

## Navigating the Linguistic Labyrinth: Challenges of Using Phrasal Verbs for L2 Learners

### *Menjelajah Labirin Linguistik: Tantangan Penggunaan Frasa Kata Kerja untuk Pembelajar L2*

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Received 12 June 2024; Accepted 23 August 2024; Published 31 August 2024

#### Keywords

acquisition; complex; culture; English; proficiency.

#### Abstract

The acquisition and usage of phrasal verbs present significant challenges for second language (L2) learners due to their complex and idiomatic nature. This paper explores these difficulties through a multifaceted analysis of the linguistic and cognitive obstacles that phrasal verbs pose to learners. The study examines the study's participants, which can lead to misunderstandings and misinterpretations. The paper delves into the learners' competence levels and other issues affecting their ability to grasp phrasal verbs, which often affects their competence and performance in this area of English grammar. The paper also discusses the pedagogical approaches that have helped to facilitate the learners' learning of phrasal verbs, such as contextual learning, teachers' ability, corpora, and technology-based tools. The research findings underscore the importance of innovative teaching strategies and continuous practice for L2 learners to effectively navigate the linguistic labyrinth of phrasal verbs. By identifying key challenges and potential solutions, this paper contributes valuable insights into the complexities of language acquisition and offers practical recommendations for educators and learners alike. Ultimately, it aims to enhance our understanding of the intricate relationship between language, culture, and cognition in the context of L2 learning.

#### Kata kunci

akuisisi, kompleks, budaya, bahasa Inggris, kemahiran.

#### Abstrak

Akuisisi dan penggunaan frasa kata kerja menghadirkan tantangan yang signifikan bagi pelajar bahasa kedua (L2) karena sifatnya yang kompleks dan idiomatis. Makalah ini mengeksplorasi kesulitan-kesulitan ini melalui analisis multifaset tentang hambatan linguistik dan kognitif yang ditimbulkan oleh kata kerja frasa bagi pelajar. Studi ini meneliti para peserta penelitian yang dapat menyebabkan kesalahpahaman dan salah tafsir. Makalah ini mempelajari tingkat kompetensi peserta didik dan masalah lain yang mempengaruhi kemampuan mereka untuk memahami kata kerja frasa, yang sering kali memengaruhi kompetensi dan kinerja mereka dalam bidang tata bahasa Inggris ini. Makalah ini juga membahas pendekatan pedagogis yang telah membantu memfasilitasi pembelajaran kata kerja frasa, seperti pembelajaran kontekstual, kemampuan guru, korporasi, dan alat bantu berbasis teknologi. Temuan penelitian menggarisbawahi pentingnya strategi pengajaran yang inovatif dan praktik berkelanjutan bagi pelajar L2 untuk secara efektif menavigasi labirin linguistik frasa kata kerja. Dengan mengidentifikasi tantangan utama dan solusi potensial, makalah ini memberikan kontribusi wawasan yang berharga ke dalam kompleksitas akuisisi bahasa dan menawarkan rekomendasi praktis bagi para pendidik dan pelajar. Pada akhirnya, makalah ini bertujuan untuk meningkatkan pemahaman kita tentang hubungan yang rumit antara bahasa, budaya, dan kognisi dalam konteks pembelajaran bahasa kedua.

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#### How to cite this article (using APA 7th edition)

Dajang, I. N., & Gongse, J. D. (2024). Navigating the Linguistic Labyrinth: Challenges of Using Phrasal Verbs for L2 Learners. *Journal of Literature and Education*, 2(2), 101–110. <https://doi.org/10.69815/jle.v2i2.67>

