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Identifying the Difficulties behind EFL Learners' Confusion in Comprehending the Meaning of English Phrasal Verbs

A B S T R A C T

Though English phrasal verbs form an important and integral part of English grammar and vocabulary, they have a negative impact on language learning, hence a problematic issue in the area of EFL learning and teaching. Their complexity arises from their unusual constructions when the meaning of two or more words together may differ from the literal meanings of the combined words. This eventually leads to EFL learners' confusion in understanding the phrasal verbs intended meaning jointly with their particles when listening to, writing and speaking English, due to their idiomatic and polysemous nature, types, constructions, the contextual, stylistic and cultural differences of their uses between the source and target languages.

In this study, the researcher aims to verify EFL Learners' difficulties in understanding the actual meaning of English Phrasal Verbs within a variety of texts and contexts by adopting a descriptive-analytical method from a syntactic-semantic point of view. To establish a theoretical background of the study assumptions, the researcher tends to identify the patterns of phrasal verbs constructions, types, characteristics, and the interpretation of their meanings, literally or non-literally. Then, the researcher also practically addresses and diagnoses the causes of such difficulties in comprehending and interpreting their communicative meanings, as a result of the very different tone or nuance between the SL and TL with examples. Finally, the study concludes with some remarks about the hypotheses of the study providing some recommendations to be implemented while teaching and learning EFL.

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تحديد الصعوبات الناتجة عن سوء فهم معنى الأفعال العبارية الانكليزية من قبل متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية
كلغة اجنبية

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الخلاصة:

رغم أن الافعال العبارية تشكل جزء لا يتجزأ من النحو ومفردات اللغة الانكليزية ، الا ان لها تأثير سلبي واشكالي على موضوع تعلم وتدریس اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية الى جانب اللغة الام . حيث تكمن الصعوبة بكون تراكيبها اللغوية غير اعتيادية اضافة الى ان معانيها الدقيقة تختلف عن المعاني الحرفية للكلمات التي تتكون منها هذه التراكيب ، وهذا بدوره يؤدي الى سوء فهم المعاني الدقيقة لجميع الكلمات التي تتالف منها هذه التراكيب مجتمعة من قبل متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية عند الاستماع والكتابة والتحدث باللغة الانكليزية . كما تكمن الصعوبة ايضا في الطبيعة الاصطلاحية وتعدد معاني الافعال العبارية وانواعها وانماط تكوينها وكذلك وجود الاختلافات السياقية والاسلوبية والثقافية في استخدام هذه الافعال بين اللغة الام (لغة المصدر) ولغة الهدف (الانكليزية هنا) .

تهدف الدراسة إلى تحديد كافة الصعوبات التي تواجه متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية في فهم المعاني الحقيقية ضمن سياقات النصوص المتعددة التي ترد فيها الافعال العبارية الانكليزية من خلال استخدام الباحث للطريقة الوصفية التحليلية لدراسة هذه التراكيب من الناحية التركيبية – الدلالية . ولغرض بناء اسس نظرية لفرضيات الدراسة ، يسعى الباحث الى التعريف بتراكيب الافعال العبارية الانكليزية وانماطها وانواعها وخصائصها وكذلك طرق تاويل معانيها المتعددة سواء كانت حرفية او غير حرفية او بين ذلك . كما ويسعى الباحث ايضا الى اثبات فرضيات البحث عمليا من خلال تحديد مسببات صعوبات فهم وتاويل المعاني التواصلية لهذا النوع من الافعال (معززة بالامثلة) ، وذلك نتيجة للاختلاف الشديد في النبرة أو الفروق الدقيقة بين لغتي المصدر والهدف . وفي خاتمة الدراسة يؤكد الباحث على المسائل الجوهرية من وراء الدراسة لاثبات فرضيات البحث ورفع بعض التوصيات اللازمة في مجال تعلم وتدریس اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية.

كلمات المفتاحية : الافعال العبارية الانكليزية ، الصعوبات ، متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية كلغة اجنبية ، التوصيات .

