

Phrasal Verbs Avoidance among Jordanian EFL University Students

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ABSTRACT: This paper reviews the status of learning and teaching English Phrasal verbs in the Arab world and especially in the Jordanian context. However, in this process of learning English Phrasal verbs, Jordanian EFL university students in the attempt to master this lexical unit face different difficulties. Through the related literature of the studies conducted on these difficulties it was suggested that the majority of errors made by the Jordanian EFL students are the results of frequent acquisition and learning process, such as structural differences between L1 and L2, passive learning interpretation, and poor language engagement. Additional research is needed to look at other issues, such as the influence of direct teaching, learners' awareness of the usage of phrasal verbs in everyday English, and the educational environment. Moreover, the researcher speculates that the differences between first and second languages and the syntactic - semantic difficulty of phrasal verbs may be reasons for the Jordanian EFL students' phrasal verbs avoidance up to a specific level of use and practice in the EFL setting.

KEY WORDS: Avoidance, EFL, Language Acquisition, Phrasal Verb, Syntactic - Semantic,

Phrasal Verbs: PVs are described as a grouping of two lexical components: a verb and a particle [1]. Many terms have been applied to reflect this specific linguistic form, such as 'separable verb', 'two-word verb', and 'verb-particle groupings [2]. Though, the term 'phrasal verb' will be implemented in the current paper, as it is the most common term employed by scholars learning this language characters (e.g. [3]; [4]). Additionally, the term 'phrasal verb' is a general concept employed in the instruction and learning setting comprising reference resources (e.g. learners' textbooks, course books, dictionaries). Much research has been carried about PVs (e.g. [5]; [3]; [4]; [2] and yet, difficulties related to the descriptions of PVs have been commonly explained within past research of PVs, mainly on the structural status of the particle in PV structure: whether a particle should be an adverbial particle (e.g. up, out, down) as in look up, get out, break down; or whether it can also comprise prepositions (e.g. with, after, into) as in deal with, look after, run into. Since the description of PVs is related and appropriate for the objective of the current research, which is associated with describing PVs for language learners, the 'more functional' description of PVs offered by [4] will be used.

Many scholars use the concept 'phrasal verb' to relate to the grouping of a lexical verb (LV) + adverb particle (AVP) while LV + preposition (PRP) is stated to as a prepositional verb. Whilst, it is very explicit that the grouping of LV + PRP (e.g. *look at, go to*) falls into the prepositional verb group, there are many combinations (e.g. *run into, look into*), in which the position of *into* is not precise. To exemplify, *run into* and *look into*, could operate as both: PRP in a prepositional verb, and prepositional particle (PRPr) in PV. A PV includes a verb and a particle. This structure has been assigned many titles by different scholars, such as verb-particle constructions, multi-word verbs, compound verbs, complex verbs, particle verbs, composite verbal expressions, discontinuous verbs, etc. (e.g. [6]; [7], and they have also been differently described by many scholars [8]. For instance, [8] considers phrasal verbs as a sub-category of multi-word verbs, whilst other scholars have understood PVs as the grouping of a head verb and one or more obligatory particles, in the form of intransitive prepositions, adjectives or verbs [9] p. 98: examples such as *hand in, cut short, let go* are provided in their research. Commonly, a PV is described as a structure that consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle that functions as a single unit both lexically and syntactically [3], p. 196). Or it is considered as idiomatic combinations of a verb and one or more particles which jointly behave as a single lexico-grammatical unit ([7], p. 230). The general explanation of PVs in these descriptions is the concord of the verb and its particles. Also, the particular description of the combined structure of PVs, many features could be practical to some but not all phrasal verbs: (1) some of them are polysemous, e.g. *make up* has eight senses [9]; [10]. (2) Their structural patterns could be elastic or secured, intransitive or transitive, or even ditransitive. (3) The presence of the particle can be neglected or obligatory, for instance: *wake (up)* but *get up*. (4) Their senses can be of diverse points of idiomaticity, from literal to metaphorical or idiomatic, e.g. *stand up* can stand for 'rise from a sitting/lying position' or 'an idea is