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## A. Introduction

A phrasal verb is a phrase that consists of a verb combined with a preposition or an adverb or both, the meaning of which is different from the meaning of its individual parts: “take care of”, “work out”, and “replace” are all phrasal verbs (Koprowski, 2005). The most common English phrasal verbs are as important as other more frequent phrases during the process of learning English. Phrasal verbs play a rather indispensable role in communication, especially in oral forms (Chen, 2007). A phrasal verb can be defined both syntactically and semantically. Syntactically, it consists of “a verb (proper) and a ‘morphologically invariant particle’ that function as a single grammatical unit” (Quirk et al., 1985). Semantically, according to Quirk et al. (1985) “the meaning of the combination clearly cannot be predicted from the meaning of the verb (proper) and the particle in isolation”, and therefore also functions as a single lexical unit. A phrasal verb is a type of multi-word expression (MWE) other than idioms, prefabs and formulaic expressions. It is “compositional” when each word is separately analyzable to compose the overall meaning of a lexical phrase or expression, and “non-syllabic” or rather “idiomatic” when it does not allow the individual analysis of words to assemble the whole meaning (Cook & Stevenson, 2006). In many cases, students find it difficult to understand the use of phrasal verbs because they do not realize that the meanings of phrasal verbs are defined from “concrete” to “abstract”.

Kamarudin (2013) argued that PVs are mostly defined as combinations of two lexical items: verbs and particles. However, problems with definitions of PV are often discussed in the PV literature, particularly the grammatical status of the particle in the PV construction: whether the particle must be an adverbial particle (e.g. up, get off, collapse; or whether it could also include prepositions (e.g. with, after, into) as in deal with, look after, run into. A number of researchers use the term “phrasal verb” to denote the combination of lexical verb (LV) + adverbial particle (AVP), while LV + preposition (PRP) is referred to as “prepositional verb” (Fraser, 1974; Quirk et al., 1985). While it is quite clear that the combination LV + PRP (e.g., look at, go to) falls into the “prepositional verb” category, there are a number of combinations (e.g. bump into, look at) in which the status is not very straightforward.

The study of phrasal verbs is essential for language learners as they permeate everyday communication, both spoken and written. Mastery of phrasal verbs increases the student’s ability to understand native speakers, communicate effectively and use the language naturally. It also contributes to fluency and helps students sound like natives in their speech. Since phrasal verbs often convey different meanings, understanding them adds depth and subtlety to language use, which is essential to achieving second language proficiency.

The importance of examining phrasal verbs is that phrasal verbs are very frequent in the English language and therefore could be considered, if used correctly, as an indicator of English language proficiency (Gardner & Davies, 2007; Garnier & Schmitt, 2015; Riguel, 2014). Additionally, studying phrasal verbs is crucial for non-native English speakers who want to achieve fluency in the language. These multi-word combinations of verbs and prepositions or adverbs are an integral part of everyday English conversation and are often used in informal settings. Therefore, understanding and mastering phrasal verbs is essential for effective communication and to be able to comprehend native English speakers in various contexts. Moreover, phrasal verbs can greatly enhance one’s vocabulary and language skills. By studying phrasal verbs, learners gain a deeper understanding of the idiomatic and nuanced aspects of the English language. This not only enables them to express themselves more accurately but also allows them to comprehend and interpret the intended meaning of phrasal verbs used by native speakers. Thus, mastering phrasal verbs facilitates the development of advanced language skills and promotes overall language fluency.

L2 learners often struggle with phrasal verbs because of their multiple meanings, idiomatic nature, and variety of usage, making them difficult to understand and remember. In addition, separable and inseparable forms of phrasal verbs can cause confusion when it comes to word order. Limited exposure to authentic language contexts can prevent students from understanding the nuances of these expressions, impacting their overall language proficiency. This study is descriptive qualitative in nature and aims to identify common challenges faced by second language learners. Understanding these issues helps educators develop targeted instructional strategies, materials, and interventions to improve students’ phrasal verb skills, improve overall language acquisition, and communication skills.

