Teaching English Phrasal Verbs to Non-native Speakers of English

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Abstract:

Researchers as well as learners of English language agree, to a great extend, that the phenomenon of English phrasal verbs (e.g., *to break up, to give in, to get away with*) (henceforth EPVs) poses a great deal of challenge to non-native speakers who want to learn the language and for interpreters/translators who involve in interpreting/translating them from and/or into the English language. Therefore, successful methods of teaching such complex English expressions to non-native speakers would undoubtedly help facilitate the process of learning them and in turn interpreting/translating them from and/or into English. Scholars from such domains as linguistics, lexicography and pedagogy have at length addressed the issue of teaching EPVs to non-native speakers and come up with a number of practical methods. In this paper this vital issue will be carefully investigated and the methods and materials used for teaching EPVs will be explored.

Keywords: Phrasal Verbs, Linguistics, Pedagogy, Teaching Methods, Teaching Materials

Introduction

A large amount of literature has been devoted to account for the question of teaching EPVs to non-native speakers who study English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). This stems from the fact that EPVs, especially the idiomatic type, constitute difficulty not only for learners of English but also for teachers, curriculum designers and material writers in the fields of ESL and EFL alike. Heaton (1968) makes the point that "[i]t has long been felt that this wide subject constitutes one of the major areas of difficulty for students learning English as a second or foreign language" (The preface, not numbered). Further, Cornell (1985) indicates that EPVs "have been 'discovered' as an important component in the curricula for English as a foreign language" (p. 269). In what follows a number of representative methods and materials will be systematically investigated and discussed.

Tom McArthur's method

In an article entitled *Teaching English Phrasal Verbs*, McArthur (1971) maintains that PVs must be taught as units, and as the equivalent of single verbs (p. 71). Further, he points out that the following points should be taken into account when planning a course to teach EPVs:

1. Phrasal verbs consist of a root verb and one or two particles.
2. They should not be confused with non-phrasal verbs which tend to take a certain preposition, such as *compromise (with), confess (to),* etc.
3. They are both transitive and intransitive, and sometimes the same verb may function in both ways […].
4. The total meaning of a phrasal verb is seldom simply the sum of its parts […].
5. Compilers of dictionaries have neglected the unitary nature of phrasal verbs and therefore classed them under their root verbs […].
6. Some phrasal verbs allow free variation in the position of the particle, while others do not (pp. 71-72).

Moreover, McArthur (1971) proposes five specimen exercises which "are not intended to be exhaustive [but to] serve as an introduction to the phrasal verb" (p. 72). Each exercise is illustrated by two examples followed by ten sentences, and a prospective student is asked to make similar changes in the sentences. Exercise 1 is "a specimen of how to approach freely varying phrasal verb" (p. 72); exercise 2 is a "specimen of how problems arise with this type of verb when the object of the verb is a pronoun" (p. 73); exercise 3 is a "specimen of how phrasal verbs may be exchanged for single verbs" (p. 73); exercise 4 is a "specimen of how single verbs may be exchanged for phrasal verbs" (p. 74).

McArthur (1971), however, admits that such specimen exercises "do not pursue the matter as far as it should be taken [since they] ignore the considerable problem of how a learner can begin to know which phrasal verbs can be divided and which cannot be divided" (p. 75).

Such a problem, however, has been ably taken up by Tom McArthur himself in his workbook *Using Phrasal Verbs* (1975), which is the fourth in the Collins' series of *Patterns of English*. The material of this workbook, according to McArthur, "has been developed out of linguistic research undertaken for Collins Bilingual Dictionaries" (p. 8) whereas its "teaching material has been

developed in 1970 and 1971 English Language Summer Schools run by the Edinburgh University Department of Education Studies" (p. 8).

Further, the book is intended for intermediate and advanced learners of English who are advised to study it in conjunction with the *Dictionary of English Phrasal Verbs and Their Idioms* by McArthur and Atkins (1974).

This book deserves a special attention as it makes a valuable contribution to this field of pedagogy. It "takes phrasal verbs as a single problem, and as a major part of English vocabulary and word-formation" (p. 6). It guides the learners through its eight units step by step in a very systematic manner. In addition to being relatively comprehensive in covering the main syntactic and semantic features of PVs presented in a simple language, it provides scores of guided exercises, examples, tables, and illustrative diagrams.

Colin Mortimer's method

In his book *Phrasal Verbs in Conversation*, Mortimer (1979) approaches the topic from a quite unique perspective by putting together 432 conversations, each of which is devoted to one separate meaning of one particular EPV. One of the most important aims of this book is to "contextualize individual meanings of a large number of phrasal verbs in such a way that these meanings will be remembered" (p. iii). Students, however, are best advised to go through conversations repeatedly as "[t]he more the conversations are used and discussed […], the more effectively will they fix in the mind of the student the meaning and use of the particular verbs on which they focus" (p. iv). Students are also advised to memorize the dialogue so as to give them, later on, "an opportunity to 'free' the language in the dialogue and to use it in a consonant, normalized situation arising from his own experience" (p. v). Moreover, Mortimer (1979) gives drills after the conversations, each of which "quotes from the conversation [it follows] one or two lines involving the use of the phrasal verb that is featured" (p. v). He recommends that "[t]hese lines should be drilled first in chorus, then in groups and then in pairs, for pronunciation practice, and to fix the idiom" (p. v).

