

## Frequency and Use of Phrasal Verbs in Academic Writing

Mustafa Talib Al.Juboury

Directorate General of Education in Holy Karbala

E-mail. [mt90iraq@gmail.com](mailto:mt90iraq@gmail.com).

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### Abstract

The present study deals with phrasal verbs. A phrasal verb can be used either intransitive when there is no noun phrase, or transitive when there is a noun phrase. Almost all transitive phrasal verbs allow adverb movement while such movement is not possible with the preposition. Phrasal verbs usually represent single semantic units that cannot be derived from the individual meanings of the two parts.

Frequently used phrasal verbs in spoken and written discourse, the Corpus of Contemporary English was used.

The problem of phrasal verb misunderstandings can be seen as a sign of deceptive teaching, insufficient attention, or lack of practice in this language domain by the instructor. In a circumstance like this, students lose control and become unable to understand or master phrasal verbs, which makes it difficult for them to employ and interpret them. The two main aspects of the resultant issue are as follows:

- 1- No way of telling what they mean just by looking at the individual words. The meaning of "put off", for example may have nothing to do with "put".
- 2- One phrasal verb may have several meanings. It is only by looking at the context that we can tell the meaning it has in any situation.

This research aims at achieving the following objectives:

1. Providing clarification on phrasal verbs, a crucial English language structure that is said to be essential for speaking and comprehending spoken English.
2. Examining the morphological and lexical diversity of English phrasal verbs.
3. Drawing attention to the connection between phrasal verb acquisition and the growth of students' communicative skills.

In order to achieve the objectives planned for this research, the researcher followed the following procedures :

1. Providing accurate, thorough information regarding phrasal verbs in English in the theoretical portion of the study.
2. Using an exam to gauge how well students comprehend and apply English phrasal verbs in suitable situations.
3. The paper ends with conclusion and list of reference.

These two potential grammatical links go by two distinct names. A phrasal prepositional verb will be the connected verb when the particle is both an adverb and a preposition. The conclusion is that there is inconsistency in the nomenclature of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs are primarily used to refer to particle verbs in modern syntactic theories; prepositional verbs are not included in this category.

**Key Words:** *Phrasal Verbs, Corpus of Contemporary English (COCA), Academic Writing.*

### **1.1 Introduction**

Phrasal verbs are linguistic units that are engendered from the amalgamation of a verb proper and a particle that can be an adverb, a preposition or both. This “verb + particle” can be determined by both semantic and syntactic factors. According to Quirk , R. & S. Greenbaum (1975: 461), a phrasal verb functions together as a single unit both lexically and syntactically.

One of the most common characteristics of the English verb is that can combine with preposition and adverb particles. These combinations are called phrasal verbs. The resulting combinations create what amounts to a new verb, whose meaning can sometimes be puzzling to learners. Phrasal verbs have alternative terms 'compound verb', verb – adverb combination, 'two – part word/verb ', three – part word /verb' and multi – word verb. They often arise from casual uses of language use. They can be both

transitive and intransitive in meaning. The problem with phrasal verbs is that their meaning is often, obscure , and they mean several different things ,i.e. the meaning of a phrasal verb is very different from the meaning of two words taken separately. The study examines the use of phrasal verbs in academic written discourse.

Spoken discourse is considered to be less formal style. On the other hand, academic writing is considered to be more formal and specialized style .

The present study deals with one of the most difficult aspects of the English language which is the learning of phrasal verbs. It is believed that these verbs have to be learned individually and that their meanings are arbitrary . Learning phrasal verbs and their translation is a difficult task for foreign language learners . Learners must learn some prepositions and particles in a clear way in order to check if this may improve their studying ,translating ,and comprehending the meaning of phrasal verb combinations in English .This study shows the difficulties faced by university learners of English in Iraq when they deal with phrasal verb combinations .In this connection ,it is necessary for learners to differentiate between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs and to be familiar with the types of phrasal verbs .Thus, the researcher ,in this research , makes a clear –cut distinction between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs and categorizes them in order to make them easily memorized by learners .

Grammatically ,a phrasal verb is a verb followed by a preposition or an adverb which creates a meaning different from the original verb alone . Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and a particle .A particle can be an adverb such as "with" or "from " , in ,for example, "deal with " and "shrink from " . Some phrasal verbs have two particles : both an adverb an a preposition as in "get on with "and stand up for ". Phrasal verb are part of a large group of verbs called "multi- part " or multi –word verbs .The preposition or adverb that follows the verb is sometimes called a particle. Phrasal verbs and other multi – word verbs form an important part of the English language.

