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Khalid Nayef Salem

Saladin Education Directorate, Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.), knsmknsn70@gmail.com

Abed Al-Mutaleb Khalaf A

Saladin Education Directorate, Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.)

Aseel Tayes J

Saladin Education Directorate Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.)

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An Investigation of the Performance of the Students of Tikrit Secondary School in Using Phrasal Verbs

Khalid Nayef Salem*, *Saladin Education Directorate, Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.)*

Abed Al-Mutaleb Khalaf. A., *Saladin Education Directorate, Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.)*

Aseel Tayes J., *Saladin Education Directorate Methods of English Language Teaching (M.A.)*

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Abstract

The purpose of this study is to investigate the performance of secondary school students in using phrasal verbs. It also aims at identifying the difficulty of using phrasal verbs by students of secondary schools. The sample of this study is secondary schools' students in Saladin province. It is hypothesized that the performance of the female students is higher than those of male students, and the performance of the scientific branch students is better than those of literary branch. A test is designed to achieve the aims of the study, then data collected and analyzed statistically. Finally, conclusions are drawn according to the finding of the study.

Keywords: phrasal verbs, investigation, and performance.

1. Introduction

1.1 The Problem of the Study

Phrasal verbs are reflected as problematical matter for a various of causes. The form of the phrasal verbs represents special difficulties for the school students, partially since their number is great [1], but also because the mixture of verb and particle appears so entirely random [11]. While in the other hand ‘Phrasal verbs’ involve around two or more spelling words come together to complete each other meaningfully, so as to be recognized as a single semantic component. If a learner recognizes that these words represent a multi-word verb, they are likely may decode the meanings of the discrete words [12].

A phrasal verb includes two or more words and a single preposition follow it (lexical verbs + adverb and /or a preposition named “particle”) [4]. Phrasal verbs are “combinations of verbs and adverbial or prepositional particles”. Such as, *He sat down, she looked after her invalid mother, and I look forward to reading it.* The term of “phrasal prepositional verbs” may be used to refer to phrasal verbs that are made up of more than two parts (a lexical verb + a particle + a preposition). The second word of the phrasal verb is named “particle” since it has a close connection with the verb and also to distinguish it from prepositions and other adverbs [8].

1.2 The Aims of the Study

The aims of this study are:

- 1- Investigating of the performance of secondary school students in using phrasal verbs.
- 2- Identifying the difficulty of using phrasal verbs by students of secondary schools.

1.3 The Value of the Study

The value of this study could be put in the following points:

- 1- this study could be valuable in reflecting points of views of the secondary school teachers' staff, concerning the sufficiency, difficulty, authenticity, integration, and appropriacy of some grammatical materials (which are phrasal verbs).
- 2- It is valuable for the instructors in the field of grammar teaching process in specific and linguistics in general to be aware of this study about a new EFL communicative course in Iraq.

1.3 The Limits of the Study

This study is limited to the following items:

- 1- The use of phrasal verbs by secondary schools' students.
- 2- The academic year 2019-2018.

1.4 The Hypothesis of the Study

- 1-The performance of the female learners is higher than those of male students.
- 2-The performance of the scientific branch students is better than those of literary branch.

1.5 Definitions of Basic Terms

1. Phrasal verb is “a lexical verb followed by an adverbial particle, which has a grammatical function as a single unit with the verb” [13].

2. Investigation means “full search for truths, especially those that are unseen or need to be organized out in a compound circumstance. The objective of an *investigation* is typically to limit why or how something occurred” [6].

2. Literature Review

2.1 Phrasal Verbs

Multi-word verbs are components of a lexical verb and one or two other elements, which are called particles (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech & Svartvik, 1985), for example *turn up*, *look after* or *put up with*. The particle can belong to two “distinct but overlapping categories” [10] of either adverbs or spatial prepositions. The most important feature of multi-word verbs is the fact that they form a unit that behaves like a single word [5], (Quirk et al., 1985). This means that they are often not fully transparent in their meaning, or even idiomatic. Thus, their meaning cannot be anticipated from the connotations of their single parts (Greenbaum, 1996).