Confirmed to be correct. Many scholars have attempted to classify PVs into varied categories, for instance: (1) literal: *go out, take away, come in*. (2) figurative: *turn up, let down* (3) completive: *cut off, burn down* [11]. Also, PVs could be categorized as semantically transparent, semi-transparent, and figurative / semantically opaque based on their semantic transparency [12]. They can be merely classified into compositional, idiomatic, or aspectual, as related to their semantic clarifications [13], [14], [15]. The classification of PVs is unknown, which is important of their semantic difficulties. The above-stated difficulties of phrasal verbs have been perceived to generate excessive difficulties for students from diverse language experiences.

For instance, scholars such as [2], p. 120 have stated that PVs are rather difficult for non-Germanic or non-Scandinavian learners learning EFL. Precisely, metaphorical PVs have been stated as being puzzling for Chinese students ([3], p. 215). The problems ascend from numerous issues. The diversity of meanings of PVs is identified as the main problem for L2 students by [16]. [5], pp.144-145 provides a complete understanding of the problems students might encounter (e.g. “confusion of combining the verb and the particle” and “polysemy”, see Section 3.4.2 for details).

[17] further adds “contextual and collocational restrictions” and “grammatical environment”, which have been reflected bordering in past research but are of specific importance to this research. In the researcher's opinion, understanding the use of phrasal verbs is a problematic issue for learners to develop and acquire their EFL skills. This is because their knowledge and acquaintance with the English language is very restricted to a classroom [18];[19]. Learners, learning English phrasal verbs in an EFL setting face problems in many syntactic and semantic structural issues especially when selecting phrases and building ideas about a specific writing theme. More significantly, they encounter problems expanding phraseology skills, such as suitable use of phrases in a natural situation within a different social setting in a resourceful manner [20].

These problems of phrasal verbs used are worsened because teachers of EFL are inclined to focus greatly on teaching learners' grammar, and suitable phrasal structures [21]. Furthermore, they characteristically present their learners as passive EFL users. These difficulties, though, incline to obstruct learners from evolving their teaching space interaction and hinder them from constructing more dynamic learning in EFL. Because of this gap between learners' requirements and teachers' teaching methods, teachers of semantic and syntax in EFL are not sure how to aid their learners interact fluently, to use phrasal verbs accurately, and to be more independent learners of academic phraseology [22]. Moreover, the difficulty is how EFL teachers can help their learners realize phrasal verbs' functions, making their EFL learning more meaningful as well as productive in varied social contexts. Therefore, there is an indispensable necessity for phraseology activities to assist learners to improve their skills and information by facing a whole learning process and the awareness of the setting in which the learning process of EFL occurs [23]; [24]. Thus, the researcher discusses that a learner should have the suitable interactive skills and ability to use phrasal verbs correctly both from the semantic and syntactic viewpoint and to fulfil the necessities of learning phraseology. Appropriate use of phrasal verbs will rely heavily on the syntactic and semantic structures [2]; [25].

Significantly, the learner can create real learning of phrasal verbs to fulfil interactive needs within specific settings. Hence, the learning of phraseology should provide significance to both the syntactic and semantic aspects of language and the meaning of ideas to make learning phraseology more meaningful. According to scholars such as [26]; [27]. Using phrasal verbs should be accurate in both content and form, in which the syntactic and semantic aspects of language are maintained. A learner would require the basic phraseology competence to semantically and syntactically be able to interact effectively with the readers. They should be competent both semantically and syntactically to be resourceful learners as being knowledgeable in one without the other is not sufficient to use phrasal verbs in an efficient manner [6]; [7].

