

**Acquisition of Some Selected Phrasal Verbs  
by English Major Undergraduates at  
Yarmouk University in Jordan**

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## **Acquisition Of Some Selected Phrasal Verbs By English Major Undergraduates at Yarmouk University in Jordan**

### **Abstract**

This study aimed at identifying the errors that English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University make in the acquisition of some selected English phrasal verbs. Specifically, the study attempted to answer the following questions:

1.What are the levels of acquisition of the English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in the selected phrasal verbs?

2.What are the types of errors made by the English major undergraduates when using the selected phrasal verbs?

3.What are the causes of errors that English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University make when using the selected English phrasal verbs?

4.Are there any significant differences in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to academic level (year)?

5.Are there any significant differences in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to gender?

The research sample consisted of 120 English major undergraduates, (87) female and (33) male students. A forty-item acquisition test developed by the researcher was designed to assess the students' acquisition of the selected phrasal verbs in four related areas: semantics, structure, collocations and phonology.

The results indicated that (67.5%) of the responses were above (50%) whereas (32.5%) were below (50%). The students did best in the area of structures with a mean of (78.3%).

Moreover, the results indicated that the respondents encounter difficulties and problems in the acquisition of semantic and collocational features of phrasal verbs.

Results related to the fourth question indicated that there were significant differences at the (0.05) level in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs in favor of the fourth and third year students on semantics and collocations. Results also indicated there were significant statistical differences on the structure section in favor of the fourth-year students. However, results related to the fifth question indicated no significant statistical differences at (0.05) level between English major students due to gender.

The researcher concluded her study with some recommendations.

## الملخص

اكتساب طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية للأفعال الاصطلاحية (المركبة)

في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك في الأردن

إعداد

آيات خالد القضاة

هدفت هذه الدراسة إلى تحري أسباب الأخطاء والصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك في اكتساب بعض الأفعال الاصطلاحية (المركبة) المختارة. وبشكل محدد، فقد حاولت الدراسة الإجابة على الأسئلة الآتية:

١. ما نوع الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك عند استخدامهم للأفعال الاصطلاحية؟

٢. ما مستويات اكتساب طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك للأفعال الاصطلاحية؟

٣. ما أسباب الأخطاء والصعوبات التي تواجه طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك في اكتساب بعض الأفعال الاصطلاحية (المركبة) المختارة.

٤. هل هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اكتساب الأفعال الاصطلاحية (المركبة) المختارة بين طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك تعزى للمستوى الأكاديمي (مستوى السنة)؟

٥. هل هناك فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اكتساب الأفعال الاصطلاحية (المركبة) المختارة بين طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس في جامعة اليرموك تعزى للجنس (ذكر، أنثى)؟

تكونت عينة البحث من مائة وعشرين طالباً وطالبة في تخصص اللغة الإنجليزية في مرحلة البكالوريوس؟ (٨٧) طالبة للإناث، و (٣٣) طالباً من الذكور.

وقد طورت الباحثة أداة مكونة من أربعين فقرة لجمع المعلومات لتقويم كفاية الطلبة في أربعة مجالات وهي: المعاني، التراكيب، التلازم اللفظي، والصوتيات.

وقد أسفرت نتائج الدراسة عن (٦٧.٥%) من إجابات الطلبة كانت فوق (٥٠%) بينما كان (٣٢.٥%) من إجابات الطلبة دون (٥٠%). وكانت أفضل نتيجة للطلبة في مجال التراكيب من بين كافة المجالات بمتوسط (٧٨.٣).

أما النتائج المتعلقة بالسؤال الثاني فقد أظهرت وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية في اكتساب

الأفعال الاصطلاحية بين طلبة اللغة الإنجليزية تعزى لمتغير المستوى الأكاديمي (مستوى السنة) ولصالح السنة الرابعة والسنة الثالثة عند مستوى (٠.٠٥) في مجالي المعاني والتلازم اللفظي. كما أشارت النتائج

إلى وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية لصالح السنة الرابعة عند مستوى (٠.٠٥) في مجال التراكيب. أما فيما يتعلق بالنتائج المتعلقة بالسؤال الثالث فقد أظهرت عدم وجود فروق ذات دلالة إحصائية بين الطلبة في

اكتساب الأفعال تعزى لمتغير الجنس عند مستوى (٠.٠٥).