What is more, the book is associated with three tapes as "an extensive source of listening and pronunciation practice" (p. vii), on which 124 selected dialogues are recorded. Unlike the ways of other tapes recorded for teaching purposes, the conversations in these tapes are spoken in normal speed with suitable hesitations, repetitions and interruptions to get "a considerable gain in naturalness" (p. vii)

Alan Cornell's methodIn his article *Realistic goal in teaching and learning phrasal verbs* Cornell (1985) suggests to assemble a "core" of phrasal verbs (henceforth PVs) which "could be arrived at by native speakers working through a collection of phrasal verbs" (p. 276). He, further, proposes the following four criteria on the bases of which a selection can be made:

1. *Idiomaticity*. Is the meaning of the phrasal verb easily deducible from its constituent parts? (In the case of polysemic combinations each meaning would of course have to be considered separately)
2. *Replaceability*. Is there a one-word or already familiar phrasal verb equivalent which the learner can readily use instead? Can the meaning of the phrasal verb be easily and naturally paraphrased in already familiar words?

3. *Restrictions*. Is the phrasal verb subject to severe collocational restrictions which would have to be learnt? Are there particular grammatical constraints which have to be observed?

4. *Frequency (and usefulness).* Is the phrasal verb commonly used? (p. 276) [Emphasis in original].

Cornell considers the last criterion (frequency) as the "overriding" one, and "presents the greatest difficulties". This is mainly due to the fact that, unlike other aspect of the English language, there is a shortage of frequency counts for EPVs. The perfect solution to meet such a shortage is "a computer intelligent enough to scan a corpus and recognize phrasal groupings and assign meanings to them" (p. 277). But such an intelligent enough computer has not been developed yet, therefore "the best approach would appear to be to consult a sufficiently large group of native speakers and see what frequency rating is assigned on average to each phrasal verb or phrasal meaning" (p. 277).

Cornell points out that the core of PVs has to be of two lists, one for active mastery, and the other for passive recognition. The former needs to receive "the extra practice and attention necessary" (p. 276), it comprises the commonly used PVs such as: *hung up*, *put off*, *put up with*, and *show off*, while the latter contains "phrasal verbs with complicated restrictions" such as: *drink up*, *go off*, *hold with,* and *shape up* (pp. 276-279).

Moreover, Cornell, in this article, ably addresses some didactic problems PVs raise. Due to the fact that there exist large quantities of PVs used in everyday spoken and written English, he makes the quantitative problem his start point. Cornell indicates that such a large number of PVs learners encounter constitutes a real problem. In his attempt to water such a problem down, he confines it to the fully idiomatic PVs, in the sense that the non-idiomatic PVs (which constitute the majority) cause no real difficulty to learners owing to their transparent meanings. What aggravates the problem, however, is the phenomenon of polysemy in that "[i]t is not only the case that a particular verb + particle combination may be polysemic in having both an idiomatic and a non-idiomatic use: in addition it may well be polysemic in having more than one idiomatic use" (p. 270). Hence, Cornell raises the question of "How many idiomatic phrasal verbs does an advanced learner know on average?" (p. 271). To answer this question he refers to the research he conducted in 1980 in which he tested a group of his German ESL students "to establish their *active* knowledge of selected idiomatic phrasal verbs" (p. 271). The result showed "a widespread ignorance" of the 60 PVs tested. He concludes that "the learning of phrasal verbs at school and university is generally not very successful" (p. 273). The reason behind that, according to him, is the "limited contact with phrasal verbs", and exposing students "to such a bookish form of the language" (p. 273).

The other didactic problem Cornell outlines is the interference between L1 and L2 (in his case German and English) where PVs sound "illogical" for learners. As an example "why should one be *laid up* with illness when one is *lying down*?" (p. 274).

He then investigates some of the semantic and collocational problems learners face when dealing with PVs such as: the question of one-word equivalent. It is obvious that some PVs have one-word equivalents, e.g., *pull up* which corresponds to *stop*, and *put up with* to *tolerate*. Whereas other PVs have no such equivalents, they rather have PV equivalents, e.g., *make up for* which

corresponds to *compensate for*, and *put in for* to *apply for, or,* otherwise, they have to be paraphrased (p. 274).

On the other hand, quite a few of one-word or PV equivalents can be deemed as alternatives for their PVs. Such a problem is related to "the degree of synonymity" since "synonymy is generally recognized as being a very relative concept" (p. 274). To use some of Cornell's examples:

> *lie in* dose not merely mean "to sty in bed", but "to stay in bed beyond one's normal time for getting up".

> *put up with*: unlike *tolerate,* it cannot be used in a positive manner (*to tolerate other people's opinions* is not the same as *to put up with other people's opinions*) (p. 274) [Emphasis in original].

Finally, Cornell outlines the grammatical problems caused by the following syntactic restrictions of PVs which typically "represent a considerable teaching and learning load" (pp. 275-276). To cite just two of his illustrative examples:

> *come by* cannot normally be used in the passive, unlike its equivalents *acquire* and *obtain*.

> *do with* can only be used with *can* or *could* in the sense of *need*: with *could* it only has a potential sense and does not refer to the past; it cannot be used in the passive (p. 275) [Emphasis in original].