1. Introduction

As a matter of fact, the use of English Phrasal Verbs (EPVs) by EFL learners is a very crucial and complicated area along the history of linguistics and language learning studies. PVs almost consist of verbs and one or more particles (often prepositional, adverbial, or prepositional adverbial), and are mainly characterized by having multiple structures with completely or partly deceptive meanings, seemingly different from the meanings of the verbs and the particles in

combination. Mostly, due to the EPVs opacified and idiomatic nature, and as part of EFL learners' linguistic behavior, avoid using them in their speech or writings. They simply tend to use verbs or VPs with a more literal and direct meaning instead, as in the case with "*pick up* " that has different meanings in different contexts, from the meaning of the words that make up the PV together. For instance, it could mean (lift, raise, learn, seize ... etc). Thus, PVs have been described by (Littlemore & Low, 2006) as "a recurring nightmare" to EF learning, and to" (Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003), PVs "do not enjoy a good reputation (Gandorah: 2015).

1.1 Problems of the Study

Actually, using EPVs accurately by EFL learners is a critical task in the area of learning EFL that needs special consideration. It is noted that these verbs are treated individually with their arbitrary meanings by these learners, in the sense that syntactically, they have different combinations; usually formed from a verb with its particle (a preposition, an adverb or prepositional adverbial) (Hameed: 2017). Semantically, PVs have multiple meanings with their particles some of which are almost idiomatic and unpredictable, thus uneasy to infer by EFL learners, especially when these verbs are used out of context, or informally in written texts and formally in speech. The meaning of "put on", for instance, has nothing to do with the meaning of the verb (put) in isolation. Besides, EFL learners are untrained enough by their English teachers to the correct use of EPVs in different situations in real life, and unexposed to the English speaking community who intuitively and fluently use PVs in their speech or writings and really know what they mean.

1. 2 Aims of the Study

The main aims of the study are:

- 1- Displaying the patterns of EPVs constructions as a vivid aspect of English language to be understood and used properly by EFL learners in spoken and written texts.
- 2- Identifying the different types of EPVs in relation to their literal or non-literal (idiomatic) meanings and their impact on EFL learners' misunderstanding of EPVs.
- 3- Showing the importance of using EPVs in EFL learning.
- 4- Verifying the difficulties EFL learners have in understanding EPVs meanings.
- 5- Providing some recommendations to overcome the above difficulties in EFL learners' speech or writings.

1. 3 Hypotheses

It is hypothesized that EFL learners:

- 1- do not have a clear cut distinction among the constructions of verb phrases, prepositional phrases and a phrasal-prepositional verbs because of the various structures EPVs have.
- 2- are unable to interpret and comprehend the accurate meanings of EPVs, especially those Lexical interpretation Of EPVs, having non-literal meanings, due to the dependence on the difficulty to infer their idiomatic and the multiplicity of the meanings EPVs have in different contexts.
- 3- are untrained by their English teachers to use EPVs correctly in their writings or speech, or because of the shortages of EFL syllabus to include such important part of English language in teaching and learning EFL curriculum.

1. 4 Literature Review

In a study conducted by Cheon, Y. (2006), the lexical aspects and the semantic features of EPVs are investigated. She discussed two different cases, the context and learning translation, among Arabic and Korean speakers who learned English. She found that the use of sentence context was better to remember PVs meanings than using the translating process. She sums up that the context is more important to remember the vocabulary. While PVs learning process is as important as the other levels of proficiency, mother tongue, and test case which are all integrated with the context of their uses.

Al-amein (2013) also conducted another study on EFL learners at the secondary and university levels in Sudan. A descriptive-analytical method was adopted in the study to identify the problems EFL students confront in understanding and using EPVs in context and out of context. The study proved that EPVs were better understood when used in than out of context. He also attributed the difficulties of understanding the meaning, constructing, and using EPVs while learning EFL to the learners' cultural unawareness of their correct uses and the non-existence of

these verbs in their native-Arabic, in addition to the shortage of their educational systems syllabus in teaching this subject in the area of learning and teaching EFL (Al-amein, 2013:7).