They are mainly used in spoken English and informal texts. It has been noted that the term phrasal verb is commonly applied to two or three distinct but related constructions in English : a verb particle and/or a preposition in English forming a single semantic unit . This semantic unit cannot be understood depending on the meanings of the individual word in isolation , but rather it can be taken as a whole; therefore, their meanings are non compositional and unpredictable verbs received different alternative terms such as compound verb –adverb combination ,verb-particle –construction ,two -

part word, and three part word/verb (depending on the number of particles )and multi – word verb. It seems that the term multi-verb is the best one used by some grammarians like, McArth, (1992)and Parrott(2000)as it refers to all forms of a phrasal verb that take (verb +adverb+, verb +preposition /verb+ adverb+ preposition).

## 2.1 Definition of Phrasal verbs

A phrasal verb can be defined as an English verb followed by one or more particles where the combination behaves as a syntactic and semantic unit. ‘Make up’, ‘give in’, ‘look after’, ‘carry on’, ‘blow out’, ‘put off’, ‘put up with’, ‘call off’, ‘drink up’, ‘take down’, ‘come to’, ‘look up’, ‘pass out’, and ‘turn into’. They are just a few examples of the many English phrasal verbs, which constitute one of the most distinctive and creative features of the English language. The phrasal verb consists of a verb, usually a monosyllabic verb of action or movement such as ‘go’, ‘put’, ‘take’, and one or more particles. The particle may be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can act as either adverb or preposition. Often the meaning of these verb phrases is idiomatic and can not be determined by knowing the meaning of their individual parts. Because of this, phrasal verbs are often difficult to master for students of English as a second language, (Maarib, 2012: 90)

A phrasal verb is the combination of a verb with an adverb or preposition and occasionally with an adverb and preposition .According to McArthur (1992:72- 6), the most common definition of a phrasal verb is used by Crystal (2003:352) as a term consisting of a sequence of lexical element plus one or more particles (an adverb, a preposition or an adverb plus a preposition ) whereas Biber et al .(1999:403) defines phrasal as multi – word units consisting of a verb followed by an adverbial particle. These particles have core spatial or locative meanings.

Downing and Lock (2006:337) classified phrasal verbs into three main categories, non-idiomatic, semi-idiomatic and fully idiomatic. Non-idiomatic phrasal verbs are characterized by their ease of being comprehended as the verb and the particle keep their own meaning. The typical meanings of this type of phrasal verbs are movement + direction whereby “the particle encodes the direction of the movement, while the lexical verb encodes the movement”. Consider the following two examples:

1. The old man **took out** the chair.
2. The woman **carried out** the food.

In semi-idiomatic phrasal verbs, the verb keeps its own literal metaphoric meaning while the particle is utilized as an aspectual marker of several kinds such as completion, beginning-point, end-point, high intensity of an event and continuation, a kind of non-completion (Downing and Lock, 2006). Consider the following examples:

3. The students are **dozing off**.
4. The mother **cried out** for help.

While in sentence (3) the phrasal verb 'dozing off' denotes a beginning of an activity, 'cried out' in sentence (4) implies a momentary activity.

The meaning of fully idiomatic phrasal verbs is typically difficult to process as their meaning cannot be deciphered via examining their constituents because of the inherent idiomaticity. For example, the meaning of the phrasal verb 'figure out' is 'to understand' and (buy off) is 'to give money in order to stop a threat or a trouble', as in the following two sentences: Swan, (1995:231)

5. It didn't take a mathematical genius to **figure out** what we had found.
6. Bloomberg's ability to **buy off** potential critics was astounding.

Phrasal verbs are either transitive or intransitive. Transitive phrasal verbs are usually separable, i.e., an object noun phrase may or may not come between the verb and the particle. However, if the direct object is a pronoun, then it must be placed between them. However, adverbs do not usually come between the verb and the particle - though there are exceptions: The referee broke up the fight immediately. Or: The referee broke the fight up immediately. He broke it up immediately. In intransitive phrasal verbs, the particle may narrow the sense of the verb (as in sit down), or it may create an idiomatic meaning which differs from that of the root verb (as in show up): Several students showed up late. When the lecturer has taken his place, the audience sat quietly down, (Nidham and Ala'a, 2015: 15)

### 2.1.1 Kinds of Phrasal Verbs

Halliday and Malthiessen (2004:351) state that phrasal verbs have two kinds, plus a third which is a combination of the other two :