Richard Side's method

In his paper *Phrasal verbs: sorting them out,* Side (1990) argues that the difficulties PVs create for learners "are sometimes increased by the way in which phrasal verbs are presented in course books or by teachers telling students that they will just have to learn them by heart, thereby implying that there is no system" (p. 144). Thus, he begins his article with criticizing the traditional treatment of PVs in course books in which PVs are grouped according to the verb along with a definition and an example for each one. Students, however, are advised to match the phrasal verb with its definition and to learn them by heart (p. 144). Unfortunately, students in such cases, stick to the Latinate definition given to them, and ignore the Anglo-Saxon PVs since the Latinate verb is "easier to learn, particularly if it is related to a word in the students' own language, and seems to make more sense" (p. 145). Another bad aspect of the traditional approach is the random way by which teachers teach particles, Side gives the following example:

> A teacher recycling recently learned vocabulary is quite likely to ask 'Can anyone give me a phrasal verb meaning *arrive* starting with *turn*?' Students may then shout out the first particle which comes into their heads and this will continue until one of them hit the jackpot with *up* (p. 145).

Such ways of treatment, according to Side, aggravate the students' negative attitude towards PVs, who already dislike the issue of PVs for such reasons as their idiomaticity, confusion, polysemy, register or appropriacy, grammatical conditions, etc. What is more, the traditional approaches make the students see PVs as random combinations of verbs and particles, which is completely incorrect. PVs are not so random. There is, rather, a system behind forming them and

a close look at the function of particles shows the patterns underlying their combining with verbs (Side, 1990).

Newly coined PVs, according to Side, are not invented randomly. They are rather "formed by analogy with existing phrasal verbs" (p. 146), and "it is possible to isolate areas of meaning by finding the connections between them" (p. 146).

The particle, for Side, is "integral to the meaning of the phrasal verb and in some cases carries more weight of meaning than the verb" (p. 146). That is, the communicative function of the PV is mainly carried by the particle (Side, 1990).

In his attempt to pinpoint patterns underlying PVs, he takes up three particles (*off*, *out*, and *up*) to illustrate how the system of forming PVs by these particles works. He, for instance, gives the particle *off* five lexical meanings (*indicating distance in time or space, departure, removal, disconnection and separation*) illustrated by the following examples, to make the point that "[m]ost phrasal verbs with *off* fit into this pattern" (p. 148):

> *Strain off* the liquid = removal, separation
> The area was *fenced off* = separation (from surrounding area
> The plane *took off* = departure
> I've been *cut off* = disconnection (telephone)
> It's time to *knock off* = departure (from work)
> *Warn* sb *off* = distance in space
> The meeting was *put off* = distance in time
> Come and *see* me *off* = departure, separation (p. 147) [Emphasis in original].

Some PVs are ambiguous in nature, but they could be understood by analogy with other PVs from the same pattern, e. g., the PV *ease off* in: *You should ease off a bit* "could be by analogy with taking one's foot off a car accelerator" (p. 148), and *took off* in: *his business really took off* "could be by analogy with an aeroplane taking off" (p. 148).

What has to be noted here is that not all PVs with the particle *off* can fit easily in this pattern. Some of them make Side (1990) admittedly declare that "[p]ersonally, I can find no convincing place for these within the overall definition" (p. 148). Such exceptional PVs are exemplified below:

> He tried to *buy* me *off*
> Stop *showing off*
> You are always *telling* me *off*
> I must *dash off* a letter (p. 148) [Emphasis in original].

Moreover, not all particles are as straightforward as *off*. The particle *out* is a good example where one cannot formulate a single overall meaning for it (p. 148). Therefore, "it is sometimes necessary to think laterally, metaphorically, or even pictorially" to understand the system in which PVs work (p. 147).

In his endeavor to find out more patterns, Side quite often refers to his own experience. For example, in outlining the highly idiomatic meaning of *cough up*, he narrates a real story happened to him when he was a child "if I choked on my food, my father would thump me on the

back and cheerfully cry 'Cough it up, it may be half a dollar!' "(p. 150). And, in explaining the PV *hung up* in: *She hung up* (to put the phone down), Side indicates that it "at first seems strange until one remembers what old fashioned telephones looked like" (p. 150). Consequently, Side concludes that the traditional approach is inadequate "either in that it fails to create learnable patterns, or in that it creates patterns of the wrong kind" (p. 150).

Peter Dainty's method

In his textbook *Phrasal Verbs in Context*, Dainty (1991) claims that "a new method for learning phrasal verbs" (p. 5) is offered. The book is of three parts. The first part contains "a specially written cartoon story in which 325 common phrasal verbs are introduced in a tale of adventure, love, money, crime, honour and blue Rolls Royce" (p. 5). Such a cartoon story is of fifteen chapters each of which is ended up with some follow-up exercises and grammatical notes.

The second part of the book, on the other hand, is devoted to "an extended blank-filling revision exercises based on the cartoon" (p. 5).

The third part is dedicated to the answers of the exercises along with a list of the 325 PVs used in the cartoon story. This textbook is associated with a tape on which the whole story is recorded.

Interestingly, Dainty (1991) claims that if the learner memorizes part of the story by heart and does the follow-up exercises, the 325 PVs can become a part of his everyday language as he develops "a more natural and more instinctive command of English" (p. 5).

Martin Shovel's method

In his book *Making Sense of Phrasal Verbs*, Shovel (1992) implements the "illustrations and question-prompts" method. Throughout the twenty units of the book, EPVs are accounted for in chunks, that is, each unit "introduces and practises six separate phrasal verbs" (p. 4). Each PV is exhibited through one or two lively cartoon illustrations followed by a number of question-prompts, which "are designed to focus the learner's attention and help him or her make an informed guess at the meaning of the phrasal verb" (p. 4). To take only one example, in explaining the PV *take after*, a cartoon picture with a man standing next to his son, who looks exactly as same as his father, is presented along with the following question-prompts:

> Do you think these two people are related
> What do you think their relationship is?
> Do you think they look a like?
> Make a sentence describing the way the small boy looks compared to his father.
> Think of another way of saying **take after**.
> Now turn to page 95 [reference section] to check your answer.
> (p. 10) [Emphasis in original].