Types of Phrasal Units: [28] categorization of PVs might be an intricate issue, as [29], p. 6 states “being or not being a phrasal verb is a matter of degree”. So, do not use a vague grouping process, scholars must agree upon a description, thus necessitating them to start from a comparable point. Moreover, the description in Quirk has been used as the criteria. According to these researchers, phrasal verbs are classified into two main kinds related to their idiomatic significances [30]; [31]: they include ‘semi idiomatic’ and ‘highly idiomatic’ structures. Phrasal verbs such as *bring up* (rear / raise of children), *come by* (acquire), *turn up* (make an appearance) are classified as ‘highly idiomatic’ PVs as “there is no possibility of contrastive substitution: *bring up / down; come by / past/through; turn up / down*; etc. (p. 1163). The second class is named semi-idiomatic: structures that are in constant but in a more restricted manner (p. 1162), such as PVs *find out* (discover), *cut up* (cut into pieces), *slacken off* (reduce pace / energy)

In which the meaning of the verb is reserved, but the sense of the particle is less easy to separate (p. 1162). Other non-idiomatic structures such as *bring in / out*, *take in / out*, *walk up / down*, *run up / down* are not categorized as multi-word verbs as the individual meanings of the components are apparent from their constancy in possible substitutions (p. 1162), proposing they are free groupings rather than phrasal verbs. Though, as far as this paper is related, the researcher will involve non-idiomatic structures and classify them as literal phrasal verbs, based on [32] categorization of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs include various types comprising transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs. The transitive PVs are categorized into two categories, they involve separable and inseparable PVs.

Intransitive PVs: Intransitive phrasal verbs refer to those PVs which do not entail a direct object that is operated upon by the verb. For instance:

I woke up at 10:30 AM.

You can come over to my house after school.

He's going back to Russia next month.

Transitive PVs : Transitive PVs include a direct object. They could be separable or inseparable [32]. When PV is separable, the verb and the preposition could be divided, placing the object in the middle of the sentence. When PV is inseparable, the object should be at the sentence-final position because the preposition and verb should always be together. In this regard, PVs have two types include the following:

Inseparable PVs: There is a type of PV that does not accept separation. This indicates that when we need to insert an object, it should often follow the whole PV. This is right when we apply a noun such as *Rama*, *the car*, *our friends*, and *Jordan*; or a pronoun such as *him*, *them*, and *us*. The object should frequently follow the whole PV as indicated in the following examples:

I ran into Mohammad = (vb + particle = NOUN)

I ran into him = (vb + particle = PRONOUN)

When a PV is non-separable, a NOUN or PRONOUN constantly comes after the particle in the instance *Incorrect: I ran Mohammad into.*

Separable PVs: Certain PV could be separated if used with objects. This shows that there is a choice. An object can be placed between the verb and the preposition, or it can be placed at the final position, in the same manner, separable verbs are used. Therefore, there is a significant thing to be remembered! If a pronoun such as *him*, *her*, *them*, *us*, or *it* is used, then PV should be separated as depicted in the following examples:

We put off our trip = (vb + particle + NOUN)

We put our trip off = (vb + NOUN + particle)

We put it off = (vb + PRONOUN + particle)

When a PV is separable, a PRONOUN OBJECT is placed between the verb and the particle. *Incorrect: We put off it.* It is also significant to recall that if the object is very long, then a PV should not be separated. It is not structurally improper to separate PVs in these cases, but it is more explicit for the hearer if PV is not separated as shown in the following examples:

Clear:

Can I use the car? I need to pick up a friend of mine from summer camp at the airport.

Confusing:

Can I use the car? I need to pick a friend of mine from summer camp up at the airport.

[33] states that there are three major types of PVs' constructions which are based on whether the verb chains with a preposition, a particle, or both. Those include the following:

Prepositional PVs (verb + preposition) : If the component is a preposition, it is the head of a complete PPV (prepositional phrase) and the PV is, therefore, a PPV. These PVs may also be understood as transitive and non-separable; the tail that follows the PV.