Furthermore, much research have shown that non-native speakers are uncomfortable with the use of phrasal verbs and therefore avoid them when writing or speaking in a foreign language (Liao & Fukuya, 2004). White (2012) explained that “PVs are often difficult for ESL learners to acquire because they are unpredictable, frequent, and polysemous.” These verbs are unpredictable for students because they give both literal and idiomatic meanings in different contexts. They are also polysemous because single phrasal verbs can be used in different meaningful ways, thus giving different meanings in different contexts. Learning to recognize, understand and actively use phrasal verbs is a really important part of learning English as a second/foreign language.

In both written and spoken English, the meaning of phrasal verbs predominates. Students have encountered its use in a variety of contexts, so it is important for them to learn its uses and meanings in order to communicate effectively (Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003). The main problem encountered by students seemed to stem from the prevailing misunderstanding among students about the meanings of phrasal verbs. They have difficult or different meanings that are not transparent to second/foreign language learners. English learners can face many problems with phrasal verbs because they are a combination of two English particles; a verb and a clause or a verb and an adverb that give the second language learner a figurative meaning that is not familiar or predictable. Dagut & Laufer (1985) stated that “learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs that are absent in their native language because ‘learners do not use what they do not understand properly.’” Zarifi and Mukundan’s (2014) study on learning phrasal verbs concluded that ESL students were able to learn phrasal verbs, but they usually used unnatural forms of phrasal verbs or created their own forms when using them. It is the duty of teachers to provide them with appropriate materials and activities that can teach them the correct form and use of phrasal verbs in different contexts. Therefore, phrasal verbs are considered an important grammatical component in learning English. A great deal of research has been done to identify the difficulties faced by second language learners, but less focus has been placed on its teaching in language classrooms and even its inclusion in university language textbooks. In language teaching, English phrasal verbs play a rather indispensable role in communication, especially in oral and written form. The most common English phrasal verbs are as important as other more frequent phrases during the English learning process (Chen, 2007). Without enough phrasal verbs, one may not develop nearly as a native speaker in the English language.

There is no doubt a number of works have been done in the area of phrasal verbs. For instance, Bronshteyn & Gustafson (2015) elaborated on the role of teachers’ knowledge about PV and their effectiveness in providing or transferring this knowledge to students. Teachers need to develop syntactic awareness of PV in order to design effective teaching strategies. White (2012), who introduced a 5-step methodology for learning PV through drawings, consisting of students refocusing on meanings, collecting PVs, discussing the meaning, debating in small groups, and then sharing their drawings, as if through drawing students could symbolize meanings and present it to classmates. Oe & Alam (2013) used pictures to teach students interactive PV. The results of all three proposed techniques were positive in optimizing students’ mental abilities in learning phrasal verbs. Dagut & Laufer (1985) attempted to explain the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Hebrew learners of English, in which phrasal verbs do not exist, at the level of structural complexity in the target language. However, Hulstijn & Marchena (1989) found that even Dutch-speaking learners of English - Dutch include phrasal verbs, preferred one-word synonyms of phrasal verbs.

Similarly, Bronshteyn & Gustafson (2015) explained that ESL students usually prefer to avoid PV and face difficulties when they try to use it. They provided a critical review of various researches and assessed various literatures related to pedagogical strategies that can support L2 learners in learning PV. He highlighted the issue of mastery and avoidance by reviewing studies such as Liao & Fukuya’s (2004) study, which argued that avoidance is mainly due to native language influence, when native speakers do not have PV, their speakers tend to avoid it in their second languages, specifically learning idiomatic PVs such as Hebrew speakers.

Gardner & Davies (2007) examined the hundred most commonly used phrasal verbs in British English using the British National Corpus (BNC) as a data source. These scholars pointed out that “there is very little information on actual frequency data that can be used by teachers, material developers, and test designers who may wish to prioritize the treatment of phrasal verbs based on their relative impact on the language as a whole” (Gardner & Davies, 2007, p. 343). However, they claimed that the result of their study will help teachers, material developers and test designers to develop very good teaching materials.