This book, which is intended to increase the confidence of the students of English as a second or foreign language at the intermediate level, is appropriate to be "used for self-study, for pairwork, for conventional class or group teaching, and as a reference book" (p. 4).

In addition, the presented PVs are listed alphabetically at the back of the book in a dictionary-like reference section where each one of them is given the following:

- a list of words and phrases that can be used with [it]
- a clear definition
- a context sentence or sentences related to the introductory illustrations
- easy to read structural information showing the positioning of noun phrases and pronouns (p. 4).

Surprisingly, unlike other scholars, Shovel (1992) avoids the employment of the grammatical classifications of PVs, claiming that "such classifications are often more complicated and difficult than the phrasal verbs are used to teach" (p. 4).

Lastly, each unit is ended up with a practice section where a variety of exercises are included. Such exercises "are very controlled to begin with and then gradually lead to free-production" (p. 4). Students are advised to study the PVs introduced in the unit before doing the practice section.

Malcolm Goodale's method

In his workbook *Collins COBUID Phrasal Verbs Workbook* (which accompanies the *Collins COBUID Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*), Goodale (1994) points out that "[t]hough the workbook can be used on its own, more benefit will be gained by working closely with the Dictionary" (p. iv). He approaches the practice "through the individual particles, as featured in the Particles Index of the Dictionary" (p. iv).

Goodale (1994), also, makes it clear that owing to the fact that adverbial PVs (idiomatic PVs) are almost always the most important type and the most difficult for learners of English to understand, "prepositional phrasal verbs [non-idiomatic PVs] are not included in this workbook" (p. iv).

Hence, the adverbial particles only are accounted for in alphabetical order throughout the ten units of the book. Each unit has an introduction in which the important meanings of a given particle are provided along with a list of the PVs to be taken up in the sections of that unit. Every section is devoted to one category of meaning. Given that most PVs are polysemic and have "as many as 20 different meanings", it is quite normal to see a phrasal verb appears in many different sections (p. iv).

Further, there is a section attached to each unit called "Other Meanings" which includes PVs "which are too common to be excluded, but which do not clearly fit into any particular category of meaning" (p. iv). As an example, the particle *over* is given two sections each of which is assigned to one particular category of meaning (Considering and Communicating, as in: *look over, put over, talk over, and think over*, and Changing and Transferring, as in: *change over, hand over, take over, and win over*), and a third section which is assigned to other meanings they include: *get over with, pass over, run over,* and *smooth over* (p. 87).

Berman and Kirstein's method

In their textbook *Practical Idioms: Using Phrasal Verbs in Everyday Contexts*, Berman and Kirstein (1996) design the whole book as chunks of dialogues between Pat, an instructor, and Lee, a talkative student.

Berman and Kirstein (1996) consider that the quickest way for learning PVs is "to practice them by families" (p. xi) as long as "it is a psychological axiom that **learning related** material is much easier than learning unrelated material" (p. xii) [Emphasis in original]. They, as a result, suggest two families in which PVs may be grouped: family A where PVs are listed alphabetically according to the verbs they begin with, e.g., *get about, get across, get around, get back, get on, get out,* etc., and family B where PVs are listed according to the particles, e.g., *back out, get out, give out, learn out, pass out, throw out,* etc. (p. xii). Berman and Kirstein (1996) make the point that "[f]amily A is more familiar arrangement-dictionary style […and] fine for the purpose of reference" (p. xii). However, "[f]amily B makes far more sense as a learning strategy" (p. xii). Therefore, they opt for treating PVs in this book by particle, claiming that it is "much more likely to find similarities of meaning […] among verb phrases [PVs] having the same particle than among verb phrases beginning with the same verb" (p. xii).

Peter Hannan's method

In his paper *Particles and gravity: phrasal verbs with 'Up' and 'Down'* Hannan (1998) employs the 'experientialism' approach which is a philosophical / linguistic approach outlined and applied by George Lakoff and Mark Johnson in their studies *Metaphors we live by* (1985), *Women, fire and dangerous things: what categories tell us about the mind* (1987), and *The body in the mind: the bodily basis of meaning, imagination and reason* (1987) (as cited in Hannan, 1998, p. 22).

Hannan (1998) attempts to explain how these two particles "have the uses they have", and discuss a number of implications of the experientialism approach for teaching PVs (p. 22).

The essential idea of this approach, as he puts it, is that "the meanings of our language [English], and indeed our structure of thought, are built up from regular patterns of bodily experience, extended into the other realms which we inhabit such as the emotional, mental and social" (p. 22). Such an extension, he elaborates, "is principally metaphorical, and what is preserved from the original physical pattern is the structure, or relationship between the elements, or some important association, and not the specific content" (p. 22). To illustrate this idea, Hannan (1998) provides two examples as "standard examples of metaphors" (p. 22), they are: *The line of people snaked around the corner,* and *The dawn of a new era.* Where the line, in the first example, "does not have scales or a forked tongue, but the winding form of the snake" (p. 22), and, in the second example, "there is no literal sun or light, but a noticeable beginning, perhaps where new knowledge is involved" (p. 22).

