

Grammatical Presentation of Phrasal Verbs in ESL Textbooks

Zarifi, A* and Mukundan, J

Department of Language and Humanities Education, Faculty of Language Studies, Universiti Putra Malaysia, Serdang.

ABSTRACT

Despite the notoriously challenging aspects of the English phrasal verbs, these combinations are of high relevance for ESL/EFL learners as knowledge of them is often equated with language fluency and proficiency. They are likely to assume a number of different syntactic patterns, and grammatical presentation of these structures in ESL materials turns out to be a major pedagogical concern. Yet, the body of research dealing with the syntactic representation of these forms is almost missing in the related literature. The present study was, therefore, an attempt to investigate the grammatical treatment of phrasal verbs in Malaysian ESL secondary level textbooks. Although there occurred a total number of 15 different syntactic patterns associated with these multiword verbs, they were almost overlooked as a category of language phenomenon enjoying their own grammatical behaviour. There also appeared to be no guiding principle underlying the selection, presentation and sequencing of different patterns associated with them, bringing further home the observation that the development of ELT textbooks is more intuitively than empirically motivated.

Keywords: Phrasal Verbs, grammatical patterns, ESL textbooks, corpus linguistics

INTRODUCTION

The emergence of corpus linguistics, the advent of machine-readable corpora and development of the lexical syllabus

brought about a considerable shift in the area of language study and instruction. These groundbreaking developments in the field gave rise to the new sub-discipline of phraseology. Cowie (1994, p. 3198) describes phraseology as “the study of the structure, meaning, and use of word-combinations”. It covers a wide range of forms including idioms, proverbs, phrasal verbs, chunks, prefabs, and prepositional

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E-mail addresses:

vahed_zarifi@yahoo.com (Zarifi, A.),

jayakaranmukundan@yahoo.com (Mukundan, J.)

* Corresponding author

structures; however, phrasal verbs _ combination of a verb and an adverbial particle_ are reported to be the largest class (Baldwin & Villavicencio, 2002).

The English phrasal verb combinations are claimed to be one of the most notoriously challenging aspects of English language instruction (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Granger, 1996; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007). Language learners have been reported to experience difficulties in dealing with these forms in such areas as “‘remembering meaning’, ‘grammar’ and ‘word order’” (Pye, 1996, p. 698). The problems can be attributed to a number of characteristics of these fuzzy constructions such as their orthographic forms, grammatical configurations, and idiomatic nature.

Despite their rather complicated structures and unpredictable meanings of some combinations, phrasal verbs are of high relevance for ESL/EFL learners because a grasp of them “can be a great asset to learners in acquiring a new language” (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Taking into account both the complexity associated with these forms and, at the same time, their usefulness to language learners, the issue of how they are selected, sequenced and presented in terms of their grammatical configurations in ESL materials appears to be a pedagogical concern. The present study thus aimed at investigating the presentation of the grammatical patterns associated with these combinations in Malaysian ESL textbooks.

LITERATURE REVIEW

There is a host of different terms like multi-word verbs (Parrott, 2000), complex predicates (Ackerman & Webelhuth, 1998), two-word verbs (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), verb particle combinations (Villavicencio & Copestake, 2002) to refer to these structures with “phrasal verbs” (Brinton, 1985) appearing “to be the winning term” (McArthur, 1989, p. 38). Likewise, literature offers a number of different definitions to describe these esoteric combinations. Among others, Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985) define a phrasal verb as a verb followed by a morphologically invariable particle, which idiomatically functions with the verb as a single grammatical and semantic unit. To Cowie and Mackin (1993), a phrasal verb is the result of a verb combining with a particle or a preposition forming a unit of meaning. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), phrasal verbs are two-word verbs that function as a single verb.

Most of the literature on phrasal verbs in corpus-based studies is mainly concerned with the presentation and frequency counts of these forms across different general and specialized corpora (Akbari, 2009; Gardner & Davies, 2007; Trebits, 2009; Schneider, 2005; Von, 2007). Empirical studies of these combinations in instructional materials are, however, few and far between. Side (1990), examining a few ELT course books and reference materials, argues that the difficulties associated with the phrasal verb combinations are to some extent motivated by the way in which they are presented.

