

Indonesian Efl Learners' Recognition and Production of Phrasal Verb

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Abstract: *This study attempts to reveal the students' mistakes in recognizing and producing phrasal verbs. English Phrasal verbs are phrases that speakers of English often use in their daily life. Bradwell (2006) affirms learning phrasal verbs is beneficial to help the learners sound more natural in speaking English. The participants involved in this study were 22 students of the English Department, who have engaged in Reading and Vocabulary 1 and 2 classes. The instrument used to measure the students' proficiency in phrasal verbs was solely a test comprising 2 parts: recognition and production parts. Since there are a large number of phrasal verbs in English, this study limits the phrasal verbs to only three main verbs, such as look, take, and get. The results showed that (1) both literal and idiomatic PVs are equally complicated to EFL learners, (2) the literal meaning of the PV did not really help them much, but their understanding of the PVs did, (3) the students did much better in the recognition part than they did in the production part, and (4) L1 transfer somehow played its role of the English PVs.*

Keywords: *Phrasal verbs, mistakes, recognition, production*

Abstrak: Penelitian ini ditujukan untuk mengungkap kesalahan siswa dalam mengenali dan memproduksi frasa verba. Frasa verba Inggris adalah frasa yang sering digunakan oleh penutur bahasa Inggris dalam kehidupan sehari-hari mereka. Bradwell (2006) menegaskan bahwa mempelajari frasa verba bermanfaat untuk membantu penutur terdengar lebih alami dalam berbicara bahasa Inggris. Para peserta yang terlibat dalam penelitian ini adalah 22 siswa dari Departemen Bahasa Inggris, yang telah mengambil mata kuliah *Reading and vocabulary* 1 dan 2. Instrumen yang digunakan untuk mengukur kemahiran siswa dalam frasa verba adalah tes yang terdiri dari 2 bagian: bagian identifikasi dan penggunaan. Karena ada sejumlah besar frasa verba dalam bahasa Inggris, penelitian ini membatasi frasa verba pada tiga kata kerja utama, seperti *look*, *take*, dan *get*. Hasil penelitian menunjukkan bahwa (1) frasa verba literal / harfiah dan idiomatik mempunyai tingkat kesulitan yang sama, (2) makna harfiah dari frasa verba tidak terlalu banyak membantu mereka, tetapi pemahaman mereka tentang PV yang menunjang, (3) siswa melakukan banyak hal. lebih baik di bagian identifikasi daripada di bagian penggunaan, dan (4) L1 transfer mempunyai peran dalam penggunaan frasa verba bahasa Inggris.

1. INTRODUCTION

There are two essential parts of languages, namely grammar and vocabulary. When speaking or using a language, however, one has to have acquired vocabularies, for they are vital for communicative purposes. Phrasal verbs (PVs) are one of the language features that we often hear in our daily lives, novels, TV, movies, etc (e.g. *sit down*, *get up*, *get in*, *don't give up*, *come on*). However, it rarely becomes the focus of the vocabulary learning. Instead, learners and teachers focus more on the words that are basic, contextual, and more genre specific. Bradwell (2006) affirms learning phrasal verbs is beneficial as to help the learners sound more natural in speaking English. A phrasal verb of "*please, come in!*", for example, is more acceptable and natural than "*Please, enter*" in a conversation.

Side (1990) stated that phrasal verbs can get the students into trouble, because there are so many PVs out there, and the combination of verbs and particle appear so random. Shoebottom (2001) affirms that the ability to produce phrasal verbs correctly is a must and a

need for second language learners. Bradwell (2006) also affirms learning phrasal verbs is beneficial as to help the learners sound more natural in speaking English.

Purnawijaya (2007) did a study on the idiomatic and literal phrasal verbs. She had 30 students of the English Department Faculty of Education involved. The instruments used were a test consisting of 20 items of 10 literal phrasal verbs, and another 10 idiomatic phrasal verbs, as well an interview. The results showed that the students did much better on the literal PVs than idiomatic ones.