Who is looking after the kids? The use of after as a preposition came to introduce the PP after the kids.

They picked on nobody. The use of on as a preposition came to introduce the PP on nobody.

I ran into an old friend. The use of into as a preposition came to introduce the PP into an old friend.

Particle PVs (Verb + particle): If the construct is a particle, it cannot be treated as a preposition but dealt with as a particle because it does not accept a complement. These may be dealt with as either transitive or intransitive verbs. When they are transitive verbs, they are separable as depicted in the following examples.

They brought that up twice. The use of up here is a particle, and cannot be treated as a preposition.

You should think it over. The use of over here is a particle, not a preposition.

You should not give in so quickly. The use of in here is a particle, and cannot be dealt with as a preposition.

Particle Prepositional Phrasal Verbs (Verb + Particle + Preposition)

This type includes different PVs that join with both a preposition and a particle.

Who can put up with that? The use of up here comes as a particle and with is a preposition.

She is looking forward to a rest. The use of forward here comes as a particle and to as a preposition.

The other tanks were bearing down on my panther. The use of down here comes as a particle and on as a preposition.

The Significance of Phrasal Verbs: A learner cannot comprehend a variety of languages without possessing awareness about the use of PVs [32]. PVs are significant constructs of native-like used discourse and not implementing them may make non-natives appear affected and unusual in discourse [2]. [16] indicated that the significance of PVs results from the excessive number of present PVs, as well. There are at least 700 PVs in normal, daily function in English and at least 3000 recognized PVs [34]; [16].[35] states the significance of teaching PVs, improving accessible consciousness, and the skill to generate them: Despite their complexity, phrasal verbs have to be trained at some phases because they are general, the structure containing them is reasonable and original, and they are a significant part of the system of language; certainly, as [29]: p.214 sets it, they establish 'an explosion of lexical creativeness that surpasses anything else in our language'. Significantly, all learners improve at least open awareness, which will help them decipher the PVs that they meet in verbal and non-verbal texts, while those students aiming to be skilled users necessitate being competent to generate at least the more general PV combinations applicably [2]. Difficulties in the application and learning PVs, several linguists and learners concerned with ESL/EFL investigation have emphasized the problem of PVs to English students in diverse linguistics teaching materials and ESL readings. [36]: p.6 stated, "Non-native speakers of English (...), in my experience, find prepositions and particles (and P- forms in particular) among the most difficult (...) forms that they have to master in learning the English language". Also, [32]: p.245 commented, "We are once again dealing (...) with a structure that is very difficult for ESL/EFL students". Moreover, [37] indicated that PVs are frequently reflected as difficult in terms of second language teaching, learning, and applicability for many reasons. The most problematic dimension is in the connotation of PVs. Though there is certain semantic systematicity, there is still sufficient idiomaticity to create problems for ESL/EFL students. Therefore, PVs are frequently non-compositional and entail specific meaning; that is somebody can distinguish the connotation of the verb and the real sense of the particle, but when they are combined, an exceptional connotation is resulting [32].

[2] specified that PVs hold two or more orthographic expressions working together, keeping them problematic to identify as a single semantic component. If a student identifies that string of words is a multiword verb, they are expected to attempt to decipher the senses of the specific words. Moreover, the PVs register can be a problem as well for ESL/EFL students.[38] pointed that for students, the problem is not so much selecting the verb form which contains the right meaning, but rather selecting the verb which has the suitable register, and which follows the prospects of the language community [39]. As such, the accurate selection between multiword