She observes that description of phrasal verbs in teaching materials often fail “to create learnable patterns” and sometimes create “patterns of the wrong kind” (P. 150). In addition, Darwin and Gray (1999), comparing a list of top 20 phrasal verbs in the BNC with the combinations in a typical ESL grammar book, found that only three forms in the textbook matched the items on the list. Likewise, Koprowski (2005) reported that there was not even a single phrasal verb shared by the three contemporary ELT course books that were developed as general English materials for intermediate level learners. Finally, in another recent study on the Malaysian ESL textbooks, Zarifi and Mukundan (2012) investigated the use of phrasal verb combinations in the spoken sections of the materials. They reported that textbooks contained combinations of extremely low frequency counts in general English and vice versa. Findings enabled the researchers to conclude that both the selection and presentation of these combinations were inconsistent with their actual use in the BNC.

Phrasal verbs are usually referred to as the multi-word middle ground between lexis and grammar (Gass & Selinker, 2001). Not only are they complicated in terms of their semantics but they are also challenging because of the various grammatical configurations they may assume. While the transitive combinations are accompanied by an NP complement, no NP follows the intransitive combinations. It is interesting, however, to point out that not all transitive structures have the same syntactic behavior. In some transitive combinations, the particle

is always contiguous to the verb. In some others, the particle is always noncontiguous to its verb. There are still other transitive combinations in which there is no fixed word order. The particle in these structures can equally occur after the NP complement or immediately after the verb. To complicate the point, there are combinations (e.g., give up) that may fall in more than one syntactic type. With that being said, any discussion of phrasal verbs should not only care for their meaning but also for their grammar.

Teaching grammar has for long been the main focus in language pedagogy and literature has a lot to contribute to the area both in terms of theory and practice. Over the past decade, an overwhelming body of empirical studies in the language classroom has shown that grammar instruction actually results in learners’ substantial gains in L2 proficiency, accuracy and rate of progress (Ellis, 2001; Nassaji & Swain 2000). While there is general agreement on the value of teaching grammar, the issue of whether instruction should be explicit or implicit has been a matter of perennial debate. Norris and Ortega’s (2000) careful analysis of 49 studies has revealed that explicit teaching leads to better and more durable learning than implicit teaching. According to DeKeyser (1998), grammar instruction should both stimulate students to reflect on the nature of grammatical rules and, at the same time, provide opportunities for them to observe those rules used in a meaningful way in realistic contexts.

Despite the ink spilled over the treatment of the phrasal verbs in teaching materials, to the best of the researchers’

knowledge, there has been very little or no attempt to investigate the grammatical presentation of these structures in ELT materials (Zarifi, 2013). The current study was, therefore, directed at the identification of the grammatical behavior of these forms and, more specifically, the structural relation that holds not only between the particle and its associated verb but also the syntactic relationship between the phrasal verb combinations and the other constituents they keep company with.

RESEARCH QUESTIONS

The current study seeks to address the following research questions:

1. What are the frequencies of different grammatical patterns of phrasal verbs in Malaysian ESL textbooks, and how are they distributed within and across the five Forms?
2. How are these patterns presented in the grammatical sections of the textbooks?

METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

Design of the Study

Methodologically speaking, the present study is a corpus-based content analysis. One major methodological issue in corpus studies, by and large, involves the choice between the quantitative and qualitative approach (Mair, 1991). While the quantitative approach lends such important insights into text aspects as the frequency counts of different linguistic features and patterns (Conrad, 2005), numbers alone fail to provide the information why such features

are used so frequently or infrequently. It follows then that even the most elaborate quantitative analyses must be complemented by some qualitative interpretations of the language patterns. Among others, De Monnik (2005), Krippendorff (2004), Mair (1991) observe that combination of the two methods is both essential and indispensable. The present study, therefore, adopted a mixed approach in its methodology.