This study attempts to investigate the students' proficiency in PVs, both in recognizing and producing them. Since there are a large number of phrasal verbs in English, this study is going to limit the phrasal verbs to only three verbs, such as get, take, and look.

2. THEORETICAL FRAMEWORK

2.1. Definition

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1983) define phrasal verbs as verbs followed by particles, which are variously described as prepositions, adverbs, or some combinations of the two. Similarly, according to Lindstromberg (1997), the term 'phrasal verb' refers to "verbs plus preposition combinations that are non-literal and more or less idiomatic. It consists of a main verb plus *up*, *down*, *out*, *off*, or *through* (e.g. *wash up*, *calm down*, *chill out*, *cool off*, *think through*)."

2.2. Types of Phrasal Verbs

Celce-Murcia, Larsen-Freeman, & William (1999) classified the semantic categories of phrasal verbs into three types: literal, aspectual and idiomatic.

2.2.1. Literal Phrasal Verbs

A combination of a verb and a directional prepositional particle belongs to this category. The meaning of PVs is used in a literal sense making them easily produced and comprehended by EFL/ESL learners (e.g. *climbed up*, *stand up*, *take down*, *throw away*, *fall down*, *look inside*, *walk across*).

2.2.2. Aspectual Phrasal Verbs

In this category, the meaning is not literal nor is it idiomatic. The particle has its own meaning to contribute to the usage. This category is subdivided into: inceptive, continuative, iterative, and completive; 'Inceptive' is to signal a beginning state (e.g. *John took off*, *many small businesses started up in the 1980s to cater to this growing market*), 'Continuative' is to show that the action continuous (e.g. *the children play along all day*, *I kept on doing my work though it was late at night*), 'Iterative' is to show a repeated action (e.g. *he did it over and over again until he got it right*, *I'll think it over and give you an answer next week*), and 'Completive' is to show a completed action (e.g. *he found out why they were missing*, *he drank up the milk*).

2.2.3. Idiomatic Phrasal Verbs

The meaning in the idiomatic phrasal verbs is figurate, and to figure out the meaning of the PVs is not by simply separating the meaning of its parts (e.g. *On Sunday, I usually catch up with my friends = gather*, *let's put off the meeting to next Monday = postpone*).

2.3. *Separable and non-separable Phrasal Verbs*

Jacobs (1995) further explained that phrasal verbs involve the placement of verbs and the particles, which can be separable or inseparable. He then categorized in terms of separable and non-separable PVs.

A. Separable PVs

The PVs are verbs which allow, and sometimes require the particle to occur not directly next to the verb (e.g. *I took my shoes off*),

B. Non-separable PVs

The PVs are verbs of which particles must not be separated (e.g. *I ran into an old friend last night = meet*, *She has vowed to stand by her husband during his trial = support*).

3. DATA SOURCE

The participants involved in this study were 22 students of the English Department, who have engaged in Reading and Vocabulary 1 and 2 classes. The instrument used to measure the students' proficiency in phrasal verbs was solely a test comprising 2 parts: recognition and production parts. In the recognition part, the questions were in a form of multiple choices questions, where the students were to opt for the most suitable phrasal verbs, while in the production parts, the students were only given the verbs, and they were to give the particles themselves.

There are a large number of phrasal verbs. For that reason, this study limits the verbs to only three common verbs, more specifically *look*, *take*, and *get*, each of which had 5 different particles, making them 15 different PVs for each part. However, the PVs tested in the recognition and the production parts were the same. The sort of phrasal verbs tested were combinations of literal, and idiomatic, and they were both separable and non-separable.