Of course, more elaborate and restrictive formulations exist as well. For example, the definition provided by [10] is formulated in two stages. According to them, a phrasal verb is a lexical part of verb which is followed by an adverbial morphological particle, which gives a grammatical function to the verb. Furthermore, they add that meaning of the combination cannot be predicted from the meaning of its parts in isolation. That is true for many phrasal verbs, but mention that phrasal verbs can also have a relatively literal meaning (for example *take down* in *take down the painting*) and even established a category of “non-idiomatic phrasal verbs” [5].

2.2 Types of Phrasal Verbs

1- ***Literal Phrasal Verbs***. This sort includes verbs which seem to be a mixture of a verb with a directional preposition as *turn up*. However, these are categorized as phrasal verbs since they task syntactically like verb-particle structures. The particle retains its prepositional meaning and, therefore, the phrasal verb meaning is a straightforward product of their semantic components. Literal phrasal verbs are highly guessable by knowing the basic literal meaning of the component words.

2- ***Semi-transparent phrasal verbs***. This is the second kind where the meaning of the phrasal verb is not as transparent, but it is not idiomatic either. This category consists of verbs to which certain particles describe the result of the action or reinforce the degree of the action denoted by the verb (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). The particles in this category appear to modify the meaning of the verb rather than serve as adverbials (Fraser, 1976).

3- ***Idiomatic phrasal verbs***. This is the third category where the meaning of the phrasal verb is idiomatic. It is difficult and may be impossible to figure out the meaning of the verb by combining the separate meanings of its parts because a new meaning has resulted from a metaphoric shift of the meaning and the semantic fusion of the individual components. Thus, idiomatic phrasal verbs have lexicalized meanings. For example, *He ran up the bill*. Therefore

4- ***Polysemous phrasal verbs***. As with other verbs, phrasal verbs can be polysemous (having many meanings) such as *check out*. Some examples are:

- *I need to check out by 1:00 pm.*
- *I went to the library to get a book, but someone had already checked it out.*
- *Be sure to check it out before you buy it.*
- *Check it out!* Just as one form can have many meanings, it is also possible to have more than one form with the same or similar meanings.

Another classification is proposed by Biber that phrasal verbs can be further split into two main domains – **intransitive** and **transitive**. Similarly, to the “usual” single verbs, intransitive phrasal verbs do not need an object, whereas transitive phrasal verbs require a direct object [2].

1-After three hours, he finally *gave in*. (intransitive)

2-Please finally *shut up!* (intransitive)

3-I need to *sort out* my problems quickly. (transitive)

4-He *turned on* the TV. (transitive)

2.3 Previous Studies

2.3.1 Kamarudin (2013)

This study aims at examining the level of understanding and using of English phrasal verbs by Malaysian students of English. The sample of the study are learners and teachers of English, a questionnaire and a test are used as tools to identify and measure the sample level in using phrasal verbs.

The results showed that L1 has a significant role in learning phrasal verbs among the Malaysian learners. Also, it showed that learners face difficulties in learning phrasal verbs by English dictionaries [7].

2.3.2 Aldukhayel (2016)

This study aims at determining the ability of learners of using three kinds phrasal verbs due to semantic awareness. The sample of the study are 81 graduate and undergraduate Arabic ESL students who are subjected to the tool of the study which is a test of multiple-choice items including 45 questions. This study concludes that phrasal verbs types significantly affected Arabic learners' preference. It also revealed these learners are able to learn the phrasal verbs as a whole meaningfully more than the one-word verbs. Regarding the idiomatic phrasal verbs, their preference for them was significantly not higher [1].

2.3.3 Discussion of Previous Studies

Concerning the aims of the study of Kamarudin (2013) it aims at examining the level of understanding and using of English phrasal verbs by Malaysian students of English, whereas, Aldukhayel (2016) this study aims at determining the ability of learners of using three kinds phrasal verbs due to semantic awareness. While, the aim of the present study is investigated of the performance of secondary school students in using phrasal verbs.

