do not, this implies that students are avoiding the use of phrasal verbs. As Kleinman (1977) stated in Dagut and Laufer (1985) in avoidance of phrasal verbs, a case for contrastive analysis:

Avoidance implies that the structure of phrasal verbs can be passively recognized by the learners, but not freely used by them; failure to use a structure or a word that is known to the learner is merely an indication of ignorance, not of learning difficulty.

Furthermore, Sjöholm (1995, p. 226) argued that when a feature or a structure in L2 has no counterpart in L1 system, it could either end in toughness in learning which results in committing errors or avoiding the use of that feature or that structure (as cited in Jarvis & Pavlenko, 2008). An example to clarify the assumption is the case of Finn and Swedish learners' attitudes towards phrasal verbs. In other words, Finn learners tend to avoid using phrasal verbs because such elements have no counterpart in their mother tongue; neither in structure nor in lexemes. Yet, each English phrasal verb usually expressed in one-word verb in Finnish language. Whereas, it was quite the opposite concerning the Swedish learners who find themselves using phrasal verbs more frequently because such components exist in their mother tongue and share to some extent similarities in both structure and lexical elements.

Learners who speak Latin-based language are likely to utter one-word verbs because they are similar to their native language rather than phrasal verbs. Thus, when learners prefer one-word verbs instead of compound ones, it proves that it is a matter of choice even if such single-word verbs seem odd or archaic (Barot, 2000, p. 116). Learners' choice of one-word verbs indicate their avoidance, because avoidance of phrasal verbs depends on learners' proficiency level and to what degree learners' L1 has phrasal verbs (Nesselhauf, 2005).

**Conclusion**

As previously mentioned in this study, phrasal verbs (PVs) are undoubtedly important to comprehend and communicate with native speakers, they are commonly used in spoken and written English. However, the learning and use of phrasal verbs poses numerous problems and challenges for EFL learners mainly because of their syntactic and semantic features. In addition, the similar structure shared with phrasal verbs such as prepositional verbs raises the level of difficulty and causes confusion for EFL learners. This chapter was devoted to describe the main problems and difficulties EFL learners may encounter in learning and using the English phrasal verbs.

## **Chapter Three: Field Work**

### Introduction

#### 3.1. Research Methodology

##### 3.1.1. Population and Sampling

##### 3.1.2. Research Instruments

#### 3.2. The Teachers Questionnaire

##### 3.2.1. Description and Administration of Teachers Questionnaire

##### 3.2.2. Analysis of Teachers Questionnaire

##### 3.2.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Teachers Questionnaire Results

#### 3.3. The Students Test

##### 3.3.1. Description and Administration of Students Test

##### 3.3.2. Analysis of Students Test

##### 3.3.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Students Test Results

#### 3.4. Overall Analysis of the Results

### Conclusion

## **Chapter Three: Field Work**

### **Introduction**

The previous two chapters of this study cast light on the different aspects of phrasal verbs, as well as the different problems and difficulties related to the syntactic and semantic properties of these items. This chapter, on the other hand, is exclusively devoted to present the practical field work which aims at investigating EFL learners' difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. It is mainly devoted to cover the major points starting with a description of the method used, population and sampling, and tools of research. It analyzes the results yielded from the teachers questionnaire and the students test. Finally, an overall analysis and discussion of these results is supplied in an attempt to answer the research questions posed in the initial phase of the study.

### **3.1. Research Methodology**

#### **3.1.1. Population and Sampling**

The study in hand was carried out in the department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel. It sheds light on the different problems and difficulties faced by EFL learners while using and comprehending phrasal verbs. For the sake of conducting this study; 25 of third year students were selected as the sample from the total number of population (304). Third year students were selected because they are seen as advanced learners of English and they are supposed to possess a large amount of vocabulary in the English language. Moreover, 15 teachers of oral and written expression as well as some grammar teachers at the same department were involved in the process of collecting the data needed for the current study.

### ❖ Students

The chosen population of this study is the third year LMD students of English at the Department of English, University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel during the academic year 2018-2019. The sample which consists of 25 students was chosen based on convenient selection from approximately 304 students of the entire population. The choice to work with them was intentional and purposeful because they are seen as advanced learners of English, which means that they already have enough background and good insights about the English language.

### ❖ Teachers

This study uses a questionnaire for teachers of English at the Department of English. The teachers questionnaire was assigned to fifteen teachers of oral expression, written expression and grammar at the Department of English, University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia, Jijel during the academic year 2018-2019. This number is considered as a representative sample because actually it constitutes the majority of the teachers teaching oral and written expression and grammar in foreign languages classes.

### 3.1.2. Research Instruments

Research instruments are the devices used to collect information (data) about a particular issue. According to Parahoo (1997, pp. 52-325), a research instrument is “a tool used to collect data. An instrument is a tool designed to measure knowledge attitude and skills”. There are different types of research instruments: questionnaire, interview, observation, tests, think-aloud protocol, etc .They apply to both qualitative and quantitative approaches. For that purpose, the data needed in this study were collected using a test and a questionnaire. This study makes use of quantitative methods of analyzing data. A test is administered to third year students in the form of Two tasks consisting of a list of phrasal verbs and a number of sentences for the purpose of testing the students’ abilities in

guessing the meaning and using phrasal verbs. In addition to this, a questionnaire is assigned to teachers of English in which they are asked to answer 10 questions about their perceptions and opinions about the difficulties faced by EFL learners while learning phrasal verbs.

## **3.2. Teachers Questionnaire**

### **3.2.1. Description and Administration of the Teachers Questionnaire**

The questionnaire is a set of research questions with a choice of answers proposed to a group of participants and devised for the purposes of a survey or statistical study. For Seliger and Shohamy (1989) it is a “printed forms of data collection, which include questions or statements to which the subject is expected to respond, often anonymously” (p. 172). It is a useful instrument in research because it allows the analysis in short period of time since it is possible to provide questionnaires to large informants simultaneously (Wallace, 1998).