وقد أوصت الباحثة في ختام رسالتها بمجموعة من التوصيات.

## Introduction

A phrasal verb is made up of a verb and one or two or three particles which together function as a single verb. The particle may be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can act as either an adverb or a preposition (Stephens, 2002).

Mortimer (1972) states that "The English language has hundreds of two- part verbs such as **bring up**, **carry on** and **put up**. These are easy enough to understand when the meaning of the whole two- part verb is equal to the meaning of the sum of its two parts". However, he concedes: "But in many cases, knowing the meaning of the parts does not help us to know the meaning of the whole". Thus, to add the meaning of *bring* to the meaning of *up* will not help us to understand the meaning of **bring up** in the expression: He **brought up** a point. Nor will it help us to understand **bring up** in the expression:

*She brought up a family (p. iii).*

There can be no doubt that phrasal verbs have received a considerable amount of attention in recent years. Cornell (1985) points out that phrasal verbs have been "discovered" as an important component in EFL curricula. The interest in phrasal verbs is clearly reflected in modern dictionaries, especially those which list phrasal verbs separately in their own right and give them separate entries. For example, they give **put up** a separate entry rather than list it under **put**. Besides, special dictionaries have been designed exclusively for phrasal verbs.

The importance of phrasal verbs is often expressed in quantitative terms. Cornell (1985) points out that there are at least 700 phrasal verbs in ordinary, everyday use in English, 3000 established phrasal verbs, and hundreds of two-part verbs. Nevertheless, large numbers of phrasal verbs are non-idiomatic in nature, in the sense that their meanings are easily deduced from the verb element. A high proficiency in using phrasal verbs indicates a good foreign learner. In this respect, Cornell (1985) states:

*"The plain fact that what distinguishes the writing and, above all, the speech of a good foreign student from those of an Englishman is that what an Englishman writes or says is full of these expressions (phrasal verbs), whereas most foreigners are frightened of them, carefully avoid them, and what sounds stilted should be the phrasal verbs, not foreigners in consequence. Foreign students who enjoy being flattered on their English can best achieve this by correctly using masses of these component verbs". (p. 270).*

EFL students usually encounter major semantic, structural, collocational and phonological problems in using phrasal verbs. Most foreign learners avoid using them because of their idiomaticness. Cornell (1985) focused on the semantic and collocational problems that arise with phrasal verbs but he overlooked the problem of structure.

Some grammarians, such as Kolln et.al (1998) take the view that phrasal verbs comprise only those combinations that form an idiom, i. e., a phrase whose meaning cannot be predicted from the meaning of its

parts. Nevertheless, Hall (2002) notes that phrasal verbs are used in three ways:

1. To describe an action literally, for example: *He went out of the room.*

The majority of phrasal verbs are used in this way.

2. To intensify or emphasize an action, for example:

*It's been pouring down all day.*

3. As verbs with a special meaning, for example:

*Her daughter was run over while playing in the street.*

On the other hand, like normal verbs, phrasal verbs may be:

1. transitive, as in: *She looked after the baby.*
2. intransitive as in: *When they went away, she got up.*

Whether used literally or figuratively, phrasal verbs are acquired early by native speakers, but usually late by foreign learners because their grammar is difficult and their meaning cannot in many cases be deduced from the meanings of the separate words. Their use is idiomatic or figurative (Kaminska, 2001). Furthermore, some phrasal verbs have a multitude of different meanings depending on the context. For instance, the American Heritage Dictionary cites seventeen different meanings of the phrasal verb **pick up**.

To conclude, EFL students, including Jordanian students, encounter a major difficulty in using the English verbs idiomatically.

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This study is an attempt to assess the acquisition of the English language undergraduate students at Yarmouk University of some selected English phrasal verbs. After surveying the available references at Yarmouk University library and the Internet websites, the present researcher found that the amount of literature on the acquisition of phrasal verbs by FL learners is scanty. Hence, this study is intended to investigate the problems encountered by Jordanian English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in the acquisition of phrasal verbs.

#### **Definition of Terms.**

**Error Analysis:** It is an approach to understanding second language acquisition (SLA) which consists of compiling a corpus of L2 learner deviations from the target second language norms-the 'errors' learners make-classifying these errors by type and hypothesizing possible sources for the error. (Hijjawi, 1987)

**EFL** : English as a foreign language. This term is used when English is taught in a country, like Jordan, where it is not used officially or as a medium of communication.