1. verb + adverb : **look out** = 'unearth ,retrieve'
2. verb + preposition : **look for** = 'seek'

3. verb + adverb + preposition : **look out of** = 'watch for the presence of' While Alexander (1988:153) classified phrasal verbs into four types of combinations with different characteristics :

1. verb + preposition (transitive ) = **get over** (an illness )
2. verb + particle ( transitive ) **bring up** ( the children )
3. verb + particle ( transitive ) **come about** = happen
4. verb + particle+ preposition (transitive ) = **run out of** (matches ) . These particles often indicate position or direction , such as **along, down, in, off, on, out , over , under , up** .When a single verb like put combines with a large number of particles or prepositions it forms new verbs ( **put off , put out , put up , put up with** , etc. ) Through this combination a new meaning can be created different from the original one . Some phrasal verbs are easy to be understood , but many are more difficult because they have special meanings .

The English language has a large number of PV. The term is unknown to the vast majority of native English speakers. Phrasal verbs may be categorized and classed by linguistics students pursuing advanced degrees. From a linguistics standpoint, this is a useful practice because it enhances our understanding of the language. Nevertheless, researchers believe that phrasal verbs are essential parts of vocabulary and should be taught to students. It's impossible to discern their meaning just by looking at their parts. In the lines "He took my wallet," "The army took over the city," and "We were taken in by him," the verbs "take," "take over," and "take in" all have distinctive meanings of their own, (Zubaida and Abdulkarim, 2023: 82)

Even though phrasal verbs consist of two words, they share the same semantic unity as single-word things. Using a single phrasal verb, each of the words expresses a unique idea, but by combining them, an entirely new idea emerges. Three categories can be used to classify phrasal verbs based on the meaning they convey. A phrasal verb with a metaphorical extension, e.g. "the matter was ringed in by barriers," e.g. "come in, walk out, stand up, etc." For lack of a better word, the preceding verb describes a phenomenon (associated with). When used in a different context, the same phrasal verb has a distinct connotation. "The field was entirely fenced in" is an example of a phrase that could be used. "sign off (in broadcast)," "catch on," and "sign off (in broadcast) (to discontinue transmission)" are all examples of this phrasal verb in usage. As a means of comprehension, (Zubaida and Abdulkarim, 2023: 58)

## 2.2. Results and discussion

The most frequently occurring structure of phrasal verbs in the academic writing constituent is (infinitival verb + adverbial particle). For instance:

1	I liked the way you could	<i>play around</i>	with this and say so much just with the little
2	In 1962, you couldn't	<i>go out</i>	the front door without permission, and there
3	You couldn't	<i>stay up</i>	reading. Lord, help us, you couldn't have any
4	to get Foster to	<i>put up</i>	a crucifix and a photograph of the Pope
5	He makes sure to	<i>point out</i>	the wonderful little bathroom the painter

**Table (1): Form of Phrasal Verbs (infinitival verb + adverbial particle)**

Thus the retrieved data that the corpus provided, certain observations materialized. The transitive form of the infinitival verb + adverbial particle combination is not only confined to enclose a noun phrase (NP) as a direct object. Rather, the direct object can be in the form of a gerund that is most frequently utilized with the phrasal verb *end up* as in 1 and 2, a wh-phrase is used predominantly with the phrasal verb *figure out*, such as 3 and 4, and that-clause which is most common with the verb *point out*, for example 5 and 6:

No.	Types	Examples
1.	Gerund	<b>1.</b> Of plausibility pleading would <i>end up</i> going 'too far.' <b>2.</b> This said he was not willing to <i>give up</i> trying the technique, saying, 'I can work
2.	Wh-phrase	<b>3.</b> Truman Capote or trying to <i>figure out</i> how Agatha Christie's sentences work <b>4.</b> and thus it is important to <i>sort out</i> how this is defined and experienced by social
3.	That-clause	<b>5.</b> students. It is important to <i>point out</i> that only 4 of the 19 strategies produced <b>6.</b> indicated that he could not <i>rule out</i> that the gains made in his study could be partially