Table 1. List of Phrasal Verbs in the Recognition and Production Parts

No.	Phrasal Verbs	Types	Separable / Non-separable	Meaning
1.	Look after	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To take care
2.	Look up to	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To admire and respect someone
3.	Look forward to	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To feel pleased and excited about something that is going to happen
4.	Look through	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To read quickly or examine to find what one wants
5..	Look into	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To examine the facts about a problem or situation
6.	Take away	Literal	Separable	To remove something / subtract
7.	Take down	Literal	Separable	To remove each piece / hit someone
8.	Take out	Literal	Separable	To remove / go somewhere
9.	Take up	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To fill up
10.	Take in	Literal	Separable	To care for
11.	Get away	Literal	Non-separable	To escape / succeed in avoiding punishment
12.	Get by	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To survive
13.	Get rid of	Literal	Non-separable	To sell / free oneself of something or someone undesirable
14.	Get out of	Literal	Separable	To avoid doing something
15.	Get down to	Idiomatic	Non-separable	To begin doing something

This research only focuses on the recognition and the production of the phrasal verbs, and the types, but not on whether the PVs are separable or inseparable. He would like to only

seek information on the students' understanding of the PVs and to see whether they were aware of their uses.

4. RESEARCH METHOD

The writer first collected and tallied every student's answer in the form of a table to see the number of correct and incorrect answers. He would then compare both recognition and production part to see which part students scored better. He also attempted to find out the most problematic phrasal verbs in every part.

In the particular part, specifically the production, the writer listed down all the phrasal verbs the students made, and gave an explanation on how the students got them mixed up.

5. FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

There were 15 phrasal verbs, which comprised 3 main verbs, namely *look*, and *get*, with each verb having five different particles. The type of the PVs are idiomatic and literal; 8 idiomatic and 7 literal ones.

The number of correct answers both in the recognition and in the production parts and the percentage are presented in a table.

Table 2. Correct number in the recognition and production part

No.	Phrasal verbs	Number of Students with correct answers in the Recognition part (percentage)	Number of Students with correct answers in the Production part (percentage)
1	look after	17 students (77.27%)	17 students (77.27%)
2	look up to	18 students (81.82%)	13 students (59.09%)
3	look forward to	15 students (68.18%)	12 students (54.55%)
4	look through	9 students (40.91%)	0 students (0%)
5	look into	16 students (72.73%)	10 students (45.45%)
6	take away	9 students (49.01%)	6 students (27.27%)
7	take down	15 students (68.18%)	14 students (63.64%)
8	take out	15 students (68.18%)	10 students (45.45%)
9	take up	13 students (59.09%)	5 students (22.73%)
10	take in	17 students (77.27%)	15 students (68.18%)
11	get away	16 students (72.73%)	6 students (27.27%)
12	get by	7 students (31.82%)	8 students (36.36%)
13	get rid of	16 students (72.73%)	15 students (68.18%)
14	get out of	14 students (63.64%)	8 students (36.36%)
15	get down to	7 students (31.82%)	3 students (13.64%)

From the table above, it clearly shows that the students did better for the 13 phrasal verbs in the recognition part than those in the production part, but only 1 phrasal verb, e.g. *get by*, which they did better in the production part, and another 1 phrasal verb with equal number of students using the PVs correctly, e.g. *look after*.

In the recognition part, the options were only limited to only three, so it was much easier for the students to guess. In the production part, however, the students gave many varieties of phrasal verbs. They even created phrasal verbs that do not exist. Here are the answers the students provided in the production part in the form of a table.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
1.	Look after	look after (77.27%) look at (18.18%) look on (4.5%)

Q: I need someone dependable to look _____ the children while I'm at work.

The PV *look after* is idiomatic, and thus cannot be literally interpreted. Its meaning is to take care of someone. However, this idiomatic PV did not seem to be a problem, for as many as 17 students (77.27%) showed their understanding and knowledge of using such PV in both parts. On the contrary, there were students, who answered *look at*, and *look on* in the production part. The students that answered *look at* might have regarded it the same as *look after*. In Indonesian, it is common and acceptable to use *look at* to ask someone to take care of something / someone. It appears that the students somehow literally transfer his / her L1 PV into the L2 PV.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
2.	Look up to	Look up to (59.09%) Look at / up / after (9.09%) Look on / into (4.55%)

Q: I have always looked _____ my father. He is so great.