**L1** : First language or mother tongue of the learner (Standard Arabic is the first language of the students in this study).

**L2** : The foreign language that is taught at schools and universities in Jordan. In this study, it is English.



**Interference or negative transfer:** "The use of elements from one language while speaking another and may be found at the level of pronunciation, syntax, morphology, vocabulary and meaning". (Richards, 1974, p. 36). e.g., "I read two **O'clocks** everyday" (hours). This error may be committed by Arab learners of English because of L1 interference, as **O'clock** and **hour** are rendered by one lexeme in Arabic/saa'ah/.

**Overgeneralization:** Errors caused by extension of target language rules to areas where they do not apply.

**Idiom:** An idiom is a conventionalized expression whose meaning can not be determined from the meaning of its parts. For example, the idiomatic meaning of "*I was pulling your leg*" means "*I was teasing you*".

**Ignorance of the grammatical rules:** "These errors refer to the students' inability to recognize rule restrictions on usages and formations." (Richards, 1974: 175).

**Incomplete acquisition of the target language:** This type of errors includes derivative deviation and word coinage errors in the substitution category.

Example: *It is so easy for a horseman to get above his horse.*

The right sentence is as follows: *It is so easy for a horseman to get on his horse.*

### **Statement of the Problem**

Research (e. g., Bolinger; 1971; Cornell, 1985; McArthur, 1989; McArthur, 1992; Kharma and Hajjaj, 1989; Crystal, 1995; Kubota, 1997; Thrush, 2001; Hall 2002; Hourany, 2002) has shown that phrasal verbs are often difficult to master by students of English as a second/ foreign language, both at the receptive and productive levels. It is assumed that both the syntactic and semantic complexities of such verbs underlie that learning difficulty. It is also hypothesized that L1 has a role in the learning process. It is also the experience of the present researcher that Arab learners of English, even at the university level encounter difficulty in understanding and using phrasal verbs. Therefore, this study is an attempt to investigate the difficulties encountered by English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in the acquisition of some selected English phrasal verbs in four areas, including semantics, structures, collocations and phonology. To the best knowledge of the researcher, no study has been conducted before on the acquisition of this linguistic category by English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in particular or at Jordanian universities at large.

### **Purpose of the Study.**

The present study investigates the acquisitional level of some English phrasal verbs by the English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University through an analytical, descriptive and interpretive approach to their errors in this linguistic phenomenon. It thus specifically attempts to answer the following questions:

1. What are the levels of acquisition of the English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in the selected phrasal verbs?
2. What are the types of errors made by the English major undergraduates when using the selected phrasal verbs?
3. What are the causes of errors that English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University make when using the selected English phrasal verbs?
4. Are there any significant differences at (0.05) level in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to academic level?
5. Are there any significant differences at (0.05) level in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to gender?

**Significance of the Study:**

This study investigates the grammatical, semantic and phonological problems encountered by English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in Jordan in the use of the selected English phrasal verbs. It is hoped that the study will give insights to Jordanian English language teachers in the use of phrasal verbs, to focus on them in the learners' linguistic input and instruction at both school and college.

It is also hoped that the findings of the study will have a bearing on curriculum design and development. Besides, the importance of this study lies in the fact that it sheds light on a neglected area of language acquisition which is "phrasal verbs". It, thus may encourage researchers to conduct further research on the different aspects of phrasal verbs acquisition to provide foreign learners and teachers of English language with useful hints and recommendations. Furthermore, the significance of this study stems from the fact that to the best knowledge of the researcher no similar study on phrasal verbs acquisition has been conducted on similar target subjects in Jordan.

## Review of the Related Literature

Learning phrasal verbs is not an easy task. There is a paucity in research on the acquisition of phrasal verbs. As explicated above, the constituent features of phrasal verbs cause a difficulty for the EFL learner.

Heaton (1965) pointed out that prepositions and adverbial particles cause more difficulty to many overseas students than any other aspect of the English language. The choice of a preposition or a particle following a certain verb, noun, adjective or adverb can be determined only after constant practice. An important aspect of the subject is illustrated by the phrasal verb in which an adverbial particle combines with a verb to form a collocation producing a new meaning.