**Table (2): Form of Phrasal Verb (Transitive Verb +particle+ direct object)**

**Table (3): Transitive Verb + direct object + particle**

Types	Examples
Personal pronoun	<p>1. Democratic senators are likely to <i>follow him out</i>, either via preemptive retirement or</p> <p>2. simply the sum of the individuals who <i>make it up</i>, then changing individuals, one at a time,</p>
Reflexive pronoun	<p>3. and numerous men who tried to <i>give themselves up</i> paid for the decision with their lives</p> <p>4. theme -- some all-powerful being would <i>set itself up</i> as God but would eventually turn out</p>
Noun phrase	<p>5. needed to be useful. To study and not <i>pass that knowledge on</i> is no better than not studying</p> <p>6. help anyone wanting to plan to <i>take some time off</i>." # Though Hekker was "</p> <p>7. her listening skills and ability to <i>draw Brian out</i>, might discover Brian's negative feeling</p> <p>8. Sciences (PAW) was put under political pressure to <i>throw Einstein out</i>; when it became clear that he had</p>
Indefinite pronoun	<p>9. mental gears are whirring. # The pressure to <i>bring something in</i>, no matter how rough, builds a</p> <p>10. sample material. But quite honestly, I don't <i>take something on</i> if I can only see a glimmer and</p>

One of the characteristics of phrasal verbs is that the direct object is not restricted to be positioned after the verb phrase, but it can be situated between the verb proper and the particle. The information from the corpus indicated that there are four major types of direct objects that are commonly positioned between the verb and the particle. The most regularly used is the personal pronoun as in 1 and 2. The second most recurrent direct object is the reflexive pronoun as in 3 and 4. The noun phrase is third most frequently reoccurring direct object in academic writing. Moreover, these noun phrases do not only have the form of a determiner+ noun (Det+ N), but it is also present



in the form of a pure noun, either proper or not, such as the examples 5, 6, 7 and 8. The least common direct object is the indefinite pronoun, as in 9 and 10.

Throughout the information that COCA provides the researcher with, certain noteworthy patterns engendered. Transitive phrasal verbs are typically modified by adverbs that further clarify the action of the verb. Adverb can either be positioned externally or internally within the verb structure as in the following examples,

We eventually decided to	<i>focus solely on</i>	We Card. For this study,
that enabled the Haganah to	<i>swiftly turn events around</i>	and go on the attack. Aft

Intransitive phrasal verbs are less common than transitive phrasal verbs in the genre of academic writing which is already been asserted by Biber et al (2007) who stated that intransitive phrasal verbs “are extremely common in conversation, but extremely rare in news and academic prose” (122).

Intransitive phrasal verbs are not only in the form of an intransitive verb+ particle, such as 1 and 2, rather it is used with an adverb, that can either be situated between the intransitive verb and the particle or outside the phrasal verb itself, which denotes properties and attributes that signify the verb (O’Grady et al, 1996), as in 3 and 4.

1. groups were apparently willing to *go along*, even if they had greater capacity
2. use are politically easy for the state to *shut down*, whereas tools in broad use
3. to the mast-head, he used to *come slowly down* again to get something which
4. you try to do so, trust will *inevitably break down* . Most parents are cooperative

There is also an additional pervasive structure of phrasal verbs in the academic writing constituent which is the phrasal-prepositional verb. It is typically structured by positioning a preposition after the particle resulting in a linguistic unit that is structured as verb+ particle+ preposition. Similar to the verb+ particle combination, the adverb in phrasal- prepositional verbs can be positioned outside the verb or within the verb structure itself. Such as:

team. I always swore I'd to	<i>never go back to</i>	the front line because of the
design idea. I will be able to	<i>jump right in with</i>	this. " # Call now to schedule

These forms of phrasal verbs can either be transitive or intransitive. However, phrasal-prepositional verbs enclose a striking feature that distinguishes them from the Verb+ particle forms, the transitive phrasal-prepositional verbs, can only occur when the direct object is positioned within the verb form itself, precisely after the verb proper. The direct object in the transitive form can be a noun phrase (Det+ N), a pure noun and a pronoun. Nonetheless, it cannot be a gerund, a that-clause or a wh-phrase, for instance 1, 2 and 3. The intransitive form of these verbs can be realized when the verb+ particle+ preposition unit occur without having a noun phrase (or anything that signify a direct object) within the structure of the verb itself, as in 4 and 5.

1. true civilization in England and *bring those lessons back to* his people. Despite his background (Det+ N).
2. we can look back at the town and *get things back into* perspective. (Noun).
3. Need to accomplish your goals and *break it down into* manageable steps. (Pronoun).
4. was neither the first nor last to *end up under* a pattern -- common to flood
5. of music their creative minds can *come up with*. Then, set up a time when they

### 3. Conclusions

Phrasal verbs are linguistic phenomena as they are on the interface between the domains of syntax and semantics that interact interestingly. The analysis of the study bases on data from the academic writing constituent of language, because it is deemed significantly rare the existence of phrasal verbs in this genre. Therefore, there is no research conducted regarding phrasal verbs in the academic writing genre.