Taking into consideration the above aspects, and due to time constraint under which the present study took place, a questionnaire was designed and assigned to teachers of oral and written expression and grammar modules at the Department of English at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. In addition to that, this instrument was chosen by the researchers rather than other instruments because of the fact that most teachers were busy and overloaded by examinations. The questionnaire was handed out to fifteen (15) teachers. Twelve (12) teachers have handed back their questionnaires. Thus, our sample includes a total of 12 teachers who have cooperated doing this study. The teachers questionnaire is made up of ten questions, arranged in three sections.

**Section One: General Information (Q1-Q2)**

The first section is about some general information. (Q1) is about gender, whereas (Q2) is about the years of teaching English in general.

**Section Two: Learning Phrasal Verbs (Q3-Q7)**

The second section is related to the learning of phrasal verbs. Whether phrasal verbs are important for EFL learners or not was the aim of (Q3). The following question (Q4) is associated to time devotion, and the frequency of teaching phrasal verbs in EFL classes.

The sequence of questions (Q5) and (Q6) aim at finding responses related to the frequency of using phrasal verbs in debates and conversations as well as in written productions by EFL learners. The aim behind (Q7) is to show whether the frequent use of phrasal verbs by learners reflects good mastery of English or not according to teachers' views.

**Section Three: Difficulties in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs (Q8-Q10)**

The third section is devoted to the difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs, it includes three questions. In this section, the researchers started by asking teachers whether they notice that their learners are facing difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs or not (Q8). The purpose of (Q9) and (Q10) is to explore the difficulties encountered by learners in using and comprehending phrasal verbs and the areas on which learners should focus more while learning phrasal verbs from teachers' perspectives.

**3.2.2. Analysis of the Teachers Questionnaire****Section One: General Information**

**Question 01:** What is your gender?

- a) Male                      b) Female

Table 3.1

*Teachers' Gender*

<b>Gender</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	03	25%
<b>b</b>	09	75%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

We can deduce from table 3.1 that the majority of the respondents to the questionnaire are females (75%), whereas the remaining percentage represents the male respondents (25%).

**Question 02:** How long have you been teaching English?

Table 3.2

*Teachers' Teaching Experience*

<b>Years of experience</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>02</b>	02	16.67%
<b>03</b>	03	25%
<b>05</b>	03	25%
<b>09</b>	01	08.33%
<b>12</b>	01	08.33%
<b>13</b>	01	08.33%
<b>14</b>	01	08.33%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

Table 3.2 explores the teachers' experience in teaching English language. It shows that 16.67% of participants have taught English for 02 years. While 25% of teachers have taught English for 03 years, a similar percentage (25%) represents teachers who have an

experience of 05 years. The remaining percentage is given for teachers who have the experience from 09 to 14 years. From the results in table 3.2, it is concluded that the majority of teachers do not have a significant experience in teaching the English language.

### Section Two: learning phrasal verbs

**Question 03:** Do you think that phrasal verbs are worthy patterns to be learned by EFL learners?

- a) yes                      b) no

Table 3.3

*Teachers' Opinions about the Importance of Phrasal Verbs*

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage
<b>a</b>	12	100%
<b>b</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

Results obtained from table 3.3 reveal that all teachers (100%) have agreed that phrasal verbs are worthy patterns to be taught for their students. From these results, we conclude that all teachers are aware of the importance of phrasal verbs. They know the crucial role that they play in learning the English language.

**Question 04:** How often do you teach a whole lesson/ lessons about phrasal verbs to your learners?

- a) Always  
b) Often  
c) Rarely  
d) Never

Table 3.4

*Teaching Phrasal Verbs as a Whole Lesson/ Lessons to the Learners*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	01	08.33%
<b>b</b>	02	16.67%
<b>c</b>	06	50%
<b>d</b>	03	25%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

Table 3.4 illustrates time and lessons devoted to teaching phrasal verbs. Half of teachers (50%) who answered this question declared that they rarely devoted a whole lesson for teaching phrasal verbs. 16.67% of participants said they often teach a whole lesson of phrasal verbs, while 25% of them have never taught a whole lesson. On the other hand, only one (01) teacher said that he/she always specified a whole lesson for teaching phrasal verbs when teaching dictionary skills in study skills module. Hence, the results clearly show that phrasal verbs as important items of English language did not get much time and lessons to be taught by teachers.

**Question 05:** How frequently are phrasal verbs used in debates and conversations by your learners?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

Table 3.5

*The Frequency of Phrasal Verbs' Use in Oral Productions by Learners*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	01	08.33%
<b>b</b>	04	33.33%
<b>c</b>	07	58.33%
<b>d</b>	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

The results obtained from the table 3.5 revealed that most of learners of English do not use phrasal verbs in debates and conversations. From the answers given by teachers, we find that 08.33% of teachers stated that learners always use phrasal verbs in debates and conversations, and 33.33% of them indicated that learners do not use phrasal verbs. The remaining percentage 58.33% is devoted for teachers who said that learners are rarely using phrasal verbs in debates and conversations.

**Question 06:** How frequently are they used in written productions by your learners?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

Table 3.6

*The Frequency of Phrasal Verbs' Use in Writing by Learners*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	00	00%
<b>b</b>	04	33.33%
<b>c</b>	07	58.33%
<b>d</b>	01	08.33%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

The data gathered in regard to this question as illustrated in table 3.6 has shown that the great majority of the participants (58.33%) declared that learners are rarely using phrasal verbs in their writings. However, 33.33% of teachers said that their students often use phrasal verbs in written productions. While only 08.33% stated that their students never used phrasal verbs. None of the teachers stated that their learners are always using the English phrasal verbs. These results indicate that the English phrasal verbs are difficult items to be used by learners in their writings.

**Question 07:** Do you think that the frequent use of phrasal verbs in debates and written productions by EFL learners reflects a good mastery of English?

- a) yes                      b) no

Table 3.7

*The Use of Phrasal Verbs as a Criterion of Good Mastery of English*

<b>Option</b>	<b>Number of teachers</b>	<b>Percentage</b>
<b>a</b>	08	66.67%
<b>b</b>	04	33.33%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

The table 3.7 shows that 66.67% of participants have agreed that using phrasal verbs by learners reflects good mastery of the English language. While 33.33% of them think that the use of phrasal verbs is not a criterion for good mastery of English. The results obtained from this question indicate that the majority of teachers think that the students who frequently use phrasal verbs in writing and speaking, necessarily, have an adequate mastery of the English.