In addition, Azmar (2019) discussed the difficulties in understanding EPVs by EFL students at the university level in Indonesia. The study proved that mastering EPVs by non-native students of English was very weak when PVs, as multi words constructions, are elements of spoken and colloquial English that can be intuitively understood, perceived and recognized only by English natives and some others who had previous knowledge and experience of their uses. The study also remarked the syntactic and the semantic problems behind the erroneous uses of PVs by Indonesian learners of English when they were interviewed by the researcher (Azmar, 2010:1).

2. Theoretical Background

Since learning EPVs is an essential part of knowing the grammar and the vocabulary of English language for its effective use in everyday communication, it is important for EFL learners to be introduced to this part of English language, study their structures, and understand their meanings.

Simply, a Phrasal Verb is, " a verb formed from two or three parts; a verb and an adverb or preposition which is called a particle. Most are formed from a small number of common verbs, as (*get, go, come, put and set*) and a small number of adverbs and prepositions, as (*away, out, off, up and in*)" (Macmillan English Dictionary, 1987: 411).

Sometimes PVs have meanings that can easily be inferred, such as (*sit down or look for*). But other PVs meanings are mostly different from the meanings of the verbs they are made up of, for instance *hold up* can mean 'to cause a delay' or 'to try to rob someone' ... etc. It has nothing to do with the meaning of 'holding' something.

A PV is also defined as "a verbal construction consisting of a verb and an adverb particle". Often PVs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs are distinct according to the different grammatical patterns in which they occur, as shown below (Richards & Schmidt, 2002: 399).

2.1 Patterns of Phrasal Verbs Constructions:

2. 1. 1 A Phrasal verb:

- A particle comes after the verb (a particle is emphasized). E.g. Turn *off* the light.
- A particle comes after the object. E.g. Turn the light *off*.

- A pronoun comes between the verb and the particle phrase. E.g. Turn *it* off.

(*Turn off it)

2. 1. 2 A Prepositional verb:

- A verb is emphasized. E.g. I'll *apply* for the job.

- A particle can't come after the object. E.g. (*I'll apply the job *for*).

- A pronoun comes after the verb + particles. E.g. I'll apply for *it*. (*I'll apply *it* for)

2. 1. 3 A phrasal-prepositional verb:

It consists of a verb, an adverb particle, and a preposition. Examples:

- We must *cut down on* expenses.

- They *put* their failure *down to* bad advice.

Thus, some of the above verbal constructions meanings could be easily interpreted from the direct meanings of their constituents, such as "*cut down on*", while others are not; they have indirect (idiomatic) meaning, such as "*put down to*" means (to attribute). All these constructions are nowadays included in the term *Phrasal Verb* (Al-amein, 2013:7).

However, in Lea & Bradbery (2004:10) PVs, are *multi-word verbs* composed of two, or three words. The first is a verb followed by an adverb (turn *down*) and the second is a verb followed by a preposition (eat *into*) or both (put *up with*). Both adverbs and prepositions are called "particles". The first combination (v + adv/pre) is called *an adverbial / prepositional phrase*, whereas the second (v + adv + pre) is called *a phrasal prepositional phrase*. Thus the name *multiword verb* is chosen to be the best to cover all the above patterns (Lea & Bradbery, 2004:10).

2.2 Types of Phrasal Verbs

Syntactically, EPVs are classified into transitive; (separable and inseparable) based on the possibility of separating the verb and its particle by adding a noun between them, and intransitive. They are also classified semantically into literal and non-literal (idiomatic) based on their direct and indirect uses in English sentences (Dhayf, 2019).