Back in the 18<sup>th</sup> century, the linguist Samuel Johnson predicted that phrasal verbs would cause problems to ESL learners. McArthur (1989) quotes Johnson in 1755 saying: "There is another kind of

composition more frequent than perhaps any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty (p. 38). In this century, Johnson's 'kind of composition' has been called a **verb phrase, a compound verb, a two-part** (and sometimes **three-part verb**), and a **phrasal verb**. However, it seems that the winning term is **phrasal verbs**. It seems that Johnson's prediction came true, and what he said about phrasal verbs is still true, except that nowadays phrasal verbs stand out more because there are even more of them about in the 20th century than in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. (McArther, 1989)

Phrasal verbs can be viewed as lexical collocations. (Shalom, 1999). Collocation may be understood as the way in which words typically occur with each other. In this line, Hijjawi (1987) conducted a study on the acquisition of collocational terms by English major students at Yarmouk University. The results indicated that students' errors in collocations were due to interference from the native language, unfamiliarity with idiom structure, and overgeneralization. There were no differences in the occurrence of errors due to the level of study, but gender variable was significant in favor of the male students.

Baker (1982) categorizes the EFL learners' difficulty with phrasal verbs in four areas:

1. semantics- understanding what the expression means,
2. structure- knowing what patterns the expression can follow,
3. phonology- producing correct, natural stress, and

4. collocation- knowing with which particular groups of words the expressions can be used.

One of the serious difficulties encountered by the foreign learners of English is the position of the second element of a two- word verb in relation to the object pronoun in a given sentence as Taha (1972) pointed out. For instance, in English we say:

*a. We can roll up our sleeves. b. We can roll them up.*

But we do not say: *We can roll up them.*

Besides many EFL learners do not distinguish between (verb + preposition) and (verb + adverb) phrasal verbs. It is not always easy for EFL learners to distinguish a particle from a preposition.

Turton and Manser (1985) say that the structure of English language causes serious problems for non- native speakers particularly in the colloquial idiomatic use of verbs followed by prepositions or particles i. e; the phrasal verbs.

Cornell (1985) conducted a study to test the students' knowledge of selected idiomatic phrasal verbs at a German University and discussed the acquisition of phrasal verbs by learners of English as a second language and examined problems of selection, semantics and usage restrictions of phrasal verbs. He found that even advanced learners have difficulty with phrasal verbs. The study revealed a widespread ignorance of the phrasal verbs tested. He concluded that the learning of phrasal verbs at school and university is generally not successful. Confusion between phrasal verbs is frequent. He found that there are semantic and

collocational problems that arise with phrasal verbs and their grammatical peculiarities.

Dagut and Laufer (1985) tried to show that Hebrew learners of English avoid English phrasal verbs such as **let down** and **mix up**, preferring instead one-word verbs **disappoint** and **confuse**, because phrasal verbs do not exist in Hebrew.

Jayousi (1986) conducted a study to compare the effect of the instructional television and conventional classroom instruction on the achievement of the Jordanian third secondary literary students in the acquisition of English conditional sentences and phrasal verbs. The results indicated that there was a statistically significant difference in the acquisition of conditional sentences and phrasal verbs due to the method of instruction in favor of the instructional television. It showed no significant differences due to gender or to the interaction between the method of instruction and gender variables.

Hulsfijn and Marchena (1989) studied learning of phrasal verbs by Dutch learners of English as a second language. The results show that, as expected, Dutch learners of English do not avoid phrasal verbs categorically. However, they seem to avoid those idiomatic phrasal verbs that they perceive as too Dutch- like (lack of contrast between the first and second language). Furthermore, they exhibit a tendency to adopt a play-it- safe strategy, preferring one word verbs with general, multi-purpose meanings over phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic, meanings.

Khurma and Hajaj (1989) in their study surveyed a number of the English courses used in several Arab countries and made a list of some very common phrasal verbs and verb collocations that cause difficulty for Arab learners of English. They suggested that EFL teachers should make their own lists of such phrasal verbs that occur in the textbooks, in oral discussions, dialogues, etc. which the students have special difficulty with, and try to deal with them in effective ways.

Kubota (1997) conducted a study on the instructional effects of positive and negative evidence on prepositional phrasal verbs. He investigated the kind of input that is effective in enabling Japanese college-level students of English to formulate grammar, specifically prepositional and phrasal verbs. He administered a grammaticality judgment test and a translation test to 131 Japanese university students, who were divided into three treatment groups and one control group. The treatment groups were taught these verbs by different methods:

1. providing positive evidence (grammatically correct examples).
2. providing examples of both grammatical and ungrammatical forms (positive and negative evidence).
3. Providing individualized error correction to each student.