Hulstijn & Marchena (1989) studied PV among Dutch learners of English. The Dutch have PVs in their native language, so they have not categorically avoided PVs, but they try not to use idiomatic PVs. Surprisingly, PVs that had a similar counterpart in L1 were avoided. If teachers focus on language skills, then avoidance or other problems can be reduced. Thus, it is directive for language teachers to adopt strategies to develop skills in the use of PVs among ESLs.

The revised studies have a different scope and topics than the current one. They investigated PV in corpus studies, L2 avoidance strategies and teachers’ knowledge of PV. However, this study investigated the problems of Nigerian L2 learners who are learners of English to determine the challenges they face in understanding and using PV. Apart from the gaps identified from the review, there other specific gaps in the literature on phrasal verbs which may vary. For instance, the existing literature on phrasal verbs lacks comprehensive pedagogical approaches. It does not provide detailed insights into effective teaching methodologies for phrasal verbs, nor does it offer strategies that cater to different learning styles and proficiency levels. Moreover, many studies fail to address the challenges and nuances of phrasal verb acquisition in specific second language contexts. These contexts can vary significantly based on learners’ native languages and cultural backgrounds.

Furthermore, there are gaps in corpus-based analyses of phrasal verbs. Current analyses are inadequate in exploring various registers, genres, and discourse types, which hinders a comprehensive understanding of usage

patterns. Sociolinguistic factors related to phrasal verbs are also neglected. There is limited exploration of how their usage varies across different social contexts, formality levels, or regional dialects. In the age of technology, there is insufficient attention given to how digital tools and resources can be effectively utilized to teach and learn phrasal verbs.

Additionally, longitudinal studies tracking learners' development of phrasal verb proficiency from beginner to advanced levels are relatively scarce. This lack of long-term investigations inhibits a comprehensive understanding of the learning trajectory. There is also a lack of literature exploring how multimodal approaches, such as incorporating visual or interactive elements, can enhance the comprehension and retention of phrasal verbs. It is advisable therefore to consult more recent literature or databases for updates on these gaps. The field of language acquisition is dynamic, and new research may have addressed some of these areas.

## B. Method

This qualitatively descriptive study employed a survey approach to collect data. The sample consisted of sixteen 400-level English students from the University of Jos. A survey method was utilized to gather participants' perceptions about their competence in using English phrasal verbs. This approach has gained popularity in educational research due to its effectiveness in soliciting individuals' views on specific topics. Using surveys, the study aimed to provide insight into the students' understanding and proficiency in employing English phrasal verbs.

## C. Results and Discussion

### 1. Data Presentation

The following data is from a survey conducted among sixteen 400-level English students from the University of Jos.

#### a. How confident do you feel in your ability to navigate and understand phrasal verbs in English?

From the data collected, eleven respondents responded with the comments: quite confident, partly confident, very confident, good, while five responded thus: difficult to navigate and understand; learning the secrets of mastering phrasal verbs; can be confusing sometimes because of its complexity; can be confusing and difficult to be understood; not confident enough.

#### b. What specific challenges do you encounter when trying to decipher the meaning of phrasal verbs in different contexts?

The respondents had the following responses to the survey question: Understanding the context appropriately; trying to deduce the meanings of some phrasal verbs due to the fact that there are many phrasal verbs in English with multiple meanings; phrasal verbs may have multiple meanings, and the meaning varies depending on the context that surrounds it. So, in order to understand the meaning of a phrasal verb in a specific context, I need to be able to recognize the context and identify the correct meaning. Another challenge is that phrasal verbs are often idiomatic, which means they have a figurative meaning that is not always clear from the individual words.

#### c. How frequently do you rely on context clues to interpret the intended meaning of phrasal verbs in your language learning journey?