Population and Sampling

The five Form textbooks prescribed for use by the Malaysian ESL learners at the secondary level were used as the corpus of the study. This pedagogic corpus was developed by Mukundan and Anealka in 2007 and contains around 302,642 tokens of running words and more than 2,000 tokens of phrasal verb combinations. It comprises an almost balanced selection of texts in terms of spoken versus written modalities, conversational versus formal registers (Arka, Simpson, Andrews, & Dalrymple, 2007) and the variety of topics it deals with, hence the representativeness of the corpus. This study adopted a comprehensive data sampling (Ary, Jacob, Razavieh, & Sorensen, 2006) as all the instances of the phrasal verbs in the corpus were included in the analysis.

Instrumentation

The WordSmith Tools (version 4.0) was used to search the corpus of the study for the potential phrasal verbs. Concord functions of this instrument provided efficiently and usefully for a two-step research of

quantitative and qualitative query into aspects of the use of phrasal verbs in the current pedagogic corpus. It gave the researchers the chance to look at each line horizontally in the context to identify the phrasal verbs and the syntactic category associated with each combination.

Data Gathering

One major methodological issue in the current study involved the extraction of phrasal verbs from the corpus. As the number of lexical verbs which can be combined with an adverbial particle to form phrasal verbs is overwhelmingly extensive, it was almost impossible for the researchers to look for the phrasal verbs by looking at all the lexical verbs in the corpus. Furthermore, any single lexical verb can occur in a number of different forms (e.g. get, gets, got, and getting) that would make the task highly formidable and cumbersome. English particles, however, form a very limited and manageable list to work with. Thus, having identified all the particle/preposition cases in the corpus, the Concordance function of WordSmith was run to look for the possible candidates.

Looking through the concordance lines horizontally, a large number of the instances of these elements were ruled out from the data for analysis since they were not preceded by any lexical verb. On the other hand, the remaining instances could feature either phrasal verbs or prepositional verbs. Therefore, the researchers, in the light of the operational definition of phrasal verb combinations adopted in

the study, went over all the instances of particle/preposition elements preceded by a lexical verb to differentiate between these two superficially similar structures. It is, however, interesting to point out that as there are no clear-cut boundaries between phrasal and prepositional verbs but a continuum (O'Dowd, 1994), and the cut-off boundaries based on the different definitions still seem to reflect more or less the subjective feeling of the researchers (Claridge, 2000), there is a hesitation to claim that a hard and fast classification of the combinations has been presented. Only a simple categorization that looks plausible has been made. Putting this into perspective, wherever a non-prepositional use of an adverbial particle followed a lexical verb, the combination was recognized as a phrasal verb (Claridge, 2000). Finally, as phrasal verbs behave syntactically differently, with particle falling immediately adjacent to lexical verbs (V + Part) or with two or more words from it (V + X + Part; V + X + X + Part; V + X + X + X + Part; etc.), the software was programmed to search for these structures within different lengths.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

The first research question aimed at identifying the different grammatical patterns of the phrasal verbs and their distribution in the corpus. The concordance function of WordSmith Tools (4.0) provided us with a total number of 16579 particle/preposition elements. Having looked into the concordance lines, a large number of cases could be ruled out from the population since

they were not preceded by any lexical verb, hence absolutely not potential candidates for phrasal verbs. Since the remaining instances could function both as phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, the researchers went on to distinguish between the two types in terms of the operational definition of the phrasal verb combinations as explained above. On the whole, there appeared a total of 16579 particle/preposition cases across the textbooks from which only 2212 cases (e.g. How well do you and your parents get ALONG?) acted as particles following lexical verbs, hence phrasal verbs. The rest of the cases, that is, a total number of 14367 behaved either as a preposition (e.g. Walk ALONG Green Avenue.) or as other functions (e.g. You certainly deserve a pat on the BACK!) based on the linguistic context in which they appeared.