The PV *look up to* is another idiomatic PV that has a meaning to admire and respect someone. 18 The students (81.82%) did well in the recognition part, but only 13 students (59.09%) showed their understanding in the production part. It appears that some of the students did not really understand the context, and some had no idea of the difference between *look up* and *look up to*.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
3.	Look forward to	Look forward to (54.55%) Look for (22.73%) Look up (9.09%) Look up for / forward for (4.55%)

Q: I am really looking _____ Christmas this year, as my family is coming to visit.

Look forward to is not a literal PV, and carries a different meaning. 15 students (68.18%) did a good job in both recognition and production parts. However, in the production part, there were students that answered *look for*. The plausible explanation is that such PV carries a similar meaning to *wait for*. There were also students making their own PVs, such as: *look up for* / *look forward for*, which in fact do not exist.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
4.	Look through	Look at (36.36%) Look into (13.64%) Look to / for (9.09%) Look up / on (4.55%) Look through (0%)

Q: Can you have a look _____ this report before I hand it to the boss please?

The PV *Look through* is idiomatic, and its meaning is to read quickly or examine to find what one wants. What is so surprising is that 9 students (40.91%) succeeded in using the PV in the recognition part, but not a single student (0%) was able to use it in the production part. This is the only PV the students seemed to have never heard or used before. In the context given, the students presented various PVs, but the most answer was *look at* (36.36%), whose meaning is to direct someone's eyes towards someone or something to see them. Both in Indonesian and in English usages, the PV *look at* is more common. In fact, *look through* and *look at* have a slightly different uses.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
5.	Look into	Look into (45.45%) Look for (22.73%) Look up / after / up for (9.09%) Look at (4.55%)

Q: I don't have that information to hand but I will look _____ it and get back to you.

The idiomatic PV *Look into* has the meaning of examining the facts about a problem or situation. 16 students (72.73%) did well in the recognition part, and only 10 students (45.45%) made it to use it properly. The rest of the answers were quite various, as the students might have no idea about those PVs. As a result, they just randomly used them.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
6.	Take away	Take out (45.45%) Take away (27.27%) Take down (13.64%) Take up / over (4.55%)

Q: The men didn't come to take the rubbish _____.

Based on the results, many students had *take out* for the situation given. The PV *take away* is actually equivalent in meaning to *take out*. Both PVs meanings are to remove something. Nevertheless, contextually the PV *take out* does not really suit the situation, because "the men" here refer to worker whose job is to take the rubbish away from the rubbish bin.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
7.	Take down	Take down (63.64%) Take up / out (9.09%) Take over / on / off (4.55%)

Q: My brother would easily take you _____ in a fight!

The PV *take down* is both literal and idiomatic. However, in this situation is categorized as a literal PV, since its meaning is to hit someone. More than half of the students did quite well in the recognition part as well in in the production one. In the production part, however, 14 students (63.64%) used a correct PV in this situation.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
8.	Take out	Take out (45.45%) Take over / away (9.09%) Take in / off / up / on / into (4.55%)

Q: Dad's taking the whole family _____ to the cinema.

The PV *take out* is actually predictable, since it carries literal meaning in this situation. It is proven by the number of correct answers in the recognition part. 15 students (68.18%) were able to opt for the correct PV. However, only 10 students (45.45%) managed to utilize it the production part. In this situation, many students gave various PVs, such as *take over, take away, take in, take off, take up, take on, take into*, which do not suit the situation.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
9.	Take up	Take over (54.55%) Take up (22.73%) Take out (9.09%) Take away / apart (4.55%)

Q: This desk takes _____ too much room.

The idiomatic PV *take up* has literal as well as idiomatic meanings. It has the meaning of occupying entirely or exclusively in this condition. However, *take over*, whose meaning is to take control over something, seemed to have been the most answer. 13 students (59.09%) did better in the recognition part, but only 5 students (22.73%) managed to use it correctly in the production one.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
10.	Take in	Take in (68.18%) Take part (18.18%) Take after (4.55%)

Q: My friend lost his job and his apartment, so I took him _____ for a month.