The sample of Aldukhayel (2016) and the present study are arabic learners who are graduate, undergraduate and school learners while Kamarudin (2013) dealt with Malaysian students of English. Both of the previous studies and the current

study designed tests to examine students concerning the phrasal verbs types, but Kamarudin (2013) used also a questionnaire to investigate about the difficulties face learners in using phrasal verbs.

The results of Kamarudin (2013) the results showed that L1 has a significant role in learning phrasal verbs among the Malaysian learners. Also, it showed that learners face difficulties in learning phrasal verbs by English dictionaries. While, Aldukhayel (2016) results showed that phrasal verbs types significantly affected Arabic learners' preference. It also revealed these learners are able to learn the phrasal verbs as a whole meaningfully more than the one-word verbs. The results of the current study showed that secondary school students are able to use different kinds of phrasal verbs properly and their performance is acceptable. It also concluded that phrasal verbs give EFL learners the rich learning opportunities that improve grammatical and authentic use of language and meaningful structures. Moreover, Students of sixth class master some phrasal verbs that are ordinary used such as those who start with *do, take, go, give..etc.*

3. Data Collecting

3.1 Sampling and Population

The sample of the study is the secondary school students in Saladin Province, schools of two towns Tikrit and Al-Alam town. Two branches literary and scientific in the secondary school. Sixth class textbook is used for this purpose since it includes the phrasal verbs exercises and students also took this subject in the previous classes. Thus, three schools are included from each town. The total number of the sample are 60 students.

3.2 The Instrument of the Study

The instrument used in the current study for data collecting is an achievement test. The test includes items that deals with using phrasal verbs. The items of the test are multiple choice and matching items. 25 items are designed.

The face validity of the test taken by consideration, and the test is given to specialists and experts in the field of English language teaching and linguistics. The experts mentioned their suggestions and advices, so the test is regarded as valid. Validity is the degree to that the interventions or choices which are made on the foundation of test scores are meaningful, suitable, and valuable” [9]. Validity is known as the degree to that a test calculate what it is meant to measure [3].

Reliability of the test measured by test re-test, and it is found out that the test is reliable since the value is 0.83.

Statistical means used for collecting data is t-test for one sample to find out students’ performance in general, and A t-test formula for the two samples which are independent to compare the performance of two groups and the percentage to find out the means.

3.3 List of Phrasal Verbs Mentioned in SB

Students’ book includes a lot of phrasal verbs that represent the verb part of speech, where the main verb in the phrasal verbs almost followed by prepositions such as (in, on, about, of, up, down etc.), see table (1).

Table (1)

List of Common Phrasal verbs

No	Phrasal verb	Meaning	Example
1	Try on	Attempt	Try this coat on.
2	Turn down	Reduce	Turn down the T.V. please!
3	Turn up	Increase	Would you please turn up the radio?

4	Stand up	To stand on legs	You should stand when you see your teachers
5	Sit down	To have a seat	Sit down please on that chair.
6	Get up	Wake up	He gets up at 7:00.
7	Get in	Go inside	He hot in the car
8	Pick up	Take you with me	Pick your friend up to the school.
9	Give up	Leave	I can't give smoking up.
10	Look for	Search	I am looking for new meaning
11	Look after	Take care	Nurses look after patients
12	Look out	Pay attention	Look out there is a dog there!
13	Pay back	Give back	Would you pay the money back?
14	Put down	Put something in the ground	She put the carpet down.
15	Switch on / turn on	Stop working	Please, switch on the fan.
16	Switch off / turn off	Start working	Could you switch off the lights?
17	Take up	Start doing	When did you take stamp-collecting up?
18	Check up	Examine	Check the machine up quickly, please.
19	Put down	Extinguish	The fire brigade put the fire down.
20	Get out	Exit	The bus got out the street.

4. Data Analysis

4.1 Data Analysis Related to the Test

The test is applied on the chosen students, t-test is used to analyze the test items and the performance of the students.