### Section Three: difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs

**Question 08:** Do you usually notice that learners of English face difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs?

- a) yes                      b) no

Table 3.8

*Teachers' Notice of the Difficulties Faced by Learners in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs*

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage
A	12	100%
B	00	00%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

The table 3.8 displays teachers' responses to whether their learners encounter any difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs or not. The results indicate that all participants (100%) claimed that their learners find it difficult to use and comprehend the English phrasal verbs. Whereas, none of the participants (00%) have said that their learners do not encounter any difficulties when using phrasal verbs.

**Question 09:** Generally, the difficulties EFL learners face in using and comprehending phrasal verbs are related to:

- a) Their idiomatic meaning
- b) Their grammar
- c) Their multiple meanings
- d) Their style
- e) All of the above

Others, please specify

Table 3.9

*The Main Difficulties Faced by Learners in Using and Comprehending Phrasal Verbs*

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage
(a)	01	08.33%
(a+b)	02	16.67%
(a+c)	07	58.33%
(a+d)	01	08.33%
(a+c+d)	01	08.33%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

This question investigates the reasons for which using and comprehending phrasal verbs is difficult for EFL learners. The results in table 3.9 show that all the participants (100%) think that the difficulties faced by EFL learners in using and comprehending phrasal verbs are mainly related to the idiomatic meaning of phrasal verbs [a=12: (a: 01)+(a+b: 02)+(a+c: 07)+(a+d: 01)+(a+c+d: 01), 100%]. In addition, 66.67% of the participants believe that the difficulties encountered in using and comprehending phrasal verbs are due to their multiple meanings[c=08: (a+c: 07)+(a+c+d: 01), 66.67%]. Moreover,

16.67% of teachers declared that the grammar of phrasal verbs is one of the difficulties for EFL learners [b=02: (a+b: 02), 16.67%]. Similarly, 16.67% of the participants assumed that these difficulties are because of the style of phrasal verbs [d=02: (a+d: 01)+(a+c+d: 01), 16.67%]. Two teachers out of 12 specified that the lack of knowledge or the limited vocabulary competence and the absence of their counterparts in the mother tongue cause difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs.

From these results we notice that the idiomatic and multiple meanings of phrasal verbs are two of the main difficulties encountered by EFL learners in using and comprehending phrasal verbs.

**Question 10:** While learning phrasal verbs, EFL learners should focus more on:

- a) The meaning of phrasal verbs
- b) The form of phrasal verbs
- c) Phrasal verbs in context

Others, please specify

Table 3.10

*The Learners Focus While Learning Phrasal Verbs*

Option	Number of teachers	Percentage
(c)	04	33.33%
(a+c)	07	58.33%
(a+b+c)	01	8.33%
<b>Total</b>	12	100%

Table 3.10 explores the teachers' opinions about where learners should focus on more while learning the English phrasal verbs. On the basis of the results presented above all teachers (100%) argued that learners of English should focus on the context while

learning phrasal verbs [c=12: (c: 04)+(a+c: 07)+(a+b+c: 01), 100%]. Whereas, (66.67%) of teachers have said that the focus should be on the meaning of phrasal verbs [a=08: (a+c: 07)+(a+b+c: 01), 66.67%]. Only one of the participants (08.33%) believe that focusing on the form of phrasal verbs is necessary while learning phrasal verbs [b=01: (a+b+c: 01), 08.33%]. Hence, the results acknowledge that while learning phrasal verbs, EFL learners' focus should be put mostly on the phrasal verbs' meaning.

### 3.2.3. Interpretation and Discussion of Teachers Questionnaire

The results obtained from teachers questionnaire affirmed that, English language teachers are aware of the importance of learning phrasal verbs. This assumption had been proved by teachers' answers to the third question Q3 of the questionnaire. All teachers tend to agree that phrasal verbs are worthy patterns to be learned by EFL learners. On the other hand, their answers on Q4 demonstrate that the vast majority of them never devoted a whole lesson/lessons to teaching these important items, which reveal that the oral and written expression lessons devoted to learning phrasal verbs at the department of English are not fairly enough to overcome the difficulties encountered by EFL learners while using and comprehending them. Additionally, teachers' answers on Q5 and Q6 demonstrate that the use of phrasal verbs by their learners in oral and written productions is very limited with regards to their one word equivalents.

In the analysis of the third section of the questionnaire, all teachers agreed that EFL learners at the department of English are facing difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs as revealed by their answers to Q8. Accordingly, teachers relate the difficulties encountered by their learners while dealing with phrasal verbs mainly to their idiomatic and multiple meaning as confirmed by Q9. Furthermore, Q10 demonstrates that EFL learners should focus more on the meaning of phrasal verbs separately and in context in order to overcome the difficulties faced by learners while learning these items.

To sum up, from the results obtained from teachers questionnaire, the difficulties encountered by EFL learners in using and comprehending phrasal verbs could be mainly related to the idiomatic nature of phrasal verbs in addition to the limited time devoted for learning these important items at the department of English.

### **3.3. Students Test**

#### **3.3.1. Description and Administration of the Students Test**

The test used in this study was opted for by the researchers, strongly believing that it is a useful instrument to examine the students' performance and collecting information from a naturally occurring situation. It was designed by the researchers themselves with consultation of some university teachers. Their notes and suggestions were taken into consideration along with the supervisor's approval before it was administered to the subjects concerned. The test was addressed to the third year students at the department of English in order to find out whether the testees are facing difficulties with the syntactic and the semantic features of phrasal verbs and which features are more problematic for them.

The test was administered to twenty five (25) participants of the third year students in the department of English enrolling at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University of Jijel at the academic year 2018/2019, and the sample was a convenient selection from the total number of population (304).