verbs and their one-word equivalents makes an effective and communicative change in a learner. For instance, by failing to implement multi-word verbs in their discourse, many learners of English tend to sound unnatural and non-idiomatic [40]. Also, there are very insufficient non-Germanic languages that contain PVs. On the other hand, PVs are very regular in English. They are diverse from verbs in several languages of the world. As a result, most English as a second language and English as foreign language learners will see such verbs as strange and problematic [41]. No one can communicate or realize English, at least the informal dialect, without an understanding of PVs. English language students, though, do not understand this and they may misuse single-word verbs where PVs would be much more suitable. Additionally, the situations that rule the optional or obligatory departure of the verb and the particle for PVs are implemented transitively; the assignment of any nominal or pronominal objects concerning the verb [42]; [37]. There is certain constancy of meaning for definite particles in the semi-transparent PVs category. Though, ESL / EFL learners can have difficulties. For instance, *burn down* and *burn up* are not antonyms because the particle up possesses a desirable goal completion meaning versus down that entails a more undesirable complete extinction meaning. Furthermore, certain particles in the semi-transparent class indicate positive meanings constantly; they cannot be allocated easily to any verb [43].

For instance, the *fade-out* is conventional but *fade-up* is not [44]; [45]. Similarly, the occurrence of polysemy of PVs is reflected as a learning difficulty as [16] stated: It is not the situation that a specific verb + particle blend might be polysomic in containing both an idiomatic and non-idiomatic implementation: further it might well be polysomic in possessing more than one idiomatic function. There is not only one non-idiomatic function of *put up* and one idiomatic function [46]. As an idiomatic grouping *put up* splits into several diverse meanings: He put us up for the night. Who put you up to this? He put up a good fight. Providing these semantic and syntactic difficulties of PVs, English language students were found to not use them constantly. The avoidance of PVs has been stated in much research in the SL acquisition field [11]; [47].

Many scholars examined the avoidance of PVs who were inspired by [48] research who first emphasized the avoidance of relative clauses. This will be discussed in further sections of this literature review which provides critiques of empirical research of the avoidance occurrence and mainly empirical research of the avoidance PVs by ESL/EFL language students [49]; [50]. To conclude, it is in the researcher's view that EFL language teachers in Jordan specifically can discuss phraseology for analysing their teaching practices especially phrasal verbs, but also as an analytical technique for examining the communication and interaction process when learning EFL. Appropriate use of phrasal verbs can facilitate language learners to discover what phraseology is and how it is used to attain interaction objectives in different syntactic-semantic contexts [32]. Phraseology can assist language teachers and learners to create an EFL language learning setting that reflects how ESL and EFL are used and inspire learners to realize their intentions of skill in another language. The researcher agrees with scholars in the field of phraseology that effective phrasal verb learning at syntactic and semantic levels requires both form and content. Moreover, researchers on phraseology agree that in EFL learning what is significant is that using phrasal verbs should be meaningful.

Jordanian EFL University students encounter difficulties in acquiring the correct way of using phrasal verbs and other English phrases such as idiomatic phrases which have a figurative meaning, independent of their forms. Lament that the dilemma is that students are not aware of those problems [51]. [52] study shows that phrasal verbs are the most difficult lexical discourse Jordanian university students faced as a result of lexical knowledge and semantic relations. [53] posit one of the causes of poor English Language proficiency among Jordanian university students is the poor knowledge of the phrasal verbs.

Phrasal Verbs' Avoidance: To describe the avoidance behaviour by EFL students, two significant assertions have been established. The first claim states that avoidance occurs when there are syntactic variations between the first and second languages. Within this opinion, avoidance is anticipated by Contrastive Analysis [54]. The second claim shows that type of avoidance is overseen by universal principles. Within this opinion, avoidance is expectable based on the semantic problem of second language forms in question [55]. [56] investigated the avoidance of English PVs by Iranian students. It attempted to analyse the contribution of PVs kinds, sorts of measurement, and English proficiency in any potential avoidance of PVs done by the participants. The study included two study groups. 85 students participated in the study at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. The research instruments included three tests. The results of the study indicated that test type and PVs influenced students' avoidance of PVs, but the level of proficiency did not influence learners' achievement. However, it was viewed that the distinction between the first and second language structure and semantic difficulty of PVs may result in the students' avoidance. [57] Investigated the avoidance of PVs. The study attempted to examine the influence of proficiency, learning context, task type, and verb type. The study included 52 first-language