Moving on to the particles *up* and *down*, Hannan (1998) makes the point that by the term 'phrasal verbs' he means not only non-literal meanings of verb-particle combinations, but also the literal meanings of them, as part of his thesis is that "there is a continuity and extension from the literal meanings of verb-particle combinations to the metaphorical meanings" (p. 22). Hence, he deals with the literal meanings of *up* and *down* as basic and central meanings for their metaphorical extension. Therefore, he begins with the literal meanings of these particles in such PVs as *go up,*

come up, climb up, stand up, move up, go down, come down, climb down, sit/lie down, fall down etc. where *up* and *down* literally "refer to our experience of gravity" (p. 23). He, then, moves on to take up the graduation of the meanings of these two particles from literal to metaphorical from different standpoints, being: 1) Quantity: This metaphor is exemplified by our experience when we add objects to a pile the level of that pile goes up, while when we take away objects its level goes down. Such an experience "leads us to associate *more* with *up*, and *less* with *down* [and such an] association is extended to non-physical things to produce a simple correspondence of 'up = more, down = less' ", as in: *turn up*, and *turn down* (the volume / heat) (p. 23); 2) Size: This metaphor is stemmed from the fact that physical size of anything around us reflects its power, in that big size means strong and powerful whereas small size means the contrary. Such an experience leads to associate *up* with big and powerful, and *down* with small and weak, as in: "*bring up* (children), [and] *bring down* (cause someone's fall from power / respect; lower the tone or moral level of a conversation, etc." (p. 24); 3) Body posture: This point is built up on the fact that "[o]ur physical posture is obviously related to our activities and to our mental emotional state" (p. 24). In the sense that "[w]hen we are standing and moving around, we are active [while] when we are lying down we are inactive, and sometimes passive […] So there is a natural association between 'up' and 'active' and 'down' and 'inactive' " (p. 25), as in: *wake up, get up, start up, open up, calm down, settle down, shut down, break down*, etc. (p. 25). Body posture, on the other hand, is related to our mental and emotional state where an erect and open posture reflects bright, lively and cheerful states of mind, while a bowed or slumped posture reflects dull, tired and sad states of mind. This fact makes us to associate *up* with happiness etc., and *down* with sad etc., as in: *cheer up*, *be up*, *feel up*, *be down*, *feel down*, *let down*, etc. (p. 25); 4) Perspective: Owing to the fact that close objects seem bigger, in the human vision, than far ones, and when they move closer they appear to go up in the visual field, one can associate *up* with nearness, and *down* with distance, as in: *come up*, and *go down* (p. 26); and 5) External environment: This point is stemmed from the fact that the "ground is home [of human], and high places are less frequented and inherently dangerous" (p. 26). Consequently, "[…] 'down' is associated with what is familiar, real, easily reached or touched, known, and 'up' with the contrary" (p. 26), as in: *bring up, come up with, bring down, get down to*, etc. (p. 26).

Hannan (1998) concludes "that usually literal meanings are basic and central, and that metaphorical extensions can be understood and systematised with reference to the central meaning" (p. 26). And he introduces some implications for teaching of PVs, they include: 1) despite the fact that the systems of meaning accounted for in this approach are not 100% logical, they are "comprehensible in terms of human experience, generalisable, and often universal" (p. 26). The approach, as a result, is "opposed to the type of superficial use of quantitative information about frequency of use and collocations which simply says 'These are the common usages, Learn them' " (p. 26); 2) lack of logic and sense of PVs in the eyes of students make them "respond to phrasal verbs with various degrees of pain" (p. 27). Therefore, proving to students "that there is a human logic, based on experiences which they can recognise, gives them confidence that it is feasible to learn these things, and open doors to useful methods of vocabulary storage and organization" (p. 27); 3) highlighting such physical experiences makes the process of explaining PVs easier. For instance, to explain *come up* and *go down*, the teacher may move towards students closer and closer till they move their heads up to see him, and so on. The advantage of this process is that "relatively abstract concepts are grounded in direct sensory experience and so stick better" (p. 27); 4) it does not matter how to sequence PVs in a syllabus "same verb, various particles; same particle, various verbs; random verbs in context" (p. 27),

what does really matter is "literal or near-literal meanings are generally presented earlier than metaphorical ones" (p. 27); and finally 5) all patterns outlined in this approach can be grasped easily, "[t]his can lay the foundation for a positive and exploratory attitude to phrasal verbs in general" (p. 27).

Darwin and Gray's method

In their article *Going After the Phrasal Verb: An Alternative Approach to Classification*, Darwin and Gray (1999) assert that "[i]n research and pedagogy, approaches to the phrasal verb have been, and still are, rather arbitrary" (p. 66). The reason for such an arbitrariness, according to them, is "[…] the understanding of the phrasal verb, by both students and instructors, has not progressed as far as it might have if a more systematic approach has been used" (p. 66). They, therefore, have concerned themselves with providing such a systematic approach.

In their attempt to clarify the problem of the lack of progress in understanding of PVs, Darwin and Gray (1999) attribute the problem to the following three reasons: 1) the definitions provided for PVs by researchers produce conflicting results, and lead to confusion for both students and instructors; 2) the frequency of the commonest and more needed PVs has not been determined. As a result instructors, curriculum designers, and researchers are left with no choice but to use their intuition which may or may not be correct; and 3) the method of grouping PVs according to the verb. Although such a method may help learners understand the idiomatic nature of PVs, "it dose little to promote their use" (p. 67).

Further, they point out that in order to avoid ambiguity in classification procedure of PVs "linguists must agree upon a definition, thereby requiring them to begin from the same point" (p. 67). Consequently, they adopt the definition produced by Quirk et al. (1985) as the standard whereby "[a] phrasal verb consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle that function together as a single unit both lexically and syntactically" (Darwin & Gray, 1999, pp. 76-77).