After extracting all the instances of phrasal verbs in the corpus, the second step consisted in sorting them into their various grammatical patterns as phrasal verbs may occur in a wide range of syntactic configurations. To this end, a fairly extensive list of the distributional possibilities of these combinations as used in the corpus was developed. This list included 14 different grammatical patterns of phrasal verbs which run as follows:

1. V+Prt+Np (Jot down all your thoughts, feelings and opinions.)
2. V+Np+Prt (The wolf then ate the lamb up.)
3. V+Pron +Prt (Someone will wake them up.)
4. V+Prt (Hey, calm down. I was just joking.)
5. V+Prt+Prep (Cut down on your television time.)
6. V+Pron+Part+Np (I bring them back some worms.)
7. V+Part+Np +Prep (... the person who opened up a new world for me.)
8. V+Part+to-V (... animals have to move away to look for another home.)
9. V+Part+V-ing (That's why you kept on asking the factory tour guide to...)
10. V+Part+Prep+V-ing (I am looking forward to reading more about you.)
11. V+Pron+Part+to-v (... helped him out to complete ...)
12. V+Prt+ as Np (... if you signed up as a volunteer.)
13. V+Prt+Adj (... (never forgot) what it was like to grow up poor.)
14. V+Prt+S (... settlers look forward their crops mature in a month's time.)

It should be mentioned that there occurred some other structures with phrasal verbs such as "V + Part + Pron" and "V + Part + That/Wh-Clause" in the corpus. However, as the constituents 'Pron' and 'That/Wh clause' are usually known as the rewrite forms of an NP constituent, the configurations in which they occurred were not treated as separate entities. In such cases,

instances of ‘Pron’ and ‘That/Wh-clause’ were acknowledged as variations of the NP constituent which could be rewritten as follows:

NP → (Pron)(That/Wh-Clause)

As a result, the combinations featuring “V + Part + Pron” and “V + Part + That/Wh-Clause” were included in the first pattern, that is, “V + Prt + Np”.

Likewise, it should come as no surprise that passive phrasal verbs were not given a separate pattern as any transitive verb-particle combination, like any single-word transitive verb, usually permits a passive variant. Active forms are also held to be more basic than passive ones (Cappelle, 2005). Similarly, as any verb is potentially likely to be followed by an adverb of manner, time, place, etc., the researchers decided that no separate pattern be allotted to configurations in which a phrasal verb was followed by any adverbial element. However, the combination “V + Pron + Part” was assigned a separate pattern as it could be taken both as an optional transform of pattern “V + Np + Part”, and as an obligatory transform of pattern “V + Part + Np” with transitive phrasal verbs. So, in order to do away with the ambiguity mentioned above, the researchers decided that it should be assigned a separate pattern, namely, “V + Pron + Part”. Therefore, it can be argued that the formulation of the grammatical patterns of phrasal verbs in the current study is far from arbitrary and seems to be justified.

To sum up, a total number of 14 different grammatical patterns of phrasal verbs occurred in the corpus. It is interesting to point out that these multi-word verbal combinations are also likely to occur in the same grammatical patterns that single-word lexical verbs of English may assume.

Having identified the patterns, the researchers found it interesting to see whether the frequencies of the various grammatical realizations of multi-word verbs developed in similar ways across the textbooks. The relative frequency of each of the grammatical patterns of the phrasal verb combinations across the corpus is presented in table 1.

TABLE 1
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency across Forms 1-5

Pattern type	Freq across corpus	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	1201	54.29
2 V + Np + Part	55	2.49
3 V + Pron + Part	116	5.24
4 V + Part	536	24.23
5 V + Part + Prep	247	11.17
6 V + Pron + Part + Np	2	.09
7 V + Part + Np + Prep	8	0.36
8 V + Part + to-V	23	1.04
9 V + Part + V-ing	14	0.63
10 V + Part + Prep + V-ing	3	0.14
11 V + Pron + Part + to-V	2	0.09
12 V + Part + as NP	2	0.09
13 V + Part + Adj	2	0.09
14 V + Part + S	1	0.04
Total	2212	100

As the table shows, these combinations proved to have been distributed significantly unevenly across the corpus. For instance, while Pattern One alone occurred with a high frequency of 54.29% throughout the Forms, patterns 6-14 altogether involved only about 2.57% of all the phrasal verb combinations across the whole corpus. Some patterns had a negligible frequency of one or two instances, and they appeared in only one of the Forms. For instance, patterns 14 occurred just once and patterns 6, 11, 12, and 13 each occurred only twice in the corpus.