In response to this question, the respondents provided the following answers: Not so often; I most of the time rely on context clues to interpret the intended meaning of phrases verbs; by using a dictionary; quite often; often; most of the time; not all the time though; very frequent; context clues are actually a crucial tool for interpreting the meaning of phrasal verbs. Without context, it can be difficult to determine the exact meaning of a phrasal verb. So, I rely on context clues quite often in my language learning journey, especially when it comes to phrasal verbs. For example, if I see the phrasal verb "to break up" in a sentence about a couple that is having relationship problems and I can infer that the meaning of "to end a relationship" is being used; most of the time, to be able to derive meaning from a context, I read the sentence or text more than once to be able to derive and this has helped overtime to help interpret some of these phrasal verbs; with the help of YouTube videos and articles; often; frequently.

- d. **In what situations do you find it most challenging to use phrasal verbs correctly in spoken or written communication?**

In response to this question, eight respondents identified their area of challenge as “spoken” while the other eight identified “written” as their area of challenge.

- e. **Do you believe that exposure to authentic materials, such as movies or books, has helped you grasp the nuances of phrasal verbs better than traditional language learning resources?**

The following responses were drawn from the responses of the respondents:

Both have made a great impact; yes; exposure to authentic materials has helped me understand phrasal verbs better than traditional language learning resources. With authentic materials, I’m able to see how phrasal verbs are used in real-world contexts, which gives me a more accurate understanding of their intended meaning. Traditional language learning resources, such as textbooks, often provide examples that are too simplistic or contrived, which can make it difficult to apply the knowledge to real-world situations; yes I do; yes I believe exposure to authentic materials, such as movies or books, has helped me grasp the nuances of phrasal verbs better; yes most definitely, especially books; yes it has; yes, because I tend to understand more when it is being demonstrated in a movie; absolutely yes. Exposure to authentic materials such as movies, books, podcasts, and songs, has been a much more effective way for me to grasp the nuances of phrasal verbs than traditional language learning resources. This is because in authentic materials, phrasal verbs are used in a natural and realistic way, rather than in a contrived or isolated context. Additionally, I find that the repetition of phrasal verbs in authentic materials helps me to better understand and remember their meanings. The more I’m exposed to phrasal verbs in a natural context, the better I get at using them correctly; yes books, movies and other materials have helped to be able to use some of this phrasal verbs correctly because as we all know, English language is not our language, the language is known to us as our second language, so reading books and also watching movies has helped to be able to use some of this phrases appropriately; no.

- f. **How do you approach memorization and retention of phrasal verbs? Share any effective strategies you have found.**

The following responses emerged as responses to the question:

Looking up phrasal verbs and their meanings online writing down the difficult ones and going through them over and over; placing pairing words together and making sentences with some commonly used phrasal verbs; I approach the memorization and retention of phrasal verbs by combining certain strategies, one of which is to associate each phrasal verb with a specific context or situation. For example, I might associate the phrasal verb “keep up with” with the context of keeping up with current events or trends. Another strategy I use is to create visualizations to help me remember the meaning of a phrasal verb. For instance, I visualize the phrasal verb “put up with” as a person putting up a wall to block out an irritating noise; reading and listening to authors and speakers who use phrasal verbs appropriately. I do not use phrasal verbs very often however I use the context which the phrasal verb has been used to help me remember; cognitive approach to the instructions of phrasal verbs; constant study; constant memorization; by relating it to something familiar to avoid forgetting; by constant practicing and understanding what each word means and apply the context; by using it constantly; there are a few strategies I’ve found helpful for memorizing and retaining phrasal verbs. First, I like to create mnemonic devices to help me remember the meanings of phrasal verbs. For example, I might create a sentence that uses the phrasal verb in context, and then make an association between the sentence and the phrasal verb’s meaning. For example, I might remember the phrasal verb “to break up” by associating it with the sentence “The couple broke up after they had a big fight.” This strategy helps me to associate the phrasal verb with a specific scenario or event; some of these phrasal verbs have become familiar to us because we almost use it every day in our conversations, for example ‘bail out’ could mean to bail someone out from jail or in social context it could mean to lend money to someone, and when it comes to using it for slang, it means to stop or not being involved in something. Another phrasal verb is ‘break up’ which could be a break up from a relationship or a divorce, and so many more. Some of these phrasal verbs are what we use in our day to day communication which helps us to have retention on how to use it properly also depending on the context of usage; I would have a notebook, whenever I come across a phrasal verb. I will write it down, the sentence it was in and the meaning then review them maybe each day; I don’t memorize them; good.