Chinese speakers of EFL. The study comprised three research instruments. The result of the study showed that elements as learning setting, type of the task, and type of the verb had the effect of PVs' avoidance on students' performance.[58]Examined the avoidance of phrasal verbs by adult Chinese immigrants. Also, the study tried to investigate the effective exposure to the L2 environment, language proficiency, and the causes of avoidance behaviour. The study included 55 participants. The researcher used two study instruments. The findings showed that exposure itself does not unavoidably result in the non-avoidance of PVs, as the Chinese immigrants with inferior language proficiency still avoid employing them after many years of education in the UK. Also, the results indicated that language proficiency influences second language learners' avoidance behaviour. [59] studied the cognitive approach to the instruction of PVs using Ruzka-Ostyn's Model and its influence in teaching new PVs comprising metaphorical ones. The study included two groups (experimental and control groups). The findings showed that the experimental group did not outdo the control group in the Post-test. This study recommends that by adopting a cognitive model, teachers should emphasize more on the use of the particles /up/ and /out/ since they possess various senses and has a great role in the formation of phrasal verbs.

Review of Related Empirical Studies on Phrasal Verbs Avoidance: Research on the avoidance of English PVs was carried out by [60] to explore the presence of syntactic difficulties and semantic complications and to clarify the connection of syntactic issues to semantic concerns amongst Libyan learners in employing PVs during writing English texts. 10 Libyan learners participated in studying at three different universities Semarang, Central Java, Indonesia. This research employed a descriptive qualitative technique to examine the data. The findings indicated that Libyan students have three difficulties connected to adverb insertion, particle placement, and fronting particle and they possess semantic difficulties in comprehending the senses in the semantic lessons of PVs. Finally, the researcher showed that the syntactic behaviour of particles relies on semantic.[61] studied the use of PVs by Iraqi undergraduates at Kirkuk University. The results of the study showed that avoidance is a distinct aspect of the undergraduates' writings and it is defined by the level of the PVs' difficulty, that is, the less apparent the PV is, the more it is evaded. Similarly, [62] examined the use of PVs by Iranian EFL students. The findings showed that the participants avoided the use of PVs, and the semantic difficulty level of the PVs orders the occurrence of avoidance in the undergraduates' writings. Further, [63] studied the use of PVs by Russian and Norwegian EFL learners. The findings also presented that avoidance does occur and that negative first language transfer also occurs whereby learners use PVs from their mother tongue that entails an erroneous connotation in English.

II. CONCLUSION:

In conclusion, one aspect of English that various language learners in a second language context find problematic is the use of PVs. Past studies show that the problematic setting of these verbs might result in the avoidance to select an individual word synonym instead. Three general causes were provided for potential avoidance including first and second language difference, first and second language similarity, and inherent second language complexity [64].Furthermore, in the avoidance of using PVs, the researcherspeculates thatthe differences between first and second languages and the syntactic - semantic difficulty of phrasal verbs may be reasons for the Jordanian EFL students' phrasal verbs avoidance up to a specific level of use and practice in the EFL setting. The results presented in this piece of research provides remarkable evidence as to the accomplishment of continuous use of PVs Jordanian EFL students in learning and selecting PVs, comprising idiomatic PVs.Additionally, the under-representation of phrasal verbs in EFL learners' output is due to a variety of issues, according to the research. The key important elements discussed in this research include structural differences between L1 and L2, passive learning interpretation, and poor language engagement. Additional research is needed to look at other issues, such as the influence of direct teaching, learners' awareness of the usage of phrasal verbs in everyday English, and the educational environment. This paper also recommends that Jordanian English language programmes to be updated. Moreover, the students' long years of English language instruction do not appear to have yielded sufficient outcomes in the learning of phrasal verbs.

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