Subjects were then tested immediately after the treatment, one month later and one year after treatment. Results indicated that the second treatment, which was over one month was more beneficial than



the period of a year. However, provision of positive evidence did not have a significant effect on the grammatical knowledge and it had only an immediate effect on translation. In addition, Kubota found that it was easier to make a correct grammaticality judgment on phrasal verbs with the object pronoun **it** than with object lexical words and phrases.

Hourany (2002) conducted a study to investigate the difficulties concerning phrasal verbs which students of translation may face when translating from English into Arabic. The population of the study consisted of the M. A. level students of translation at Yarmouk University and at the University of Jordan. The sample consisted of forty students. The results show that the subjects have a low standard of competence and performance regarding understanding and translating phrasal verbs into Arabic. He interprets this low achievement of the phrasal verbs due to some syntactic and semantic features such as transitivity, separability, objects used and degree of idiomaticity.

To conclude, review of the related literature and the previous studies shows that syntactic and semantic features of the English phrasal verbs form a strong source of difficulty for FL learners. Moreover, no study has been conducted locally so far about the causes of the difficulty that face English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in the acquisition of phrasal verbs in areas of semantics, structure, collocations and phonology. It seems there is a gap in local research in this area; hence comes the significance of conducting this study. Hopefully, this study is an attempt to partially fill this gap.

## **Methodology**

### **Population of the study:**

The population of this study consisted of all English major undergraduates in the English Department at Yarmouk University during the second semester in the academic year 2002/2003. The whole population is (1200) students, (300) males and (900) females.

**Table (1)**

Distribution of the Population According to Gender

Gender*	Number	Percentage
Male	300	25%
Female	900	75%
Total	1200	100%

\*This information was obtained from the Department of Admission and Registration at Yarmouk University.

### **Sample of the study:**

The research sample consisted of 120 English major undergraduate students, (87) female and (33) male students, about (10%) of the whole population, a percentage that seems satisfactory for the purpose of this study. Table (2) shows the distribution of the sample according to academic level and gender.

**Table (2)**

Distribution of the Sample According to Academic Level and Gender

Academic Level	Male		Female	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
2nd year	8	24.2%	32	36.8%
3rd year	10	30.3%	30	34.5%
4th year	15	45.5%	25	28.7%
Total	33	100%	87	100%

The research sample was randomly chosen from the second, third, and fourth year-levels. Thus there were three independent variables in terms of academic level, viz: 2nd year, 3rd year, 4th year.

### **Instrument**

The research instrument for collecting data was a grammaticality judgement test designed by the researcher to test English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University in the use of some selected English phrasal verbs. The test was designed to assess the students' proficiency of phrasal verbs in four areas: semantics, structure, collocations, and phonology (stress) respectively. The test itself consisted of forty contextualized phrasal verbs (cf. Appendix1) which were drawn from the students' English curricular courses. The 40-test items covered four areas: viz, semantic (1-11), structural (12-24), collocational (25-35), and phonological (36-40), aspects of the selected phrasal verbs (see Appendix1).

Each item in the semantic area was followed by four options. The respondent had to choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb from the options provided in each item.

**Example: (item number 3 in Appendix1)**

The rebels laid down their arms though their fate was certain.

- |                       |                     |
|-----------------------|---------------------|
| a. sold               | c. stopped fighting |
| b. continued to fight | d. hid              |

Each item in the structure area was followed by two options. The respondent had to choose the proper structure from the two options provided in each item.

**Example: (item number 13 in Appendix1)**

- a. She looks them after. b. She looks after them.

As for the collocational area, the respondent had to provide the right verb- complement from a four alternative list of choices which may best give the meaning of the underlined verb in each item.

**Example: (item number 26 in Appendix1)**

My cousin was brought \_\_\_\_\_ on my grandfather's farm near our village

cared for until fully grown

- a. up            c. out            b. about            d. by

In the last part of the test the phonology area, the respondent was asked to select the correct position of the stress from three options provided for each item.

**Example: (item number 36 in Appendix1)**

- a. What time did the areoplane 'take off?
- b. What time did the aeroplane take 'off?
- c. What time did the aeroplane 'take 'off?