The test (Appendix 2) given to the students is a thirty- minutes (30) written test that is composed of two main tasks. The first task includes twelve items of phrasal verbs taken from *Oxford Phrasal Verbs Dictionary for Learners of English*. When selecting the phrasal verbs, the semantic properties are considered; four transparent, four semi-transparent and four idiomatic phrasal verbs are chosen. Participants are asked to provide synonyms to phrasal verbs and use them in meaningful sentences. On the other hand, the second task is consisted of eight sentences. These sentences contain some phrasal verbs which need to be

identified as correct or incorrect, learners are also asked to correct the wrong sentences if there is a problem with the syntax of the phrasal verb, or it is used inappropriately.

Concerning the analysis of the test, problems and difficulties dealt with in the second chapter were taken as the basis for evaluating the students' answers. Each phrasal verb and sentence will be evaluated according to its difficulty.

### 3.3.2. Analysis of the Students Test

**Task A: Write down the meaning of these phrasal verbs and use each one of them in meaningful sentence.**

Table 3.11

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Fall down"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning					Use						
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 1	17	68	08	32	25	100	12	48	13	52	25	100

As Table 3.11 shows, 68% of testees guessed the meaning of the phrasal verb "fall down" correctly, whereas 32% of them failed in guessing its meaning. Concerning the use of the phrasal verb "Fall down", 52% of testees used it incorrectly, while 48% of them used it correctly. Hence, the results clearly indicate that the majority of learners succeeded in guessing the meaning of "fall down" but only half of them used it correctly in examples.

Table 3.12

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Climb up"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 2	20	80	05	20	25	100	13	52	12	48	25	100

Table 3.12 illustrates learners' performance in guessing the meaning and using the phrasal verb "climb up". The majority of students (80%) provided the right meaning and only 20% of them failed in providing the correct one. Further, 52% of students used the phrasal verb correctly in their examples but 48% of them failed in using the phrasal verb "climb up" correctly in their examples. This implies that the majority of students know the meaning of the phrasal verb "climb up" but only half of them managed to use it correctly in examples.

Table 3.13

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Come across"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 3	10	40	15	60	25	100	08	32	17	68	25	100

Table 3.13 indicates learners' performance with regard to the phrasal verb "come across". More than the half of participants (60%) gave the wrong meaning of the phrasal verb and the remaining ones 40% performed correctly in guessing its meaning. Furthermore, the majority of participants (68%) used the phrasal verb "come across"

incorrectly in their examples and only 32% provided examples with the correct use of the same phrasal verb. From the results obtained from Table 3.13, it is concluded that the phrasal verb “come across” is comprehended and used incorrectly.

Table 3.14

*Learners’ Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb “Walk away from”*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 4	17	68	08	32	25	100	11	44	14	56	25	100

It is shown in Table 3.14 that 68% of the subjects are aware of the meaning of “walk away from”, while 32% of them did not provide the right meaning of it. In addition to that, more than half of the subjects 56% used the phrasal verb incorrectly in their examples and only 44% managed to use it correctly. From the above results shown in Table 3.14, one can deduce that even though the majority of the subjects know the meaning of the phrasal verb “walk away from”, only the minority of them manage to use it correctly in their examples.

Table 3.15

*Learners’ Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb “Wash up”*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 5	19	76	06	24	25	100	14	56	11	44	25	100

In Table 3.15 shown above, almost all of the learners (76%) provided the right meaning of “wash up” and only few of them 24% failed in giving its right meaning. Moreover, more than the half of learners (56%) used the same phrasal verb correctly, whereas 44% of them misused the phrasal verb in their examples. These findings imply that most of learners know the meaning of “wash up” and more than the half of them manage to use it correctly in examples.

Table 3.16

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb “Work on”*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 6	11	44	14	56	25	100	10	40	15	60	25	100

Concerning the phrasal verb “work on”, Table 3.16 shows that 56% of students failed in guessing its meaning but 44% of them identified its right meaning correctly. On the other hand, 60% of students used the phrasal verb “work on” incorrectly in their examples, whilst 40% of them used it correctly in the examples provided. It is concluded that more than half of students performed incorrectly in guessing the meaning and using the phrasal verb “work on”.

Table 3.17

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb “Read up on”*

Phrasal verb	Meaning			Use		
	Correct	Incorrect	Total	Correct	Incorrect	Total

<b>verb</b>	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>N° 7</b>	01	04	24	96	25	100	01	04	24	96	25	100

Table 3.17 illustrates learners’ performance in comprehending and using the phrasal verb “read up on”. Almost all the participants (96%) are unaware of the meaning of the phrasal verb “read up on”, and only 4% of them are aware of its meaning. Similarly, (96%) of participants misused the phrasal verb “read up on”, while 4% used it correctly in the given examples. The above results infer that the participants are unaware of the meaning and the use of the phrasal verb “read up on”.

Table 3.18

*Learners’ Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb “Meet up with”*

<b>Phrasal verb</b>	<b>Meaning</b>					<b>Use</b>						
	<b>Correct</b>		<b>Incorrect</b>		<b>Total</b>	<b>Correct</b>		<b>Incorrect</b>		<b>Total</b>		
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
<b>N° 8</b>	15	60	10	40	25	100	11	44	14	56	25	100

Results shown in Table 3.18 indicate that 60% of learners know the meaning of the phrasal verb “meet up with”, but 40% of them do not know its meaning. Also, 56% of learners used the same phrasal verb incorrectly and 44% of them used it correctly in their examples. The meaning of the phrasal verb “meet up with” is known by the majority of the learners. However, more than half of them misused it when they were asked to provide examples.

Table 3.19

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Make out"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
N° 9	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	09	36	16	64	25	100	04	16	21	84	25	100

Table 3.19 clarifies the comprehension and the use of the phrasal verb "make out". One can notice that 64% of learners guessed the meaning of "make out" incorrectly, while 36% of them guessed it correctly. Also, 84% used the same phrasal verb incorrectly and only 16% used it correctly in their examples. As far as the results obtained are involved, the majority of the learners who passed the test are unaware of the meaning of the phrasal verb "make out" as well as its use.

Table 3.20

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Wait on"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
N° 10	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	01	04	24	96	25	100	01	04	24	96	25	100

Table 3.20 illustrates the participants' performance in comprehending and using the phrasal verb "wait on". Notably, almost all the participants (96%) performed incorrectly in both comprehension and use of the phrasal verb "wait on". The remaining ones of the participants (4%) performed correctly in understanding and using the same phrasal verb. The results imply that the overwhelming majority of the participants misunderstand and misuse the phrasal verb "wait on".