2. 2. 1 The Syntactic Classification of PVs

Grammatically, PVs, based on their structures, are classified into two main categories:

2. 2. 1. a. Intransitive PVs

In the construction of intransitive VPs, the verb and its particle are usually attached together. A VP does not need an object; sentence meaning is already completed by the meaning of the PV itself. In addition, the intransitive phrasal verbs cannot be made passive (Foley & Hall, 2003:157). Examples:

- They often *get up* late.
- Please, *come down*.
- The plane *took off*.

2. 2. 1. b. Transitive PVs

A transitive PV, as the term reveals, needs an object for fulfilling the meaning of the sentence, without which the sentence is meaningless. Examples:

- Will you *look after* the patients?
- *Take care* of my children while I'm absent, please.
- *Fill out* the form quickly, please?

A particle in the above VPs constructions can function as a preposition in one context and an adverb in another (Arif & Ibrahim: 2019). However, transitive PVs could be subdivided into two types based on the position and the number of particles a VP needs.

- Inseparable Transitive PVs

In such kind of transitive verbs, a verb needs a direct object. It can also be attached to its particle and should come separately (Al-amein, 2013:9). Examples:

- She never asks me to *look after* her children.
- * She never asks me to *look* her children *after*.
- I'm looking for my books.
- * I'm *looking* my books *for*.

However, there are also transitive PVs with two inseparable particles. The first particle is an adverb and the second one is a preposition. The verb and its particles cannot be separated; even the two particles cannot be separated. Examples:

- I can't *put up with* him.

* I can't *put up* him *with*.

-We should *look up to* the lecturer.

* We should *look up* the lecturer *to*.

- **Separable Transitive PVs**

In such kind of transitive PVs, a verb needs an object that either comes *between* a VP and its particle or *after* it when it is a pronoun. Examples:

- *Switch on* the TV, please.

- *Switch it off*, please.

- *Turn on* the engine.

- Don't *turn it off*.

2. 2. 2 The Semantic Classification of PVs

As generally known, a VP is "a combination of two or three words (V + pre / adv and V + adv +pre) that functions as a single unit of meaning which can't be deduced from the words it contains" (Longman Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs,1983. cit in Al-amein, 2013:19). Hence, to Nadjmeddine (2019:14), VPs are thought to be understood literally or non-literally based on the context of their uses, thus can be classified semantically based on the degree of idiomaticity they have into:

2. 2. 2. a. Literal (transparent)

The meaning of the VP here is so clear or transparent. It is easily understood by the learner as a result of the meanings of the parts that make it up. Examples:

-She *put down* the book. (Literal)

- *Stand up*, please.
- *Raise your hands up*.

2. 2. 2. b. Semi-Idiomatic (The semi-transparent)

The meaning of the PV here is different from the meanings of its two components. It is semi-idiomatic; when one has *literal* meaning and the other has *non-literal*. Examples: *cut off*, *find out*, *burn down*, and *eat up*. Examples:

- Try to *find out* the reasons behind his failure.
 - He *cut off* the world.
- The house was completely *burned down*.
- They *ate up* all the food.

2. 2. 2. c. Idiomatic (non - transparent)

This kind of PVs is the most difficult and confusing to be learned by EFL learners. They are thought to be understood idiomatically (nonliterally) in the sense that their meanings do not sum up the meanings of their individual constituents. Examples:

- The army *put down* the rebellion. (figurative / idiomatic meaning: "to suppress")
- He *passed away* last year. (means: "to die")
- Never *give up*! Try again. (means: "to abandon")

Similarly, to Laufer and Eliasson (1993:38 cit. in Gandorah, 2015: 26) PVs are categorized semantically with different terms having the same syntactic nature into three kinds "transparent, semitransparent, and opaque phrasal verbs".

2. 3 Characteristics of Phrasal Verbs

There are some restrictions on the formation of PVs:

1. The combination of PVs (V+ adv / pre) is restricted to certain particles, like; *down*, *on*, *off*, *in*, *out*, *up*. Though there is no restriction on the verbs, but, the most common verbs are simple and short ones; like *put*, *take*, *get*, and *make*.