They criticize the nine traditional tests proposed by Bolinger (1971) maintaining that they admit noteworthy exceptions which cause "a problematic lack of agreement among those who study phrasal verbs as to exactly which verb + particle combinations are or are not included in the category" (p. 75). Such a disagreement "can seriously impair the learning of phrasal verbs by ESL students, preventing the placement of verb + particle combinations in a grammatical paradigm" (p. 75). Hence, they confirm the real need for a more systematic classification that can "promote greater agreement among the experts and better presentation of verb + particle combinations to the ESL learner" (p. 75).

Darwin and Gray's alternative approach is "to take the opposite stance" (p. 75). That is to say, instead of "excluding a verb + particle combination from the phrasal verb category until it is proven to belong, linguists should consider all verb + particle combinations to be potential phrasal verbs until they can be proven otherwise" (pp. 75-76). In doing so, they explain, two advantages that can be accomplished: 1) a degree of definiteness can be added; 2) a curriculum-based confusion students have can be eliminated (p. 76).

Moreover, in their attempt to clarify their new approach, Darwin and Gray (1999) set out seven tests focusing on semantics, phonology and syntax. In addition, they indicate that there is no

need to apply all these tests to all combinations; one test is enough to divide up a combination (p. 77). The tests in brief are the following:

1. **Particle repetition**, e.g., *I *looked up, up, up* your name. [PV]
   I *looked up, up, up* to the very highest point [Not PV]

2. **Where questions**, e.g., He *ran up* the rally. Where? *Up* the rally [Not PV]
   I *looked up* the address. Where did you look? **Up* the address. [PV]

3. **Fronting**, e.g., He *made up* a story. **Up* he *made* a story. **Up* a story he *made*
   [PV]. *Up* the tree he *went* [Not PV]

4. **Verb insertion**, e.g., He *pulled on* the lever, but it was stuck. He *pulled* and *jerked on*
   the lever, but it was stuck [Not PV].
   I really *messed up* on my test. * I really *messed* and *fouled up* on my test. [PV]

5. **Adverb insertion**, e.g., * The mine *caved* quickly and forcefully *in*. [PV]
   They *crept* slowly and silently *down* the hall. [Not PV]

6. **Stress**, e.g., she *RAN UP* a huge bill. [PV]
   She *RAN to* the park. [Not PV]

7. **Intonation units**, e.g., *I *passed / out* in the doctor's office. [PV]
   I *hid / behind* the door. [Not PV] (pp. 77-81) [Emphasis in original] [My
   bracketing].

Interestingly, in their response to some critiques raised by some scholars (which will be outlined later on in this paper), Darwin and Gray (2000) elaborate in more details on their approach. They warrant their choice of Quirk et al's definition by claiming that it is "the most concise representation of definitions presented by others working on phrasal verbs" (165), and expect that such a definition "would lead to agreement about which verb + 'something' […] combinations to include in the category of phrasal verb" (p. 165) in order to establish a list of PVs that ESL learners are more likely to encounter. The definition consists of two parts: grammatical part where the verb + particle combination functions as a simple verb; and lexical part where the combination of verb + particle functions as "a single lexical item with a meaning significantly different from that carried outside the combination" (p. 166). For convenience, Darwin and Gray (2000) utilize the following features: V + X combination (where X represents particle, adverb, and preposition), [+ G] (representing a grammatical unity of the combination), [+ L] (representing the lexical unity of the combination). Thus, the definition of Quirk et al, according to Darwin and Gray (2000) "defines only an ideal, a phrasal-verb prototype" (p. 166) where a PV has to be [+ G, +L] not [- G, -L], [+ G, - L] or [- G, + L] V + X combination. In so doing, Darwin and Gray limit their list to only those "prototypical phrasal verbs" (p. 166). Their new method is to exclude any combination that exhibits any negative feature [- G] or [- L]. Any test of the seven tests proposed by them would be enough to demonstrate inclusion or exclusion of any given combination.

Thus, the lists of PVs built up by utilizing this method overlook many combinations, which exhibit the abovementioned negative features. Darwin and Gray (2000) justify such an omission

by claiming that it reduces the "conflict between definition and example in the pedagogical tools produced" (p. 167).

Using *freshman humanities textbooks* as their corpus, Darwin and Gray utilize their abovementioned tests in frequency count to develop the list of frequently occurring PVs.

Nevertheless, Darwin and Gray's method has been heavily criticized by Joan Sawyer (2000) and Ron Sheen (2000), who both agree with them on the question of choosing the most frequent PVs list to be taught to ESL learners. However, they both reject the method of teaching PVs proposed by Darwin and Gray, and instead each one has proposed his own method as in what follows:

Joan Sawyer's method

In her reply to the article of Darwin and Gray (1999), Sawyer (2000) denies the ruling out of the semantically transparent constructions and the constructions concentrating only on the semantically opaque (those which function as single units). She considers that scholars should open the membership of the class of PVs to include all types of combinations of verb and morphologically invariable particles because the semantically transparent combinations have the surface structure as the more semantically opaque ones, can "lead students to understand the surface structure of the combinations" (p. 152). This in turn can reduce "avoidance of these combinations on the part of students and gives teachers a simple functioning of the semantically less transparent combinations" (p. 152).