Table 3.21

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Chew out"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 11	04	16	21	84	25	100	03	12	22	88	25	100

Concerning students' performance in guessing the meaning and using the phrasal verb "chew out", Table 3.21 explains that 84% of students guessed the meaning of "chew out" incorrectly in contrast of 16% of them who succeeded in guessing its meaning. Furthermore, a remarkable number 88% of students misused the phrasal verb "chew out" as opposed to 12% of them who used it correctly in the examples provided. These results indicate that the overwhelming majority of students who passed the test misunderstood and misused the phrasal verb "chew out".

Table 3.22

*Learners' Performance in Guessing the Meaning and Using the Phrasal Verb "Put up with"*

Phrasal verb	Meaning						Use					
	Correct		Incorrect		Total		Correct		Incorrect		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
N° 12	05	20	20	80	25	100	05	20	20	80	25	100

Table 3.22 refers to the learners' performance with regard to the phrasal verb "put up with". In both comprehension and use, 80% of learners provided the right answers while 20% of them provided the wrong ones. It is clearly inferred from the table above that

the majority of the learners lack the awareness and the use of the phrasal verb “put up with”.

**B -Read the following sentences carefully to decide whether the phrasal verbs are syntactically appropriate or not. Write “correct” for right sentences and “incorrect” for the wrong ones and correct them.**

**Sentence 1:** The area was *blocked off* during the demonstration.

Table 3.23

*Learners’ performance in using the right particle*

sentence	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb					Correction of the phrasal verb						
	right		wrong		Total		right		wrong		Total	
N° 1	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	11	44	14	56	25	100	03	12	22	88	25	100

From table 3.23 we find that the majority of students 56% which represents 14 participants failed in identifying that the problem in this sentence is in the particle *off* and 11 participants with the percentage of 44% have answered correctly. On the other hand, only 12% that is equivalent to 3 participants have succeeded to use the right phrasal verb *blocked out*, while most of the participants (88%) performed in a wrong way while correcting the sentence.

The results indicate that the majority of the students who participated in the test are facing problems in using the right particle.

**Sentence 2:** When you’ve done your homework, *get across* to my house and we’ll listen to some music.

Table 3.24

*Learners' performance in using the right verb*

sentence	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb						Correction of the phrasal verb					
	right		wrong		Total		right		wrong		Total	
N° 2	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
01	04	24	96	25	100	00	00	25	100	25	100	

According to the findings presented in table 3.24, the overwhelming majority of the students (96%) have failed in guessing that the sentence contains a problem in the verb *get* and 4% of the participants which represents only one student said that the sentence is incorrect. However, none of the participants (100%) have managed to provide the correct form of the phrasal verb *come across* in the correction of the sentence.

These findings suggest that these participants have problems in using the right verb while dealing with the phrasal verbs.

**Sentence 3:** If I don't like the dress, can I *get back* my money?

Table 3.25

*Learners' performance in using the right position of the particle*

sentence	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb						Correction of the phrasal verb					
	right		wrong		Total		right		wrong		Total	
N° 3	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
04	16	21	84	25	100	02	08	23	92	25	100	

The phrasal verb used in this sentence must be separated by the object. It is noticeable that the data provided in table 3.25 implies that most of students (84%) failed to identify that the particle *back* is misplaced, while the remaining 16% have declared that the sentence is incorrect. In addition to that, a great percentage of participants 92% did not



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13	52	12	48	25	100	05	20	20	80	25	100
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The phrasal verb *grow up* used in this sentence is intransitive; that is, it does not need to be followed by an object. From table 3.27, it is clear that more than half of the participants (52%) have said that the sentence is incorrect and it was expected that the students would succeed to provide the right correction. Surprisingly, when it comes to correction only 5 students with a percentage of 20% have managed to give the correct form of the sentence.

**Sentence 6:** Jane and Shane have *split up*.

Table 3.28

*Learners' performance in the transitivity and intransitivity of phrasal verbs*

sentence N° 6	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb					
	right		Wrong		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	17	68	08	32	25	100

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This sentence contains of an intransitive phrasal verb. The aim behind this sentence is the same as the previous one. According to the findings presented in table 3.28, a considerable number of students (68%) knew that the sentence is correct, while 32% of the participants gave wrong answers and failed to identify that the phrasal verb *split up* does not need to be accompanied with an object.

From the above table, it seems that most of the participants have no problem with the transitivity or intransitivity of phrasal verbs.

**Sentence 7:** We don't have enough money to *pay* a flight.

Table 3.29

*Learners' performance in the recognition of the prepositional verb*

Sentence	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb						Correction of the phrasal verb					
	right		wrong		Total		right		wrong		Total	
N° 7	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%	N	%
	21	84	04	16	25	100	21	84	04	16	25	100

This sentence represents the difficulty in recognizing the prepositional verbs. These items are sometimes used alone while they require a preposition. Table 3.29 shows that the majority of participants (84%) have succeeded in both identifying and correcting the prepositional verb, while 16% which represents 4 participants failed to recognize that the verb needs to be followed by the preposition *for*.

**Sentence 8:** I'm *counting on* my father to help me pay for my classes.

Table 3.30

*Learners' performance in the recognition of the prepositional verb*

sentence N° 8	Appropriateness of the phrasal verb					
	right		wrong		Total	
	N	%	N	%	N	%
	16	64	09	36	25	100

The same as the previous sentence, this sentence represents the problem with the prepositional verbs. It is given in its correct form and learners are asked to guess whether it is correct or not. Table 3.30 shows that, most of the learners (64%) have managed to identify that the sentence is correct. Whereas, 36% of the learners did not succeed to guess that the sentence is correct.

It is revealed from table 3.29 and table 3.30 that the majority of students have no difficulty in recognizing the prepositional verbs.

### 3.3.3. Interpretation and Discussion of the Test

The test was administered for the purpose to identify the most difficult semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs for EFL learners as well as their use at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University.