The PV *take in* is both idiomatic and literal. In this situation, it carries literal meaning, which is to care for someone. 17 students (77.27%) and 15 students (68.18%) managed to use the PV properly in the recognition and production respectively. The rest of the PVs, like *take part* and *take after* were used by only a few students.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
11.	Get away	Get away (27.27%) Get in / off / on (13.64%) Get round (9.09%) Get up / lost / by (4.55%)

Q: By jumping over the barriers, he got _____ without paying for a ticket.

The PV *get away* is a literal PV, whose meaning is to escape or succeed in avoiding punishment. 16 students (72.73%) managed to identify its use in the recognition part; however, only 6 students (27.27%) were able to figure out its use in the production part. Despite its common use, more than half students failed to use it in the context given. The students provided several PVs that did not fit the situation, such as: *get in, get off, get on, get round, get up, get lost, and get by*.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
12.	Get by	Get by (36.36%) Get on (22.73%) Get round (18.18%) Get out off / get rid of (4.55%)

Q: We don't earn much money but we can get _____.

The PV *get by* is an idiomatic PV, which should be infrequently used. Nevertheless, it was so surprising that the students managed to deal with it better in the production part than they did in the recognition part. There were some various phrasal verbs the students provided, but only 8 students (36.36%) were able to use it correctly.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
13.	Get rid of	Get rid of (68.18%) Get on (9.09%) Get off / down / away (4.55%)

Q: I used weedkiller to get _____ the weeds in the garden.

The PV *get rid of* is a common PV and carries literal meaning, that is to free oneself of something or someone undesirable. More than half students were able to identify its use in the recognition part (72.73%) and to use it properly in the production part (68.18%).

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
14.	Get out of	Get out of (36.36%) Get off (22.73%) Get down / round (9.09%) Get over / on / away / up (4.55%)

Q: If you get _____ of a routine, it's very hard to get back into it.

The results show that the PV *get out of* was quite troublesome for some students. In spite of the fact that such PV has a literal meaning and is common to use in daily life, they seemed to have failed to produce it in the context given. 16 students (72.73%) managed to identify its use in the recognition part, but only 8 students (36.36%) succeeded in utilizing it in the production part. The first most answer was *get out of*. It is then followed by the PV *get off* (22.73%), which means to leave a place. It appears that the students might have regarded the PV *get off* the same as to leave something. In Indonesian use, *to leave a routine* is more acceptable than *to stop a routine*.

No.	Phrasal verb	Students' answers
15.	Get down to	Get on (31.82%) Get up (18.18%) Get down to / in (13.64%) Get away / over / into / off (4.55%)

Q: I've got a lot of work to do, but I can't seem to get _____ to it.

The PV *get down to* is idiomatic. As an idiomatic one, its meaning is to begin doing something. However, the PV *get on* took the most answer (31.82%), and *get down to* only took 13.64%. *Get on* has the meaning of continuing doing something, which does not suit the

situation here. This PV appears difficult to the students, for they did not manage to recognize or produce it correctly.

6. CONCLUSION

Both literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs are important to know and understand, as their uses are common in daily life. Purnawijaya (2007) found out the EFL Learners did much better on the literal PVs than idiomatic ones. However, this study reveals some different facts. First of all, both literal and idiomatic PVs are equally complicated to EFL learners, since the number of mistake were more or less the same. Furthermore, the literal meaning of the PV did not really help them much, but their understanding of the PVs did. Next, the students did much better in the recognition part, where they had to make a guess. When it came to production, however, they did worse. The PV *look through*, for example, was the most problematic. There were students who still managed to use the PV properly in the recognition, but none triumphed to use it in the production. Finally, when the students produce PVs, L1 transfer somehow played its role of the English PVs. The PV *look at*, for example, was in place of *look after* to ask someone to take care of something / someone.

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