Corpus of contemporary American English was used because of its dynamic architecture and its rich database. This study indicated that 'infinitival verb + adverbial particle' is the most frequent form in academic writing. The direct object of its transitive form can be a noun phrase, a gerund, a wh-phrase and a that-clause. When the direct object is inserted within the verb and the particle, it can be a personal pronoun, reflexive

pronoun, indefinite pronoun, and a noun phrase. The results also indicated that Intransitive phrasal verbs can enclose an adverb within their structure and they are less common in academic writing than transitive phrasal verbs. Phrasal-prepositional verbs are also pervasive in academic, writing which are either transitive or intransitive.

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## استخدام الجمل الفعلية في الكتابة الأكاديمية

مصطفى طالب الجبوري

المديرية العامة لتربية كربلاء المقدسة

[mt90iraq@gmail.com](mailto:mt90iraq@gmail.com)

### الملخص:

تتعامل الدراسة مع الجمل الفعلية، إذ يمكن استخدام الجمل الفعلية إما مع الأفعال اللازمة إذا لم يكن هنالك عبارة اسمية، أو مع الأفعال المتعدية عندما تكون هنالك عبارة اسمية. تقريباً جميع الأفعال المتعدية تسمح في حركة الظرف، في حين هذا غير ممكن مع حروف الجر. أشباه الجمل الفعلية عادة ما تمثل وحدات دلالية مفردة لا يمكن اشتقاقها من المعاني الفردية للجزئيين. في كثير من الأحيان الجمل الفعلية المستخدمة في الخطاب المنطوق والمكتوب، تم استخدام اللغة الإنجليزية المعاصرة. يعدُّ الخطاب المنطوق أسلوباً أقل رسمية. في حين تعتبر الكتابة الأكاديمية أكثر أسلوباً رسمياً ومتخصصاً.

يمكن النظر إلى مشكلة سوء فهم الفعل الظرفي بوصفه علامة على التدريس الخادع، أو عدم الاهتمام الكافي، أو عدم الممارسة في هذا المجال اللغوي من قبل المعلم. في مثل هذه الظروف، يفقد الطلاب السيطرة ويصبحون غير قادرين على فهم أو إتقان أفعال الجمل الفعلية، مما يجعل من الصعب عليهم توظيفها وتفسيرها. الجانبان الرئيسيين للمشكلة الناتجة هما كما يأتي:

- 1- لا توجد طريقة لمعرفة ما يقصدونه بمجرد النظر إلى الكلمات الفردية. فمعنى "تأجيل" على سبيل المثال قد لا يكون له علاقة بـ "وضع".
- 2- الفعل الواحد قد يكون له عدة معانٍ، فقط من خلال النظر إلى السياق يمكننا معرفة المعنى الذي يحمله في أي موقف.

يهدف هذا البحث إلى تحقيق الأهداف الآتية:

1. تقديم توضيح بشأن الأفعال الفعلية، وهي بنية بالغة الأهمية في اللغة الإنجليزية يقال إنها ضرورية للتحدث وفهم اللغة الإنجليزية المنطوقة.

2. دراسة التنوع الصرفي والمعجمي للأفعال الفعلية في اللغة الإنجليزية.

3. لفت الانتباه إلى العلاقة بين اكتساب الفعل المركب ونمو مهارات التواصل لدى الطلاب.

ولتحقيق الأهداف المخططة لهذا البحث اتبعت الباحثة الإجراءات الآتية:

1. توفير معلومات دقيقة وشاملة عن الأفعال الفعلية في اللغة الإنجليزية في الجزء النظري من الدراسة.

2. استخدام اختبار لقياس مدى فهم الطلاب لأفعال اللغة الإنجليزية وتطبيقها في المواقف المناسبة.

3. وينتهي البحث بالخاتمة وقائمة المراجع.

هذان الارتباطان النحويان المحتملان يمران باسمين مختلفين. سيكون الفعل الفعلي لحروف الجر هو الفعل المتصل عندما يكون الجسيم ظرفاً وحرف جر. والخلاصة هي أن هناك تناقضاً في تسميات الأفعال الفعلية. تُستخدم الأفعال الفعلية في المقام الأول للإشارة إلى أفعال الجسيمات في النظريات النحوية الحديثة؛ لا يتم تضمين أفعال الجر في هذه الفئة.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفعال الفعلية، مجموعة اللغة الإنجليزية المعاصرة (COCA)، الكتابة الأكاديمية