Table 3.31

*Frequency of learners' difficulty in the Semantic Features*

Phrasal verbs (1 – 12)	Meaning			Use of phrasal verbs		
	frequency	percentage	Mean	frequency	percentage	Mean
<b>Literal phrasal verbs(1 - 4)</b>	36	21.06%	09	56	27.05%	14
<b>Semi-literal phrasal verbs (5 - 8)</b>	54	31.58%	13.5	64	30.92%	16
<b>Idiomatic phrasal verbs (9 – 12)</b>	81	47.36%	20.25	87	42.03%	21.75

From the results of the test at the semantic level, it is concluded that the majority of participants were poor in identifying the idiomatic meaning of phrasal verbs. For example: *put up with* and *wait on* which they mean *to tolerate* and *to serve in a restaurant*, were identified as *to put something in a high place*, and *wait for long time*. On the other hand, a low number of them face difficulties in identifying the meaning with regard to the literal phrasal verbs and the semi-literal ones. For example: *work on* and *wash up* which they mean *to work hard in order to improve something* and *to clean something dirty using water*, were identified as *to shape something* and *to carry something*. This indicates that learners failed in the comprehension of the idiomatic phrasal verbs, with a small confusion while handling the literal and semi-literal types. In using phrasal verbs in examples, one

can notice that half of the learners failed in using the literal phrasal verbs even though the majority of them have managed to identify their correct meaning. For example: *she decided to walk away from her job, and a man was hit by a car while he was coming across the road*. One can notice that the phrasal verbs in these two sentences are misused by the participants who they tended to say “*to quit the job*” in the first sentence, and “*to cross the road*” in the second sentence. Furthermore, the majority of learners failed in using semi-literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs. For example: *my parents are making out a plan for this summer, make sure you chew out your food properly before you swallow, and the student asked to read up on the book of his friend*. It is clear that the semi-literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs in these three sentences are misused by the participants because they tend to understand them literally. The results obtained from Task A imply that EFL learners who passed the test face difficulties mostly in the idiomatic meaning as well as the use of the three semantic types of phrasal verbs namely; literal, semi-literal, and idiomatic. What is noticeable in this part of the test is that the phrasal prepositional verbs *put up with* and *read up on* seemed to be more problematic for participants, because none of the participants managed to identify their meanings and to use them in examples.

Table 3.32

*Frequency of learners' difficulty in the Syntactic Features*

Sentences (1 - 8)	Difficulty in identification of the problem			Difficulty in correction of the problem		
	frequency	percentage	Mean	frequency	percentage	Mean
<b>Problems of using the wrong verb and particle (1+2)</b>	38	33.93%	19	47	35.88%	23.5
<b>Problems in the position of the particle (3+4)</b>	41	36.61%	20.5	43	32.82%	21.5

<b>Problems with the transitivity and intransitivity of phrasal verbs (5+6)</b>	20	17.86%	10	28	21.38%	14
<b>Problems in recognizing the phrasal prepositional verbs (7+8)</b>	13	11.60%	6.5	13	09.92%	6.5

Concerning the syntactic level, the findings of the test indicate that the problem of using the wrong verb and particle, as well as problems in the position of the particle are considered as the most difficult syntactic types of phrasal verbs for EFL learners at the department of English. In addition, only a low number of participants faced difficulties in identifying the errors concerning transitive and intransitive. Prepositional verbs were identified by the majority of learners. Further, the majority of the participants failed in using the phrasal verbs correctly even if they have managed to identify the source of error in the sentences given.

### **3.4. Overall Analysis and Interpretation of the Results**

As mentioned in the initial stages of this research, the aim of the study is to identify the main semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs that cause difficulties in their comprehension and use by EFL learners. The process of collecting data was through administering a questionnaire and a test for teachers and learners. The findings and the results obtained from both the questionnaire and the test are used as an attempt to answer the research questions posed at the beginning of the study.

#### **3.4.1. The Extent of EFL Learners' Use and Comprehension of Phrasal Verbs**

Based on the results accumulated from the questionnaire and the test, most of EFL learners at the department of English face difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs. That is to say, all teachers who answered the questionnaire noticed that their learners

face difficulties in the use and the comprehension of phrasal verbs. Moreover, the scores of the majority of learners who passed the test clearly indicated that they are unaware of the use and the comprehension of phrasal verbs to a higher extent.

### **3.4.2. EFL Learners' Difficulty with Syntactic and Semantic Properties of Phrasal Verbs**

The obtained results revealed by the questionnaire and the test imply that learners 'difficulty with semantic properties are due to the idiomatic meaning of phrasal verbs. In the same sense, most of learners failed in identifying the idiomatic meaning of phrasal verbs when passing the test. In addition to the idiomatic meaning, the multiple meaning of phrasal verbs was picked by teachers to be one of the semantic properties that poses difficulty for learners.

Although that most of the teachers did not consider that the syntactic properties of phrasal verbs cause any difficulty for EFL learners, test scores clearly indicate that learners face difficulty with regard to them namely; the choice of the wrong verb and particle and the position of the particle.

### **3.4.3. Lessons Devoted to Teach Phrasal verbs**

On the basis of what the teachers questionnaire revealed, it was concluded that time devoted for teaching phrasal verbs as a whole lesson or lessons is almost rare. Thereby, English foreign teachers tend to ignore phrasal verbs in EFL classes even if they are considered to be important for EFL learners.

### **3.4.4. The Extent of EFL Learners Use of Phrasal Verbs in Oral and Written Productions**

The results obtained from the questionnaire revealed that the majority of EFL learners at the department of English rarely use phrasal verbs in debates and conversations

as well as in written productions in EFL classes. Additionally, the results of the test indicated that the majority of EFL learners at the department of English face difficulties in using phrasal verbs appropriately. The fact that EFL teachers do not focus on phrasal verbs even if they are important, make learners avoid using phrasal verbs and push them to use their one-word verb synonyms in oral and written productions.

### **Conclusion**

The study in hand aims at investigating the extent to which EFL learners understand and use phrasal verbs. It also lays emphasis on the types of phrasal verbs that seem to be difficult for them. The findings indicate that the majority of EFL learners misunderstand and misuse phrasal verbs. When it comes to the semantic properties of phrasal verbs, idiomatic phrasal verbs are more difficult to identify and use. Furthermore, the choice of the wrong verb and the wrong particle in addition to the position of the particle are considered as the syntactic types that pose more difficulty for learners. The results reached at the end of this study prove that the semantic and the syntactic features of phrasal verbs create difficulties for EFL learners.