The overwhelming occurrence of Pattern One with the predomination of prenominal particle position all across these ESL textbooks revealed the writers' tendency towards showing the dependence of the particle on its related lexical verb and the proximity between these two elements. This finding is consistent with Schneider's (2004) finding that the prenominal particle position predominated all across the ESL or "Outer Circle" varieties of English. It is also supported by Von (2007) who found that pattern "V + Part + NP" was preferred to its counterpart by both native speakers and non-native learners in writing. Arnold, Losongco, Wasow and Ginstorm (2000) argue that constituent ordering is affected by a number of psycholinguistic factors. It is also argued that combinations in which the particle immediately follows lexical verb are less marked (Dehe, 2002) and, therefore, easier to decode, hence a pedagogical priority. Not only Pattern One but also Patterns 4, 5, 7, 8, 9, 10, 12, 13

and 14, that is, more than 92.18% of all the phrasal verbs in the corpus, featured such proximal immediacy. The sheer instances of the patterns in which the particle was in the immediate vicinity of the verb might tempt the reader to think of it as a piece of evidence of argument in favor of the originality of the structure 'V + Part + Np' compared with 'V + Np + Part', at least in outer circle English, which is often a matter of dispute among linguists (Cappelle, 2005).

Tables 2 through 6 present the frequency distribution and the percentage of occurrence of each single pattern in Form One through Form Five, respectively. Findings show that a total number of 347, 345, 395, 583 and 542 phrasal verb combinations occurred with different syntactic patterns in Form 1 through Form 5, respectively. As it is shown, the patterns were unequally distributed across the Forms both in terms of type and number. For instance, while 11 out of the 14 specified patterns occurred in Form Five, and 10 of them came in Form One, there happened only 9 of these grammatical configurations in Forms Two, Three and Four. As the frequency of each pattern is concerned, while Patterns 3 and 4 were of moderate frequency, some patterns like number 4 and more noticeably number 1 were overwhelmingly repeated at the expense of others such as types 12, 13 and 14.

TABLE 2
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency in Form 1

Pattern type	Frequency	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	192	55.33
2 V + Np + Part	22	6.34
3 V + Pron + Part	31	8.93
4 V + Part	65	18.73
5 V + Part + Prep	29	8.36
7 V + Part + Np + Prep	1	0.29
8 V + Part + to-V	4	1.15
9 V + Part + V-ing	1	0.29
11 V + Pron + Part + to-V	1	0.29
12 V + Part + as NP	1	
Total	347	100

TABLE 3
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency in Form 2

Pattern type	Frequency	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	174	50.43
2 V + Np + Part	9	2.61
3 V + Pron + Part	17	4.93
4 V + Part	115	33.33
5 V + Part + Prep	21	6.09
6 V + Pron + Part + Np	1	0.29
8 V + Part + to-V	5	1.45
9 V + Part + V-ing	2	0.58
10 V + Part + Prep + V-ing	1	0.29
Total	345	100

TABLE 4
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency in Form 3

Pattern type	Frequency	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	208	52.66
2 V + Np + Part	4	1.01
3 V + Pron + Part	29	7.34
4 V + Part	91	23.04

TABLE 4 (continue)

5 V + Part + Prep	49	12.41
7 V + Part + Np + Prep	6	1.52
8 V + Part + to-V	3	0.76
9 V + Part + V-ing	3	0.76
10 V + Part + Prep + V-ing	2	0.51
Total	395	100