**g. To what extent do cultural differences impact your understanding and usage of phrasal verbs in English?**

The following were the responses from the survey:

It doesn't; to a large extent; some phrasal verbs have specific cultural references and are used in ways that are particular to a certain culture. Therefore, I take cultural differences into consideration when using phrasal verbs in English; people with different cultural backgrounds communicate using different styles; let's say 3/10; to some extent it increases my understanding and usage of phrasal verbs through exposure; I've not discovered any impact at the moment; cultural differences definitely have an impact on my understanding and usage of phrasal verbs in English. For example, in some cultures, certain phrasal verbs may have a very specific or literal meaning, while in other cultures, they may have a more figurative or idiomatic meaning. Additionally, the use of phrasal verbs can vary based on the level of formality of the conversation or the relationship between the speakers. Some phrasal verbs may be considered too casual for certain situations, while others may be considered more appropriate. So, it's important for me to be aware of the cultural context in order to correctly use and interpret; L2 are learners of a second language, knowing that English language isn't our language, sometimes, mother tongue interference can be a problem when trying to understand some of these phrasal verbs; cultural differences impact my understanding in learning and understanding parasail verbs; to some extent due to direct translation.

**h. Are there specific phrasal verbs that you find particularly tricky or confusing? Please provide examples.**

No; fall apart, melt into, pour into, break out, break away; there are a few phrasal verbs that I find particularly tricky or confusing. One example is "pop in." This phrasal verb can have several different meanings, including "arrive unexpectedly" or "briefly visit." In addition, the preposition "in" can be interpreted as "visiting a physical location" or "visiting virtually," which can make the phrasal verb confusing. Another example is "give up," which can mean "stop trying" or "quit," but it can also mean "surrender"; living in, living at, demand to/for, etc.; flip out, lash out, power on; size up, dish out, dump down, farm out; not really, I try my best to get them right; yes, -speak up, sleep out; none ;some phrasal verbs that I find tricky and sometimes confusing are; "Allow for"(to take into consideration), "Boot up" (to start a computer by loading and operating system); none for now; yes, there are a few phrasal verbs that I still find challenging. One example is "to take out." This phrasal verb can mean "to borrow something" (e.g. "I took out a book from the library") or "to kill someone" (e.g. "The assassin took out the target"). These two meanings are very different, and I sometimes get them mixed up. Another example is "to get by." This phrasal verb can mean "to survive" (e.g. "We'll have to make do with what we have to get by") or "to understand; yes there are some of these phrasal verbs that can be confusing, examples are Answer back, Beat down, break off ,etc. The above listed if not understood probably can be misinterpreted.

**i. How do you think educators can better support language learners in overcoming challenges related to phrasal verbs?**

These were the responses gathered:

Educators should group phrases verbs by topic in that way, it makes it easier for students to build the needed connection; by encouraging language learners to use more usage of phrasal verbs in communication and mastering phrasal verbs also; there are a few things that educators can do to support language learners in overcoming challenges related to phrasal verbs. First off, it's important to provide clear explanations of the meanings and uses of phrasal verbs. This can be done through examples, visuals and clear definitions. Also, educators can provide feedback and correction when students make mistakes using phrasal verbs. With this support, students can gain a better understanding of these tricky grammar points; more work has to be done in teaching the functions of each part of speech to enable learners to understand how to use phrasal verbs; I think educators should provide the meanings of some tricky and confusing phrasal verbs in the glossary; keep on practicing; nothing beats encouragement to study and use them frequently; educators should encourage consistent reading; by breaking them down for further understanding; educators can better support them support learners to overcome challenges related to phrasal verbs by educating them to practice and use them in conversation and or read them in context; use it constantly in interactions with language learners and encouraging them to repeat it till they learn it's proper use; I think educators can support language learners in overcoming challenges related to phrasal verbs by providing more opportunities for exposure to authentic materials, such as movies, books, and music. This can help learners to hear and see how phrasal verbs are used in context, which can make their

meaning clearer. Additionally, educators can provide explicit instruction on the meaning and use of phrasal verbs, including information about their cultural and contextual differences. Finally, providing opportunities for learners to practice using phrasal verbs in real-world contexts can help them to build their confidence and fluency; teachers can be a source of help to learners of English language by helping them provide some materials to enable them to when and how to use some of these phrasal verbs in a giving context; simplifying it to the best of their abilities; drawing more attention to it.

**j. Have you noticed any improvement in your phrasal verb comprehension and usage over time, and if so, what factors do you attribute to this progress?**

The responses received from data were:

Yes, my ability to group phrases verbs by particle and understanding them according to context helped out; yes, my constant usage of phrasal verbs when I communicate in English; I have noticed some improvement in my phrasal verb comprehension and usage over time. I think the main factor that has contributed to this progress is exposure to phrasal verbs in a variety of contexts. I've been exposed to phrasal verbs in a wide range of materials, including TV shows, movies, books, and social media. This exposure has helped me to understand the different meanings and uses of phrasal verbs; a better understanding of the different parts of speech; I hardly use phrasal verb in my comprehension and usage so it's very difficult to know if there is any progress; regular study; sure and I attribute that to reading; yes, I practice sometimes and also put into practice; yes, my study of the English language has helped me a great deal; yes, the factors I attribute to this progress is by looking up the individual words that make it up and put them together to determine its meaning; yes. I have read more English literature and done deeper studies on grammar; yes, I have definitely noticed an improvement in my phrasal verb comprehension and usage over time. I attribute this progress to a few factors. First, I have been exposed to a lot of authentic materials in English, including movies, books, podcasts, and online content. This has helped me to hear and see phrasal verbs used in a variety of contexts. Second, I have had some great language teachers who have helped me to understand the nuances of phrasal verbs and how they can be used in different situations. Finally, I have been doing a lot of writing and speaking in English, which has helped me to use phrasal verbs; though still trying to improve, reading books and going on the internet to look out for some of these phrasal verbs could help one improve and become better; they helped me understand the meaning, and also how to use them; yes, reading more and researching about it; being intentional about it.

## **2. Findings**

The challenges associated with phrasal verbs for L2 learners are undeniable, but proficiency can be achieved with strategic learning approaches and consistent practice. Recognizing the nuances, embracing contextual learning, and providing ample opportunities for application are key elements in helping learners navigate the intricate terrain of English phrasal verbs. As educators and learners collaborate to overcome these challenges, the journey toward linguistic mastery becomes rewarding. The respondents acknowledged that the difficulty associated with learning PVs is due to the fact that they are learners of English as a second language, and so there are cultural differences and issues of interference. They also identified having good teachers and resource materials, both print and electronic, as contributing factors to their improvement despite the fact that PVs are complex to understand.