**Validity**

To ensure face and construct validity of the test, the researcher distributed it to five university professors from the English Department, College of Education at Yarmouk University and English Department at Al al-Bayt University to provide their comments and recommendations. The referees' recommendations were. Accordingly, the test was modified; some of the items were deleted, and the final total number of the test items was reduced to forty.

**Reliability**

Students' responses on the test were computed and Cronbach alpha reliability coefficient was calculated. The calculated reliability coefficient was (0.73) which indicates a good level of internal consistency of the test items.

**Administration and Scoring of the Test**

The researcher obtained permission from the professors of English language and literature to administer the test to English major undergraduate students during their lectures at Yarmouk University. The test items were forty. The correct answer was given one score where as the incorrect answer was given zero score.

### **Statistical Treatment**

The collected data of the students' responses were first computed and analyzed by using SPSS program. The following statistical procedures were used to find answers to the questions of the study:

1. Percentages, mean scores, standard deviations, and number of correct and incorrect responses were calculated to answer the first and the second questions.
2. To answer the fourth and the fifth questions, analysis of variance and univariate F-tests were used.
3. Error Analysis technique was used to identify and classify errors. The test was analyzed quantitatively.

Since the correct answer was given one score and the incorrect answer was given zero score, the scores ranged between zero and 40.

### **Results**

#### **Acquisition Levels of Students in the Selected Phrasal Verbs**

To assess the students' overall proficiency in the use of the selected phrasal verbs, percentages of the students' correct and incorrect responses on each phrasal verb were calculated. If the percentage of the correct responses on a phrasal verb is (50%) or above, it is considered well acquired or the students have achieved an acceptable acquisitional level of it. If the percentage of the correct responses on the phrasal verb is below (50%), it is considered as not yet acquired or that the students have not achieved an acceptable level of proficiency in it, based on the

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fact that (50%) is the 'pass' grade for the undergraduates at Yarmouk University.

Table (3) shows the number of correct and incorrect responses on each of the selected phrasal verbs.

**Table(3)**  
Students' Responses (Acquisition Level) on the Selected Phrasal Verbs  
(N= 120)

Item No	Correct Responses	Percentage	Incorrect Responses	Percentage
1	15	12.5%	105	87.5%
2	57	47.5%	63	52.5%
3	59	49.2%	61	50.8%
4	99	82.5%	21	17.5%
5	97	80.8%	23	19.2%
6	69	57.5%	51	42.5%
7	56	46.7%	64	53.3%
8	69	57.5%	51	42.5%
9	57	47.5%	63	52.5%
10	51	42.5%	69	57.5%
11	104	86.7%	16	13.3%
12	101	84.2%	19	15.8%
13	106	88.3%	14	11.7%
14	116	96.7%	4	3.3%
15	105	87.5%	15	12.5%
16	62	51.7%	58	48.3%

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Item No	Correct Responses	Percentage	Incorrect Responses	Percentage
17	114	95%	6	5%
18	110	91.7%	10	12%
19	99	82.5%	21	17.5%
20	68	56.7%	52	43.3%
21	86	71.7%	34	28.3%
22	69	57.5%	51	42.5%
23	97	80.8%	23	19.2%
24	89	74.2%	31	25.8%
25	96	80%	24	20%
26	68	56.7%	52	43.3%
27	61	50.8%	59	49.2%
28	65	54.2%	55	45.8%
29	58	48.3%	62	51.7%
30	14	11.7%	106	88.3%
31	89	74.2%	31	25.8%
32	66	55%	54	45%
33	77	64.2%	43	35.8%
34	60	50%	60	50%
35	80	66.7%	40	33.3%
36	55	45.8%	65	54.2%
37	38	31.7%	82	68.3%
38	43	35.8%	77	64.2%
39	40	33.3%	80	66.7%
40	44	36.7%	76	63.3%



How is the percentage of correct responses calculated on each phrasal verb?

The number of correct responses is divided by the total number of responses on each phrasal verb. The result is multiplied by (100%).  
Example:

The number of correct responses on a phrasal verb is (90) for instance. The total number of responses on each phrasal verb is (120) in this study. Then the result will be =  $\frac{90}{120} \times 100\% = 75\%$ .

Table (4) presents distribution of means and standard deviations of the correct responses (acquisition levels) in the four areas of the phrasal verbs.