2. The combination is not freely formed. It is a collocation restriction which is clearly noted when replacing the particle with its antonym, for instance, we say "*put up with*", but we don't say "*put down with it*". The verbs "*give out*" and "*carry off*" are not the antonym of "*give in*" and "*carry on*".

3. When the combination is usually replaced with a one-word verb, their meaning is not necessarily the same, for instance, *carry on* means "continue", *put up with* means "tolerate", *put off* means "postpone" (Alwasilah: 2003 cit. in Azmar, 2019:11).

2. 4 Style of Phrasal Verbs

PVs could be classified according to their uses in English language into formal and informal (Redman, 2004:38 cit in Al-amein, 2013:34).

2. 4. 1 Formal PVs: are used easily in both written and spoken English. Examples:

- He often *wakes up* early.
- The truck *broke down* on the highway. (*broke down* means *went wrong / stopped working*)
- Burglars *broke into* my house. (*broke into* means *entered illegally*)

2. 4. 2 Informal PVs: are sometimes used informally and more commonly in spoken than in written English. Examples:

- They have to *make up* a novel. (*make up* means *invent / edit*)
- He *left out* a question. (*left out* means *dropped / quitted*) as part of daily speech by a native.

3. The Significance of PVs Use in EFL Learning

Using phrasal verbs in both spoken and written forms of a language is widely considered by non-native speakers of English while learning foreign languages. Thus, as part of learning English grammar and vocabulary, learning and studying EPVs constitute an essential means for successful communication and fluent speech in English. Hence comes the importance of knowing the very special meanings and the various structures of PVs in the process of learning

and teaching EFL through learning the basic language skills as reading, writing, listening and speaking.

To add, using PVs in peoples' every day speech is a natural and indispensable linguistic behavior when communicating in English both formally and informally. It is considered as a variety of a language to express peoples' relations, practices and actions they are experiencing in their lives. For their conversations to be successful, it depends on the ability to perceive and use these multi word verbs in their conversations properly in a wide range of human contexts. For instance, human beings could "*look in*", "*look at*", "*look for*", "*look up*" or "keep up to", "keep in", "keep down" ... etc. Therefore, knowing these verbs uses, types, patterns, constructions, meanings, and their idiomatic and polysemous norms in particular, is a must to enrich EFL learner's vocabulary about humans' attitudes and experiences (Hameed, 2017: 346).

Furthermore, knowing and using PVs by EFL learners are very important in their translation classes. If they do not have a basic knowledge about what multi word verbs are, their forms, meanings and uses, they will not be able to translate them in texts of different types accurately. The corpus studies conducted so far about translating PVs into their mother tongues proved students' inability to translate these verbs properly, either because of their difficult structures, idiomaticity, multi meanings in a variety of contexts, or because of the non-existence of these verbs in their native languages. The previous studies also showed that students had serious problems in translating English PVs for the above reasons. They were not quite sure whether to translate these verbs literally or non-literally. Identifying the contexts in which these verbs occur is the only solution to find suitable equivalents in their native languages (Algazoly, 2021 cit. in Hameed, 2017:346).

4. EFL Learners' Difficulties in Learning EPVs

Knowing and using PVs are the most critical issues in the area of EFL learning. Therefore, they are broadly researched matters in English language learning and teaching studies. Unfortunately, EFL learners either improperly or totally avoid using them in their speech or writings due to the difficult and overlapped structures they have. In addition to the irrelevance or nonexistence of these constructions in their mother tongues. EFL learners almost mistakenly use them because of

the semantic confusion, stylistic inefficiency, the syntactic differences and the lack of collocational awareness between the SL and TL languages (Toom, 2020: 14). Thus, the most common errors often EFL learners encounter in using EPVs are due to the following difficulties.