## **3. Discussion**

Phrasal verbs have always been considered problematic for L2 learners as researched by a number of researchers on their learning and teaching problems and as evident in the responses of the participants to the survey questions. According to Bronshteyn & Gustafson (2015), English Second Language (ESL) learners usually prefer to avoid PVs because they face difficulty when they attempt to use them. Moreover, ESL learners also avoid phrasal verbs due to difficulties in acquiring and mastering of Phrasal verbs (PVs) and thus using it effectively in their speaking and writing compositions (Ghabanchi & Goudarzi, 2012). Students expressed their hesitation even they have developed positive perceptions about phrasal verbs. It meant that students need motivation to use such verbs apart of exposure and awareness as indicated in the respondents' responses to the survey questions. They should be encouraged to use verbs without any assistance or fear of making mistakes. It should be considered that many undergraduate students have low English language proficiency; they mostly make structure and grammatical errors while speaking and writing—the survey demonstrates this by showing that the students have challenges with PVs both in written spoken aspect of the language. This might be one factor of their avoidance of phrasal verbs.

#### 4. Strategies to Overcome L2 Problems of PVs

- a. Ambiguity and multiple meanings: phrasal verbs often carry multiple meanings based on context, making them a linguistic minefield for L2 learners. For example, the verb “break” can be combined with various particles such as “up,” “down,” or “out,” each conveying a different sense. The ambiguity can lead to confusion, as the intended meaning may vary depending on the specific phrasal verb used.
- b. Idiomatic expressions: many phrasal verbs have idiomatic expressions that may not be deducible from the individual words. For instance, “break up” can mean to end a relationship, but understanding this requires knowledge beyond the literal meanings of “break” and “up.” L2 learners often struggle with grasping these idiomatic nuances, hindering their ability to communicate effectively.
- c. Variable particle placement: phrasal verbs exhibit flexibility in particle placement, adding another layer of complexity for learners. The placement of particles can alter the meaning of a sentence, and L2 learners must navigate through the intricacies of when to place the particle before or after the object. This variability poses a significant challenge in achieving fluency and accuracy in communication.
- d. Lack of one-to-one equivalents: unlike some languages, English phrasal verbs may lack direct equivalents in the learner’s native language. Translating them literally can lead to awkward and incorrect usage. The absence of clear correspondences makes it essential for L2 learners to memorize phrasal verbs in context, adding an extra burden to the learning process.
- e. Informal vs. Formal usage: phrasal verbs are often associated with informal language, and learners may struggle to discern when it is appropriate to use them. The divide between formal and informal contexts adds another layer of complexity, requiring L2 learners to develop a nuanced understanding of when and where to deploy phrasal verbs appropriately.
- f. Contextual learning: encouraging L2 learners to acquire phrasal verbs in context, through reading, listening, and real-life situations, helps them understand the subtleties of usage and develop a more intuitive grasp of these expressions.
- g. Regular practice: consistent practice is crucial for mastering phrasal verbs. Engaging in activities like speaking, writing, and interactive exercises can reinforce understanding and build confidence in their usage.
- h. Use of visual aids: visual aids, such as diagrams or illustrations, can assist learners in visualizing the meanings and contexts of phrasal verbs. This visual support aids in better retention and comprehension.
- i. Gradual introduction: introducing phrasal verbs gradually, categorizing them based on common themes or situations, can make the learning process more manageable. This approach allows learners to focus on specific subsets of phrasal verbs at a time.

#### D. Conclusion

The study’s results revealed that students recognized the importance of phrasal verbs in English writing but initially lacked an understanding of their syntactic use and complexity. However, after participating in learning sessions and being exposed to quality resources, students’ comprehension and motivation improved, encouraging them to utilize phrasal verbs to enhance their grammatical skills.

Mastering phrasal verbs offers numerous benefits for learners, including enhanced communication skills, improved listening and reading comprehension, nuanced expression, and boosted confidence. For educators, focusing on phrasal verbs enables effective teaching strategies, contextual learning, diagnostic assessment, curriculum development, and resource creation. Learners and educators can collaborate to refine language acquisition and teaching methodologies by acknowledging the practical applications of studying phrasal verbs. Recognizing the challenges of learning phrasal verbs is crucial, as they are a fundamental aspect of English, and understanding their complexities can significantly impact second language learners’ proficiency.

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