**Table(4)**

Distribution of Means and Standard Deviations of the Acquisition Levels in the Four Areas of Phrasal Verbs (N= 120)

Area	Mean	Standard Deviation
Structures	78.3	13.08
Collocations	55.6	19.94
Semantics	55.5	17.75
Phonology (stress)	36.7	22.35

Table (5) shows the hierarchy of percentages of students' acquisition levels on the four areas of the selected phrasal verbs according to the academic level.

**Table(5)**

Hierarchy of Percentages of Students' Acquisitional Levels in The Four Areas of The Selected Phrasal Verbs According To Academic Level (N= 40)

Area	2nd- year level	3rd- year level	4th- year level
Structures	72.9%	77.7%	87.4%
Collocations	49.5%	53%	64%
Semantics	44.3%	62.3%	62%
Phonology (stress)	33%	38%	34%

Table (6,7,8,9) show the students' acquisition levels in the semantic structural, collocational and Phonological areas according to the academic level perceptively.

**Table (6)**

Students' Acquisition Levels on the Semantic Items According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%
11	33	82.5	11	35	87.5	4	37	92.5
4	28	70	5	34	85	5	36	90
5	27	67.5	4	34	85	11	36	90
6	25	62.5	8	22	55	8	30	75
3	19	47.5	7	19	47.5	6	25	62.5
9	18	45	6	19	47.5	2	25	62.5
8	17	42.5	10	18	45	3	23	57.5
2	17	42.5	9	17	42.5	9	22	55

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2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%
7	16	40	3	17	42.5	7	21	52.5
10	14	35	2	15	37.5	10	19	47.5
1	4	10	1	13	7.5	1	8	20

**Table (7)**  
**Students' Acquisition Levels in the Structural Items**  
**According to the Academic Level (N=40)**

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%
14	37	92.5	17	40	100	14	40	100
13	37	92.5	14	39	97.5	19	39	97.5
18	37	92.5	18	36	90	17	39	97.5
15	36	90	23	35	87.5	18	37	92.5
12	35	87.5	14	34	85	12	36	90
17	35	87.5	13	33	82.5	13	36	90
19	31	77.5	24	30	75	15	35	87.5
24	28	70	12	30	75	23	35	87.5
23	27	67.5	19	29	72.5	21	34	85
21	25	62.5	21	27	67.5	24	31	77.5
20	19	47.5	22	26	65	16	26	65
22	18	45	20	23	57.5	20	26	65
16	14	35	16	22	55	22	25	62.5

**Table (8)**

Students' Acquisition Levels in the Collocational Items  
According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%
25	25	62.5	25	34	85	25	37	92.5
31	25	62.5	35	32	80	31	33	82.5
33	22	55	31	31	77.5	26	28	70
35	21	52.5	33	27	67.5	33	28	70
34	17	42.5	28	25	62.5	32	27	67.5
28	16	40	27	25	62.5	35	27	67.5
32	16	40	26	25	62.5	28	24	60
26	15	37.5	34	24	60	29	22	55
27	15	37.5	32	23	57.5	27	21	52.5
29	13	32.5	29	23	57.5	34	19	47.5
30	2	5	30	5	12.5	30	7	17.5

**Table (9)**

Students' Acquisition Levels in the Phonological Items  
According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%	Item No	No of Correct Responses	%
36	22	55	38	19	47.5	36	20	50
40	14	35	39	17	42.5	40	16	40
37	14	35	40	14	35	38	11	27.5
38	13	33.3	37	13	32.5	37	11	27.5
39	13	33.3	36	13	32.5	39	10	25

#### 4.2. Errors Committed by Students in the Four Major Areas of the English Phrasal Verbs

To detect errors committed by students in phonological, semantic, collocational and structural areas, percentages of the students' incorrect responses on each phrasal verb were calculated (see table 3).

Tables (10-15) shows percentages of incorrect responses in the four areas of phrasal verbs.

**Table (10)**

Percentages of Errors Committed by All Students in the Four Areas of Phrasal Verbs (N= 120).