4. 1 The Syntactic Difficulties

It is hypothesized that the syntactic difficulties EFL learners confront in comprehending the meaning of EPVs as literal or non-literal (idiomatic) are attributed to some syntactic factors, such as the lexical features a VP has; transitivity, word order and the object used, which affect its meaning (Salih, 201:30). Examples:

- James *turned on* the TV. (TV)
- James *turned on* to punk rock. (Int V)

In the above sentences, the same PV can be both transitive and intransitive having totally different meanings. In the first sentence, the PV has a very common meaning as (to let the electric current to flow) to be understood literally. While in the second sentence, the VP has idiomatic meaning which means (to be attracted by), which is unpredictable by EFL learners, thus to be understood non-literally (Salih, 201:31). Likewise:

- Mac *came across* a new recipe for fudge. (TV)
- Luckily, Mac *comes across* well."(Int V)

In the first sentence above, the PV "*comes across*" is used transitively; means (to meet by chance), while in the second, the same PV is used intransitively; which means (to make a good impression). The two possible meanings of the PVs here that are totally different are confusing for EFL students unless identified by the context of their uses in such combinations (Celce & Larsen, 1983. cit. in Salih, 2011:31).

On the other hand, word order, is another syntactic difficulty to understand the meaning of the PVs by EFL learners. Examples:

- I *see* the plan *through*.
- I *see through* the plan.

- I *hung up* the phone.
- I *hung* the picture *up* the wall.

The meanings of the PV "*see through*" in the above sentences are not the same. In the first sentence, it means (to preserve until the plan completes), while in the second, it means (to realize the deception of the plan). To Courtney (1983. cit. in Salih, 201:31), the difference in the meanings of the object that comes before or after the PV (that refers either to a person or a thing) leads to misunderstanding of their meanings by EFL students. Examples:

- Jon *looked up* the truth.
- Jon *looked* the truth *up*.

Likewise, the PV "*looked up*" in the above sentences has two different meanings. In the first sentence it has direct literal meaning (to search for), while in the second, it has nonliteral idiomatic meaning as (to look at). The multiple meanings are very confusing for non-native students of English. Therefore, the context of the object used should be identified very well by these students (Seidl & McMordie, 1988. cit. in Salih, 201:31).

4. 2 The Semantic Difficulties

One of the semantic difficulties EFL learners encounter in using EPVs is the multi meanings they later have in different combinations and contexts. These learners avoid using them in their English speech or writings, not because they are rare or few in their mother tongues, but they prefer using single word verbs with simple and direct meanings instead. Cries, (2002) admits that "Many phrasal verbs have more than one meaning, so care must be taken when dealing with such phenomenon". For instance the verb *take off* has multiple meanings when checked in a dictionary in different contexts (Al-amein, 2013:35). Unless identifying the context in which PVs are used, learners are unable to use these verbs properly. Examples:

- I feel hot, so I *took off* my coat. (*took off* means "to remove")
- The plane often *takes off* in time. (*takes off* means "to depart").
- The dentist *took off* the child's decayed tooth. (*took off* means "to pull")

In some cases, a *wrong particle* is used with a *correct verb* in the combination of a PV which affects the meaning of the sentence. Examples:

- * *Fill up* the blank spaces!
- *Fill in* the blank spaces!
- The assignments have to be *carried on* *.
- The assignments have to be *carried out*.

Or in the other cases, the *wrong verb* is used with the *correct particle* which also affects the meaning of the sentence. Examples:

- He has to *come back to* work so soon*.
- He has to *go back to* work so soon.
- *Cut down* the crying baby.*
- *Calm down* the crying baby.

In addition, many other PVs have difficult and unnatural meanings that are unpredictable by EFL learners, totally different from the meanings of their constituents in isolation. The meaning of the verb *put up with* (tolerate), for instance, has nothing to do with the meanings of the verb "put" and its particles "up" and "with"; therefore, it is confusing.

Above all, EFL learners lack the 'collocational awareness' of the special semantic relations that naturally exist between some words in the PVs combination rather than relations existing between others having the same meaning. Examples:

- A study is *made up*.*
- A study is *carried out*.
- *Bring it out from* that big hole *.
- *Bring it out of* that big hole.