TABLE 5
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency in Form 4

Pattern type	Frequency	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	308	52.83
2 V + Np + Part	8	1.37
3 V + Pron + Part	25	4.29
4 V + Part	152	26.07
5 V + Part + Prep	79	13.55
6 V + Pron + Part + Np	1	0.17
8 V + Part + to-V	4	0.69
9 V + Part + V-ing	5	0.86
10 V + Part + S	1	0.17
Total	583	100

TABLE 6
Phrasal verb patterns and their frequency in Form 5

Pattern type	Frequency	Occurrence %
1 V + Part + Np	323	59.59
2 V + Np + Part	12	2.21
3 V + Pron + Part	14	2.58
4 V + Part	113	20.85
5 V + Part + Prep	69	12.73
7 V + Part + Np + Prep	1	0.18
8 V + Part + to-V	7	1.29
9 V + Part + V-ing	3	0.55
11 V + Pron + Part + to-V	1	0.18
12 V + Part + as NP	1	0.18
13 V + Part + Adj	2	0.37
Total	542	100

Results of the grammatical analysis revealed that pattern 1 was the top frequent pattern, followed by patterns 4, 5 and 3, respectively. The relative infrequency in the corpus of patterns 2 and 3 which appear to be well-known configurations in general English might be attributed to the distance between the lexical verb and its particle which is motivated under certain syntagmatic and pragmatic conditions. For instance, it is often the case that only light not heavy NPs may come before the particle (Cowan, 2008). In addition, only when the direct object is a pronoun, it necessarily intervenes between the verb and its particle in separable combinations. Otherwise, it more often than not follows the verb and its associated particle. Moreover, some of the combinations are inherently inseparable and the particle is always there out to immediately follow the verb irrespective of the type of noun phrase that comes with it. By the same token, pattern 1 with the particle directly following its lexical verb was predominant.

As far as patterns like 6 and 10 through 14 are concerned, it should be pointed out that irrespective of their low frequency in real use, they were so infrequently used in the corpus that their presentation would be most likely to be ignored by the learners. Bley-Vroman (2003) argues that the grammar that L2 learners acquire is significantly based on what they have encountered and “how often” (p. 268). While there is no definite number of encounters that ensures learning of a certain form, and different degrees of learning call for different kinds of exposure

(Biber&Reppen, 2002), for ESL learners to acquire a given language form, they need to encounter it in different contexts with a minimum degree of seven to ten frequencies of occurrence over spaced intervals (Brown, Waring, & Donkaewbua, 2008; Thornbury, 2002).

Despite the fact that a large number of phrasal verbs are ditransitive, occurring with one direct object and one indirect object, these combinations were of a negligible frequency (2 instances) in the corpus. The relative absence of these forms from the corpus brings further home the claim often made about the selection and presentation of language items in pedagogical materials, namely, it is based more on speculation and anecdotal experience of materials developers than on empirical findings (Moon, 1998; Mukundan, 2004; Sinclair, 1991; Sinclair & Renouf, 1988). This issue can be raised as a major shortcoming the textbooks are suffering from since these combinations are highly frequent in natural use of language as exemplified by instances such as ‘GIVE BACK’, ‘GIVE UP’, ‘GIVE IN’, ‘HAND IN’, ‘HAND OUT’, ‘PAY BACK’ and many more similar combinations. While patterns 8 and 9 occurred also with a negligible occurrence of one each, they are used quite infrequently in the natural use as well. It should be pointed out, however, that the low frequency of a pattern alone does not warrant its being ignored or underrepresented in the ELT materials as there are factors like range, usefulness, learner need, and some others that have also a role to play in making decisions as to

which forms or patterns to include. Conrad (2000, p. 556) is strongly emphasizing this stance by arguing “Frequency data alone cannot dictate pedagogy”, and it is pedagogically insensible to neglect a particular grammatical structure simply because it is infrequent.