## **General conclusion**

1. Pedagogical Recommendations
2. Limitations of the Study
3. Suggestions for Further Research

### **General Conclusion**

The present study aims at investigating the comprehension and the use of phrasal verbs by EFL learners at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. This dissertation is divided into two parts: one is theoretical and the other is practical. The theoretical part includes two chapters, while one chapter was devoted for the practical one.

In the theoretical part of the study, the first chapter provides a general overview on phrasal verbs; involving their definitions, construction, and their one-word synonyms. It also stresses out the importance of phrasal verbs as well as its historical rise. It sheds light on semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs and it points out to different approaches to teaching and learning these items. The second chapter discusses the difficulties EFL learners face in using and comprehending phrasal verbs. It introduces the difficulties associated with the semantic and the syntactic features of phrasal verbs. Also, it distinguishes between phrasal verbs and other multi-word items such as prepositional verbs. Then, it emphasizes on formality and informality, register, and the problem of learners' avoidance of using phrasal verbs.

The practical part or the field work of the study covers the procedures and the instruments used for collecting the data. In order to tackle the issue under study, a questionnaire and a test were used at the University of Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia. The questionnaire aims at exploring teachers' views and perceptions on learning phrasal verbs as well as the main difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs by EFL learners, whereas the test aims at identifying the most difficult semantic and syntactic types of phrasal verbs in terms of understanding and use. Analysis and interpretation of the results as well as an overall discussion was followed as an attempt to answer the research questions.

To conclude with, the findings obtained after collecting and analyzing data tend to support the hypothesis stated earlier at the first steps of the research. That is to say, EFL learners at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University face difficulties in comprehending and using phrasal verbs.

### **Pedagogical Recommendations**

The reported findings of this study launched a number of pedagogical recommendations in order to stress out the importance of using phrasal verbs and to overcome learners' difficulties with the semantic and the syntactic types of phrasal verbs.

It is recommended for teachers to focus on using phrasal verbs inside EFL classes. This may push EFL learners to notice that phrasal verbs are important to use in the English language. Also, it might motivate learners to search for the meaning of these items which would help them to enrich their vocabulary knowledge.

To overcome the difficulties with the semantic and the syntactic types of phrasal verbs, it is advisable to include teaching them in some courses. The semantic types of phrasal verbs can be dealt with in oral and written expression courses. Whilst, the syntactic types of phrasal verbs can be delivered to EFL learners in grammar courses.

EFL learners should not learn phrasal verbs in isolation from a list, because it would not be sufficient. It is better for learners to learn phrasal verbs in context like in examples or the use of extensive reading as an effective tool to master phrasal verbs.

### **Limitations of the Study**

In the process of conducting this research, the researchers encountered some difficulties that needed to be mentioned to serve and guide future research.

This study was limited only to third year LMD student at Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia University. Thus, the results obtained are unlikely to be generalized for all EFL learners.

The political movements that the country witnessed lately in general, the long period of strikes that took place in all universities in specific, and the time constraints limited the researchers from tackling the issue more appropriately and accurately using other instruments such as classroom observation or conducting an experiment.

Due to time limits, the researchers could not explore the learners' thoughts and perceptions on the learning of phrasal verbs and the main difficulties they encounter in using and understanding them. This led the researchers to opt for a test for learners and a questionnaire for teachers.

The administration of the test and the questionnaire were approximately at the same time with the examination period. Consequently, it was difficult to reach both teachers and learners. So, the samples of the study were small in number.

Some teachers and learners refused politely to take a part in the research for being busy with other matters and issues such as examinations, other teachers refused answering the questionnaire because they are not experienced in the field of phrasal verbs. Moreover, few teachers did not hand back their questionnaires, while some learners seemed to be careless when answering the questions of the test.

### **Suggestions for Further Research**

As a matter of fact, every research ends with both a result and a question. After conducting the present study which may hopefully open the door for further research, several suggestions are proposed for future researchers interested in the area of phrasal verbs so that an awareness of the importance of phrasal verbs may arise and the various difficulties surrounding the issue may be resolved.

It is suggested that researchers have to extend their sample, vary the instruments used (questionnaire, test, classroom observation, and experiment), explore other settings if

possible to measure whether there is a significant difference in the results obtained which will make the study more valid.

The researchers should not focus only on the semantic and the syntactic types of phrasal verbs as the only area of difficulty, it is also advisable to shed light on the absence of phrasal verbs in the mother tongue of learners as a potential difficulty. In addition to that, the limited vocabulary of the learners could be one of the difficulties they face in using and comprehending phrasal verbs. Thus, an investigation on EFL learners' knowledge of phrasal verbs could be an interested area for research.

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# APPENDICES

## **Appendix 1**

### **Teachers Questionnaire**

**Dear teachers,**

You are kindly invited to fill in the following questionnaire as a part of our research entitled “Difficulties encountered by EFL learners in learning phrasal verbs: A case study of third year LMD students of English language at Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia, University of Jijel”. Your responses are highly valued and your cooperation is genuinely appreciated. Be sure that your identity will not be revealed and information obtained will be used only to serve this particular research and will remain confidential. So, please feel free to share your ideas and opinions and report frankly your real situation when answering the following questions.

Thank you in advance for your collaboration.

Mr. Grimes Fawzi&

Boucherit Adel

Faculty of letters & foreign languages

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Department of English

Please tick (✓) the box that corresponds to your answer or writes a full statement when necessary.

**Section one: general information**

1) What is your gender?

Male  Female

2) How long have you been teaching English?

.....  
.....

**Section two: learning phrasal verbs**

3) Do you think that phrasal verbs are worthy patterns to be learned by EFL learners?

Yes  No

4) How often do you teach a whole lesson/ lessons about phrasal verbs to your learners?

Always

Often

Rarely

Never

5) How frequently are phrasal verbs used in debates and conversations by your learners?

a) Always

b) Often

c) Rarely

d) Never

6) How frequently are they used in written productions by your learners?