4. 3 The Stylistic Difficulties

Using PVs by EFL learners is one of English language features. EPVs are used in both formal and informal situations and various contexts of language use whether in spoken or written form of a language as if they look natural and native like. Because using multi word verbs is more expressive than single ones in English language. Though EPVs entered language through native speakers' daily speech, but they are also used by writers in all texts types including the most technical or conservative ones (Al-amein, 2013:35).

However, what characterizes English language is the use of PVs in its informal spoken form and all types of written texts. Nevertheless, EFL learners tend to use such verbs in their formal writings rather than informal speech, for in writing tasks, there is enough time for them to perceive and encode their meanings, especially those obscure and unfamiliar within everyday spoken English (Azmar, 2019:16). The next examples are taken from some learners' formal essays, De Cock (2006):

- The state is responsible for citizens' well-being and must *help out* when needed.
- ... many people are constantly *getting away from* tradition, religion and moral values.
- The Swedish well-meaning immigration policy is sometimes stopping people from *getting into* the society.

However, in their formal writings, some learners use prepositional verbs that are not exactly related to this type of texts. Examples:

- Their communities ought to organize meetings to *talk about* (discuss) the epidemic.
- But the English version of the Treaty *talked about* (mentioned) land ownership.
- The problem I'm interested in and I want to *speak about* (discuss) is the death penalty.

5. Conclusion

The present study has investigated the various problems behind EFL learners' confusion in understanding the meaning of English PVs when learning EFL that leads to their improper use in of such kind of verbs in writings or speech. The analysis of the study has proved the hypotheses that the different constructions these verbs can occur with their particles whether prepositions, adverbs or both which have almost idiomatic, non-literal meanings that are different from the

meanings of their constituent parts in isolation, lie behind EFL learners confusion. The confusion of inferring EPVs meanings can also be attributed to the PVs polysemy, types, characteristics, the context of their uses in spoken and written texts, and the stylistic and cultural differences between the SL, i.e. English here and the TLs, their mother tongues. Furthermore, EFL learners' confusion is due to the lack of EFL learners' training by their English teachers to the proper use of EPVs in their speech or writings and the shortcomings of EFL programs to cover all aspects of learning and teaching EPVs.

The study concludes that verifying the context of using EPVs is the only and best solution to help EFL learners comprehend and then verify the formers' accurate meanings throughout verifying the collocational relations that exist between the PVs with their particles. At the end, the study provides some recommendations to help EFL learners overcome the syntactic, semantic, stylistic, contextual and collocational difficulties they have to raise their communicative competencies in using EPVs correctly in writing and speaking English.

6. Recommendations

Below are some required recommendations to be followed in learning and teaching EPVs that help overcome the challenges confront EFL learners and improve the quality of learning English as a foreign language.

- 1- Raising EFL learners' awareness of the importance and the proper use of English PVs while communicating in English through motivating and training English learners to understand their meanings and learn them by heart within the context of their uses.
- 2- Treating English PVs as chunks; multi word forms having single meanings interpreted literally or non-literally by EFL learners depending on their syntactic, contextual, and collocational characteristics.
- 3- Training EFL learners to contextualize English PVs by using them in all types of written and spoken texts, formally and informally, drawing their attention to the righteous use in writing or speech, the syntactic constructions of phrasal verbs, and the words PVs tend to attach with.
- 4- Helping EFL learners to deal with PVs properly as they crop up in spoken and written texts rather than only memorizing the most commonly used in their speech or writings.

5- Drawing EFL learners' attention while learning EPVs to the existence or non-existence of these verbs, or whether they have similar combinations in their mother tongues by devoting more time to learn these verbs, and raising their awareness to the syntactic, semantic and stylistic differences between English and their mother tongues.

6- The issue of teaching/learning EPVs should be included in the educational systems when designing curriculum starting from the earlier stages of EFL teaching and learning through a course test, translating assignments, field work (inviting guest lecturers, interviewing native or foreign speakers), and special educational programs.

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