It is found out that the general mean score of the sample of students is (17.31) with standard deviation (7.29). After that, a comparison is made between the values and the theoretical mean of the test through calculating the formula of T-test of one sample. It is found out that the mean scores of the selected students in using phrasal verbs is better than the theoretical mean with statistical significance, as mentioned in table (2).

Table (2): The Mean, Standard Deviation, and T-Test Value of the Scores of Subjects

No Sample	Mean	SD	T. Value		Sig
			Calculated	Tabulated	
60	17.31	7.29	18.62	2.02	0.05

This means that the students of sixth class have experimental mean 17.74 that seems higher than the theoretical mean the score is 15.0. in this case, the level of the sample is regarded nearly as the better one.

4.2 Comparison between Males and Females Students' Scores in the Achievement Test

The mean of the performance of male students in the achievement test is calculated to be compared to the female students' achievement, in order to assess their levels. The mean score of the male student's achievement is found out to be 15.40 whereas concerning the achievement of the female students is 18.73. Moreover, so as to discover if there is any significant difference between the males and the females' students mean score a t-test formula for the two independent samples is used. It is found that the t-value which is calculated to be 3.90 at level of significance 0.05 under 58 degree of freedom which indicate that there is significance between male students and female and in favoure of female

students. In this case this shows that the female students' level is higher than the males', as mentioned in table (3).

Table (3): T-Test Value, Standard Deviation, and Means of the Scores of the Females and Males in the Achievement Test (a comparison)

Group	No	Mean	SD	T. Value		Sig
				Calculated	Tabulated	
Male	30	15.90	5.26	3.90	2.02	0.05
Female	30	18.73	6.71			

4.3 Comparing the Scores of Scientific and Literary Students in the Achievement Test

One can notice that the mean value of the students of the scientific branch in the study tool which is (the test) is compared to those of literary branch. The mean score is found out as (13.73) while the mean score of scientific students is found out as (20.90). The researcher has used a t-test formula for the two independent samples so as to identify if there is any significant difference between both branches scores in the achievement. The calculated t-value is 3.75 at 0.05 level of significance under 58 degree of freedom which reflects that there is significance difference between both male and female students' achievement for the behalf of female students. This verifies that the female students are better than the males, as presented in table (4).

Table (4)A Comparison between T-Test Value, Standard Deviation, and Means of the Scores of the Students of Scientific and Literary Branches in the Achievement Test

Branches	No	Mean	SD	T. Value		Sig
				Calculated	Tabulated	

Scientific	25	20.90	6.26	3.75	2.02	0.05
Literary	35	13.73	8.71			

4.3 Discussion of the Test Results

After calculating the scores of the test items, it has been found out the level of the performance of male and female students of sixth class and calculating the scores by statistical means. By comparing male to female students' performance in using phrasal verbs, then it shows that the performance of the female students is better while the performance of the male students is lower in using phrasal verbs correctly. This result may be according to the level of female students and their organized assignments and homework in a proper way.

Whereas, concerning the performance of the students of both scientific and literary branches in the achievement test, it has been found out that the performance of the scientific branch students is higher than of literary branch performance in using phrasal verbs. These results can be due to the teaching method, intensive collaboration between teachers and students, or students' real high level and their improved background.

The general performance of all sample show that student's level is fair but not really high for many reasons such as: phrasal verbs is one of the grammatical elements in which most of teachers of English suffer from teaching. Teaching grammar is something not easy and students dislike repeated rules such as parts of speech, tenses, and others.

5. Conclusions

In the light of the findings of the study the following conclusions have been concluded:

- 1- It is found out that secondary school students are able to use different kinds of phrasal verbs properly and their performance is acceptable.
- 2- Phrasal verbs gives EFL learners the rich learning opportunities that improve grammatical and authentic use of language and meaningful structures.
- 3-It has been found that the achievement of female students is better than the achievement of male students in using phrasal verbs.
- 4-The achievement of students of scientific branch is higher than the achievement of the students of the literary branch.
- 5- Students of sixth class master some phrasal verbs that are ordinary used such as those who start with *do, take, go, give...etc.*

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