Empirical findings of the study also cast light on some aspects of the localized use of the English language as well. There were some patterns with phrasal verbs in the corpus which featured more the Malaysian variety of English. For instance, the sentence “The new settlers LOOKED FORWARD their crops mature in a month’s time.” in Form Four, is a deviation from the Standard English. Out of the 1097 hits of ‘LOOK FORWARD’ in the BNC, not even a single instance was found to be used with this structure. In Standard English, ‘LOOK FORWARD’ is usually used with the preposition ‘to’ followed by a ‘noun’ or an ‘-ing’ form of the main verb. Likewise, in standard English, ‘LOOK UP’ is used with a preposition like ‘at, in, into, and for’ when it is followed by an NP referring to a geographical name unless it is followed by another prepositional phrase like ‘in telephone directory’ as in “Now LOOK UP Livesay in the classified telephone directory” (BNC). However, Form One used ‘LOOK UP’ in the sentence “One such place is Taman Negara. LOOK UP two more such places in your own state.” which is grammatically a deviation from Standard English. Standard English makes use of ‘LOOK FOR’ or ‘LOOK UP FOR’ to convey the same meaning. While Mesthira

and Baht (2008) state that one of the characteristics of Southeast Asian English including Malaysia is the use of prepositions after verbs where they would not normally appear in standard British English, this new empirical evidence reveals that, Malaysians may also tend to ignore prepositions in contexts where native speakers usually use them in standard British English. Platt *et al* (1984) are, in fact, emphasizing the localized patterns in new Englishes when they state that phrasal verbs are sometimes used without particles, with different particles and sometimes new phrasal verb structures are created.

One more point of pedagogical importance to mention is that the guiding principle underlying the sequencing of different patterns across the Forms was not clear, and it was doubtful why some structures were prioritized over others. While the first five patterns were used in all the five Forms, the other patterns were scattered among the Forms almost with no pedagogical justification. For instance, it is unclear why pattern 6, which is more frequent and more familiar to students facing such structures with single word verbs in previous Forms, was postponed to level Two, but pattern 12 which is very infrequent both in natural use and in the corpus came in level One. Finally, much to the researchers’ surprise, Form Four students who were at a higher level of language proficiency were denied the chance of coming across patterns 7, 10 and 11 that were introduced to the learners of lower levels.

Of main concern with the presentation of phrasal verbs in the textbooks was that they were presented along with the prepositional verbs like ‘think about’, ‘concentrate on’ (Form Four, p. 144) and more disappointingly with prepositional constructions like ‘responsible for’ and ‘happy with’ (Form Five, p. 164). While the textbooks made a distinction between prepositions of time, place, direction and so on (Form Four, p. 182), they surprisingly remained silent on the issue of differentiating between particles and prepositions. Such a silence, in the absence of any revealing pattern presentation, would mislead the students to conclude that phrases that come under the same category behave in a similar way. Consequently, learners would remain ignorant of the fact that even though some combinations share similar elements in their structures, they might have different syntactic behavior. For instance, while ‘ON’ in ‘INSIST ON’ is a preposition and it is always used before any NP following the verb, and it forms a semantic unit with the NP not the verb, ‘ON’ in ‘PUT ON’ is a particle making a semantic and intonational whole with the verb rather than with its following NP. The situation would become more problematic if learners come to decode the phrasal verbs compositionally as with prepositional constructions, that is, in terms of the meanings of the constituent parts. Particles in phrasal verbs, unlike prepositions in prepositional verbs, no longer maintain their prepositional meaning. They rather tend to add a new aspectual or figurative meaning to the lexical verb which makes

comprehension of these forms challenging at least for ESL/EFL learners (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). Unless learners are provided with some explicit or implicit information on how phrasal verbs differ from other similar-looking structures, it should come as no surprise that learners show tendency to regard them as identical forms. Alternatively, they might come to consider the verb and particle in a phrasal verb as individual linguistic elements combining freely together like other free forms such as “They put the book/it on the table”.