- a) Always
- b) Often
- c) Rarely
- d) Never

7) Do you think that the frequent use of phrasal verbs in debates and written productions by EFL learners reflects a good mastery of English?

Yes  No

**Section three: difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs**

8) Do you usually notice that learners of English face difficulties in using and comprehending phrasal verbs?

Yes  No

9) Generally, the difficulties EFL learners face in using and comprehending phrasal verbs are related to:

- a) Their idiomatic meaning
- b) Their grammar
- c) Their multiple meanings
- d) Their style
- e) All of the above

Others, please specify: .....

.....  
 .....  
 .....

10) While learning phrasal verbs, EFL learners should focus more on:

a) The meaning of phrasal verbs

b) The form of phrasal verbs

c) Phrasal verbs in context

Others, please specify: .....

.....

.....

.....

**Thank you**

## Appendix 2

### Students test

**A-Write down the meaning of these phrasal verbs and use each one of them in a meaningful sentence.**

Phrasal verb	meaning	Examples
1) Fall down	..... .....	..... .....
2) Climb up	..... .....	..... .....
3) Come across	..... .....	..... .....
4) Walk away from	..... .....	..... .....
5) Wash up	..... .....	..... .....
6) Work on	..... .....	..... .....
7) Read up on	..... .....	..... .....
8) Meet up with	..... .....	..... .....
9) Make out	..... .....	..... .....
10) Wait on	..... .....	..... .....
11) Chew out	..... .....	..... .....

12) Put up with	..... .....	..... .....
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**B -Read the following sentences carefully to decide whether the phrasal verbs are syntactically appropriate or not. Write “correct” for right sentences and “incorrect” for the wrong ones and correct them.**

1) -The area was *blocked off* during the demonstration. ....

➤ .....

2) - When you’ve done your homework, *get across* to my house and we’ll listen to some music. ....

➤ .....

3) -If I don’t like the dress, can I *get back* my money? .....

➤ .....

4) -I *looked* the number *up* in the phone book. ....

➤ .....

5) A lot of parents are criticized for the way they *grow up* their children. ....

➤ .....

6) Jane and Shane have *split up*. ....

➤ .....

7) We don't have enough money to *pay* a flight.

➤ .....

8) I'm *counting on* my father to help me pay for my classes. ....

➤ .....

## Résumé

Malgré le fait que les verbes à particule soient des éléments linguistiques importants en langue anglaise utilisé par des locuteurs natifs notamment dans leurs conversations quotidiennes et leurs situations informelles, ces verbes ont été jugés difficiles à apprendre par les apprenants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère. Afin d'aborder cette question, l'étude présente vise à examiner les difficultés des apprenants d'Anglais comme langue étrangère à comprendre et à utiliser les verbes à particule. On a émis l'hypothèse que les apprenants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère à l'Université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia font face à des difficultés pour comprendre et utiliser les verbes à particule en raison de leurs propriétés sémantiques et syntaxiques. Pour cela, un test a été soumis à 25 étudiants universitaires de troisième année du LMD de l'année universitaire 2018/2019 afin de déterminer quels types sémantiques et syntaxiques des verbes à particule sont plus problématiques pour les apprenants. De même, un questionnaire a été soumis à 15 professeurs d'expression orale et écrite ainsi qu'à ceux de grammaire de l'Université de Mohammed Seddik Ben Yahia pour explorer leurs points de vue et leurs perceptions sur l'apprentissage des verbes à particule et les principales difficultés que les apprenants rencontrent pour les apprendre. Les résultats ont révélé que les verbes à particule sont mal compris par la majorité des apprenants en raison de leur signification idiomatique. De plus, la position de la particule et l'utilisation incorrecte du verbe et de la particule sont considérées comme étant les problèmes syntaxiques les plus rencontrés par les apprenants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère. Cela confirme que les apprenants de l'Anglais comme langue étrangère à l'Université de Mohamed Seddik Ben Yahia rencontrent des difficultés pour comprendre et utiliser les verbes à particule en raison de leurs propriétés sémantiques et syntaxiques.

## ملخص

تعتبر الأفعال المركبة من العناصر الهامة في اللغة الانجليزية وتنتشر بشكل واسع في الحوارات اليومية والمواضع الغير رسمية لمتحدثي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أم. لكن قد تشكل هذه العناصر صعوبة لمتعلمي اللغة الانجليزية كلغة أجنبية عند تعلمهم لها، وعليه تم التطرق لهذه المشكلة عن طريق هذه الدراسة التي بين أيديكم والتي تهدف إلى تقصي الصعوبات التي يعاني منها طلبة اللغة الانجليزية أثناء فهمهم واستخدامهم للأفعال المركبة، وتم افتراض أن طلبة اللغة الانجليزية على مستوى جامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى يواجهون صعوبات في فهم واستخدام الأفعال المركبة بسبب خواصها الدلالية والبنوية. وبناءا على ذلك فقد تم توزيع اختبار على 25 طالبا مسجلين بالسنة الثالثة جامعي تحت نظام ل م د خلال العام 2019/2018 لاستكشاف الخصائص الدلالية والبنوية التي تشكل صعوبة أكبر لطلبة اللغة الانجليزية. كما تم توزيع استبيان على 15 أستاذ متخصصين أساسا في التعبير الشفهي و الكتابي و القواعد بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى لسبر آرائهم و تصوراتهم فيما يخص الأفعال المركبة و أهم الصعوبات التي يواجهها الطلبة عند تعلمهم لمثل هذه العناصر اللغوية. تظهر النتائج أن أغلب طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية لا يجيدون فهم الأفعال المركبة بسبب معناها المجازي. كما أن موضع الأداة (ظرف المكان أو حرف الجر) و الاستعمال الخاطيء للفعل أو الأداة (ظرف المكان أو حرف الجر) يعتبران من أكثر الصعوبات البنوية التي يواجهها المتعلمين. وعليه تم استخلاص بأن طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية بجامعة محمد الصديق بن يحيى يواجهون صعوبات في فهم و استخدام الأفعال المركبة بسبب خصائصها الدلالية و البنوية.