By adopting Fraser's (1976) view, Sawyer indicates that all PVs have a verb and a morphologically invariable constituent, but this constituent could be a preposition, an adverb or real particle (the element that forms a unit with the verb), as illustrated in the following set of examples:

> The cowboy shot *up* the hill. (preposition)
> The cowboy shot *up* the bullet. (adverb)
> The cowboy shot *up* the salon. (real particle) (p. 153)
> [Emphasis and bracketing in original]

Sawyer believes that knowing the type of the particle "not only helps predict which combinations might be easily taught but also suggests the order in which they might best be presented to students" (p. 155). The "[a]nalysis of their different function offers teachers one way of considering which ones to teach and suggest a step-by-step process for doing so" (p. 157). Therefore, she outlines her method of teaching PVs, according to the particle type, in the form of three steps as follows:

Step 1: Do Not Teach Verb-Preposition Combinations as Phrasal Verbs. Verb-Preposition Combinations, according to her, are mere "standard verbs followed by PPs [prepositional phrases]" and "they do not present a challenge for comprehension or production of this group". In addition, ruling them out "from the class of phrasal verbs leaves only the combinations that include adverbs and real particles requiring specific instruction" (p. 155).

Step 2: Teach Verb-Adverb Combinations. Sawyer notes that the student knows the meanings of both elements of this type of combinations since it is semantically transparent and its elements

retain their original meanings. Besides, like the case of verb-real particle combinations, these combinations have "word-order alternation" (i.e. they can be split/separable or non-split/non-separable). Teaching a word order of such semantically transparent combinations gives learners confidence in that when "they begin working on less transparent types, they no longer need to be concerned with word order" (pp. 155-156).

Step 3: Teach Verb-Real Particle Combinations. In her endeavor to account for this step, Sawyer refers to her work *Verb-adverb and verb-particle constructions: Teaching and acquisition* (1999) in which she studies child language acquisition and demonstrates that real particles have at least three common functions: 1) telicity or completiveness, as an example, the particle *up* in: *eat up* and *drink up* whereby the object "is consumed completely". Teachers are advised to teach each one of these real particles by offering a number "of verbs with which the real particle has the telic reading" to encourage the students "to see a pattern that they can use to decode new combinations encountered" (p. 156); 2) real particles which do not add much semantically to the verb, such as: *clean up, lock up, wash up, act out, sort out*, and *start out*. Teachers as well are advised to "demonstrate each real particle that works this way with a set of verbs to which it adds little semantically" and the students also "would see that these are not isolated cases but show a pattern" (p. 156); and 3) idiomatic combinations which are "the most difficult to organize into groups for presentation; they must be presented in context" and have to be learned individually. For example, *give up, think up*, and *wear out* (p. 156).

Sawyer (2000) concludes that "[t]he fact that real particles can be clustered into groups by function […] makes teaching more efficient" (p. 157). Such a method "may help students learn patterns for decoding new combinations and increasing their vocabularies while reducing their avoidance of these combinations" (p. 157).

Ron Sheen's method

In his reply to the article of Darwin and Gray (1999), Sheen (2000) admits that they "make a valuable contribution to teaching phrasal verbs […] in pointing out the unreliability of choosing such items as curriculum content based on intuition and in emphasisng the need to base such a selection on authentic frequency of use" (p. 160). He considers "[s]uch a selection would result in a bank from which one might choose a restricted list for active use and much longer one for passive" (p. 164).

Sheen, on the other hand, criticizes the approach of Darwin and Gray (1999), claiming that it addresses the complexities of PVs without touching upon the major question: "[w]hat is the best way to achieve familiarity with and fluency in the use of PVs, which is the absolute essential to a mastery of English?" (p. 161). In his attempt to address such an issue, Sheen proposes his method which is called "explicit-plus or explicit-minus?". By 'explicit-plus' he means "should teachers devote time and effort to enabling students to analyse PVs both syntactically and semantically?" (p. 161), and by 'explicit-minus' he means "[s]hould teachers be content with the minimalist approach […] which would teach the word-order problems with transitive PVs and leave the rest to exposure, memorization, and practice?" (p. 161).

Reporting on his own experience as a teacher at university level, Sheen claims that he did apply both approaches. He first adopted the explicit-plus approach in which he devoted a great deal of time and effort to teaching syntactic and semantic complexities discussed by Darwin and Gray

(1999), and McArthur (1979). Meanwhile, he spent some minimal time on classroom oral work encouraging students to use PVs outside. He then, conducted some written and oral tests. The results yielded a success in written proficiency, but such a success did not apply to oral proficiency which was poor and not encouraging.

On the contrary, when Sheen decided to adopt the explicit-minus approach in which he spent most of the time on oral activities the results of oral proficiency were far much better. Such an empirical experience has made Sheen argue for the explicit-minus approach, which "allowed the students to reach a standard nearer to that of Anglophones than did the explicit-plus approach" (pp. 161-163). Therefore, he concludes that "teachers need to devote time and effort to activities encouraging frequent and spontaneous use of PVs and not to the sort of analyses involved in exploiting the classification system proposed by Darwin and Gray" (p.164).

Rosemary Sansome's Method

In her paper *Applying lexical research to the teaching of phrasal verbs*, Sansome (2000) summarizes the insights obtained from research conducted in the Lexical Research Unit, Leeds University 1980-1984. The research has taken up a large sub-group of PVs, that is, combinations of verbs with collocates in which the latter changes the meaning of the former "in a systematic way by subordinating it to a new meaning introduced by the collocate" (p. 56). However, such meaning-changing collocates, according to Sansome, include not only adverbial particles; adverbs; prepositions; and prepositional phrases, but also adjectives and nouns (p. 61). The following two examples are provided by her to illustrate such collocates:

> *He tricked her into taking her medicine*. *Trick into* means: "to get someone to do something by tricking them" (p. 60).
> *She tricked him out of a fortune*. *Trick out of* means: "to get something out of someone by tricking them" (p. 60).