Phrasal verbs are often known as the middle ground area between grammar and lexicon (Gass & Selinker, 2001). They, like any other phenomenon category in the language, enjoy their own grammar (Aston, 2001; Thornbury, 2002), and learning a phrasal verb involves learning the grammatical patterns associated with it. It is, in fact, due to the strong bonding between the meaning and grammar of each combination that Liu and Jiang (2009) argue that learning of the lexical and grammatical aspects of these phrasal verbs should take place simultaneously. The ESL materials, however, failed to drop even a single hint as to the grammatical forms that these forms could take on.

In order for ESL learners to master the grammatical complexity of the phrasal verb combinations, their attention should be consciously drawn towards the essence of these forms through explicit instruction and meaningful classroom activities (Bishop, 2004). This stance of pedagogical practice

receives much theoretical support from Schmidt's noticing hypothesis (1990). According to Schmidt, unless the learner is consciously aware of the target language features of any type, he will fail to learn them effectively. Likewise, Norris and Ortega (2000), in a meta-analysis of a huge number of studies dealing with the effectiveness of L2 instruction, concluded that form-focused instruction results in substantial and long lasting gain of the target structures. In a similar way, Lewis (2000) and Segermann (2003), cited by Siepmann (2008), argue that ESL materials should not only make the learners aware of the formulaic nature of these sequences through explicit explanation and frequent use of them, but also draw their attention to the "re-analyzability" of these forms for productive purposes.

The lack of grammatical explanation on phrasal verbs, however, should not be interpreted that perhaps the presentation of the grammar in the textbooks followed a communicative approach and thus it needed to be implicit. While some Forms (e.g. Form One) turned out to be highly communicatively oriented, tending to present grammar implicitly, this tendency was not the same across all the five Forms. In some Forms, the authors managed to dish out elaborate grammatical comments on different aspects of the language ranging from bound morphemes to free forms and complicated grammatical rules. For instance, there were explanations on the application of plural morphemes *-s* and *-es* and irregular plural forms on page 36

of the Form Three textbook. There also existed comments about English definite and indefinite articles like 'a', 'an' and 'the' and the phonological conditions of the nouns with which they can be used (Form Three, page 36). There were as well grammatical explanations about changing direct speech to indirect speech in page 210 of the Form Five textbook. On the other hand, even the proponents of communicative language teaching have increasingly recognized and stressed the merit of attention to form in classroom pedagogy (Nassaji & Fotos, 2011). For instance, Savignon (2005) argues that "for the development of communicative ability, research findings overwhelmingly support the integration of form-focused exercises with meaning focused experience" (p. 645).

CONCLUSION

Data analysis led the researchers to conclude that phrasal verbs did not enjoy a good reputation in these ELT textbooks. They were hardly ever treated as a group as such, enjoying their own grammatical behavior and were, therefore, rather sparingly dealt with. Despite their pronounced regularity, no grammatical explanation was provided for the language learners. Even in the sections directly addressing these combinations only a few examples were provided just to show that combination of a lexical verb and a particle/preposition element could lead to new sequences with new meanings in the language. No distinction was made between the separable and inseparable forms. No explanation was given on how

a separable combination behaves if the accompanying noun phrase is a pronoun form. Neither was any differentiation made between these combinations and other orthographically similar looking forms though they are inherently different both in grammar and meaning. Despite the pronounced tendency of the writers of some Forms to have the learners explore and discover the grammatical rules on their own, the frequency count of most of the patterns was far too low for the students to pick them up incidentally. It can be leniently argued that presentation of these challenging forms in the corpus existed on the fringes — as ‘rubbish dumps’ in Sinclair’s terms (1991, p. 104). By and large, the researchers are standing up for the presentation in ELT materials of phrasal verbs with their corresponding grammar as “a grammatical structure may be lexically restricted” (Francis, 1993, p. 142), and, at the same time, use of each lexical item is associated with some grammatical implications (Biber, Conrad, & Reppen, 1998; Conrad, 2000). Hunston and Francis (2000, p. 33) even take a stricter stance contending “meaning could not in fact be explained without an indication of the patterns of use of each word sense”.

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