Sansome (2000) maintains that the issue of 'meaning-changing collocates' has been outlined in the works of linguists who dealt with the phenomenon of PVs such as Bolinger (1971) and Fraser (1976), but it has not been described systematically. In the sense, both Bolinger and Fraser have approached the issue from a syntactic viewpoint excluding verb-preposition combinations from their scope (p. 60).

Concentrating on analysing the meanings of PVs grouped into only one major subsection of the semantic area CONTACT, that is, PHYSICAL CONTACT, the research yields insights into the pattern underlying PVs belong to this subsection. Such a pattern, as Sansome puts it, is:

> Nearly all the meaning-changing collocates in the PHYSICAL CONTACT area change the meaning of the verb according to the same patten: 'to___ by ___ ing' (e.g., *pull apart* 'to separate by pulling'; *pull up* 'to raise by pulling'). The verb-meaning is subordinated to a new verb-meaning introduced by the collocate (pp. 60-61) [Emphasis in original].

Sansome, however, believes that such an insight has practical applications in the field of EFL teaching. She herself, as an EFL teacher, has conducted a comprehension test given to first-year undergraduate Japanese, Korean, and Taiwanese students to find out "to what extent foreign learners of intermediate level and above have absorbed the pattern underlying these verb-

collocate combinations and whether they cause comprehension problems" (pp. 61-62). The result showed that students have not acquired the pattern underlying the tested combinations. This matter "has implications not only for comprehension but also production; if students are not aware of any underlying pattern, they are unlikely to be able to use verb combinations except in cases where they have learnt the whole phrase" (p. 63).

John Flower's method

In his practice book *Phrasal Verbs Organiser*, Flower (2000) makes a noticeable contribution to the field of teaching PVs. Unlike other scholars who prefer to treat PVs either by particle or by verb, Flower treats more than 700 PVs in three different ways, i.e. by particle, by verb, and by topic. He rightly makes the point that "[t]he more different ways you meet these verbs, the more you will learn" (p. 3). In treating PVs by topic, for instance, he groups them according to the field they are commonly used in. In the section of "Technology and Computing", for example, he accounts for such PVs as *cut out, filter out, wire up, print out, back up* etc. (p. 89). While in the section of "Sport and Leisure" he takes up such PVs as *worm up, ease up, play off, stretch out, pass trough,* etc. (p. 92).

Moreover, Flower (2000) provides, other than the mini-dictionary of the used PVs,   "Test Yourself" section (pp. 108-112), where five tests are set up to give the learners an opportunity to examine themselves in what they have studied throughout the book.

In addition, he establishes "Your Personal List" (pp. 135-144) section where nine well organized blank tables are given to allow students to add their own PVs, or PVs that they learn in class or come across while they read.

Conclusion

A close look at the abovementioned methods proposed for teaching EPVs to non-native speakers of English reveals that pedagogues vary in what to teach as PVs to foreign students. Scholars like Hannan (1998), Sawyer (2000), and Sansome (2000) strongly believe that all types of verb-particle combinations (literal and idiomatic/semantically transparent and semantically opaque) have to be taught. They are driven by the reason that the former constitutes the central and the basis upon which the meaning of the latter can be grasped and understood. Other scholars, on the other hand, like Darwin and Gray (1999), consider that only idiomatic/semantically opaque type of PVs has to be taught as it is the prototypical. Pedagogues, also, vary in how to teach EPVs to non-native learners of English. Such scholars as Side (1990), Hannan (1998), Sawyer (2000), and Sansome (2000) are totally convinced that PVs have to be taught by knowing the patterns underlying them in order to pinpoint the system and the logic by which they work. Others believe that PVs are random combinations of verb and particles and they have to be memorized by heart. The issue of how to sequence EPVs in textbooks, as well, constitutes a debatable point. Scholars such as Side (1990), Goodale (1994), Berman and Kirstein (1996), Darwin and Gray (1999), Sawyer (2000) and Sansome (2000) are quite persuaded that PVs must be dealt with by particles. On the contrary, others prefer to tackle them by verbs. Interestingly, Flower (2000) believes that they have to be presented in different ways, i.e. by particles, by verbs, and by topics. Aside from how to sequence EPVs in textbooks, scholars such as Cornell (1985), Darwin and Gray (1999) and Sheen (2000) call for frequency counts of the EPVs, just like other aspects

of the English language, to determine the most common and needed ones, and in turn to avoid designing pedagogical tools according to pedagogues' intuitions. It is worth noting that despite the fact that most of the specialized dictionaries of PVs are developed as teaching materials to be utilized in classes of English as a second or foreign language, there are some workbooks written to be studied in conjunction with specialized dictionaries, such as *Using Phrasal Verbs* by McArthur (1975) and *Collins COBUILD Phrasal Verbs Workbook* (1994), which are produced in conjunction with the *Dictionary of Phrasal verbs and their Idioms*, and the *Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal verbs* respectively. It is very noticeable that most of the researchers agree on the necessity of teaching PVs in context owing to the fact that presenting them in contexts enhances their learnability much more than presenting them as unrelated elements. To sum up, the undeniable fact is that PVs are not random combinations of verbs and particles. There is a pattern underlying each one of them. Although these patterns vary in their degree of comprehensibility, they need to be further investigated, and applied so as to provide learners of English with reliable pedagogical materials.

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