Area	Percentage of Errors
Phonology	63.3%
Semantics	54.5%
Collocations	54.4%
Structures	21.7%

**Table (11)**

Percentages of Errors Committed by Students in the Four Areas of Phrasal Verbs According to the Academic Level (N= 40)

Area	2nd- Year Level	3rd- Year Level	4th Year Level
Phonology	67%	62%	66%
Semantics	51.5%	47%	36%
Collocations	46.7%	37.7%	38%
Structures	27.1%	22.3%	12.6%

**Table (12)**

Percentages of Errors Committed by Students in the Phonological Items According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
39	27	67.5	36	27	67.5	39	30	75
38	27	67.5	37	27	67.5	37	29	72.5
40	26	65	40	26	65	38	29	72.5
37	26	65	39	23	57.5	40	24	60
36	18	45	38	21	52.5	36	20	50

**Table (13)**

Percentages of Errors Committed by Students in the Semantic Items According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No.	No of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
1	36	90	1	37	92.5	1	32	80
10	26	65	2	25	62.5	10	21	52.5
7	24	60	3	23	57.5	7	19	47.5
2	23	57.5	9	23	57.5	9	18	45
8	23	57.5	10	22	55	3	17	42.5
9	22	55	6	21	52.5	2	15	37.5
3	21	52.5	7	21	52.5	6	15	37.5
6	15	37.5	8	18	45	8	10	25
5	13	32.5	4	6	15	11	4	10
4	12	30	5	6	15	5	4	10
11	7	17.5	11	5	12.5	4	3	7.5

**Table (14)**  
Percentages of Errors Committed by Students in the Collocational  
Items According to the Academic Level (N=40)

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No.	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
30	38	95	30	35	87.5	30	33	82.5
29	27	67.5	29	17	42.5	34	21	52.5
27	25	62.5	32	17	42.5	27	19	47.5
26	25	62.5	34	16	40	29	18	45
28	24	60	26	15	37.5	28	16	40
34	23	57.5	27	15	37.5	25	13	32.5
35	19	47.5	28	15	37.5	32	13	32.5
33	18	45	33	13	32.5	33	12	30
32	16	40	31	9	22.5	26	12	30
31	15	37.5	35	8	20	31	7	17.5
25	15	37.5	25	6	15	25	3	7.5

**Table (15)**  
 Percentages of Errors Committed by Students in the Structural  
 Items According to the Academic Levels (N=40).

2nd-Year Level			3rd-Year Level			4th-Year Level		
Item No	No of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No	No of Incorrect Responses	%	Item No	No of Incorrect Responses	%
16	26	65	16	18	45	22	15	37.5
22	22	55	20	17	42.5	20	14	35
20	21	52.5	22	14	35	16	14	35
21	15	37.5	21	13	32.5	24	9	22.5
23	13	32.5	19	11	27.5	21	6	15
24	12	30	12	10	25	23	5	12.5
19	9	22.5	24	10	25	15	5	12.5
12	5	12.5	13	7	17.5	13	4	10
17	5	12.5	15	6	15	12	4	10
15	4	10	23	5	12.5	18	3	7.5
13	3	7.5	18	4	10	17	1	2.5
14	3	7.5	14	1	2.5	19	1	2.5
18	3	7.5	17	0	0	14	0	0



## Discussion and Recommendations

### Acquisition levels of the Students in the Selected Phrasal Verbs.

Table (3) shows students' acquisition levels of the selected phrasal verbs. It indicates that the students achieved an \* acceptable acquisition level on twenty-seven items out of the forty items of the test. In other words, (67.5%) of the students achieved the acceptable level of acquisition in the selected phrasal verbs.

### Acquisition Levels in the Structural Area of the Test:

Table (3) indicates that the students achieved an acceptable acquisition level in all phrasal verbs in the structural area of the test (items 12-24); and they achieved an acceptable acquisition level in five phrasal verbs in the semantic area (3, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11); in nine phrasal verbs on the collocational area (items 25-35). It also indicates that the students did not achieve an acceptable acquisition level on any of the phrasal verbs in the phonological area of the test (items 36-40).

Table (4) indicates that the students achieved the best acquisition level on the structural area of the test with a mean of (78.3).The researcher attributes this finding to the simple wording of the items in this area and to the familiarity of those items to the students. Besides, each item in the structural area included only two alternatives which made the choice easier for the subjects.

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\* The total number of correct responses = 27. The total number of the test items = 40. The total number of correct responses is divided by 40 (the total number of the test items). The result is 67.5%.

Table (5) indicates that the second year students achieved an acceptable level of acquisition only in the structural area, whereas the third and fourth years achieved an acceptable level of acquisition in three areas: structures, semantics, and collocations. The researcher attributes this difference in acquisition to the academic level, the higher the academic level, the better the acquisition level.

Table (5) also indicates that the level of acquisition of the fourth-year students (87.4%) was much higher than the levels, of the second-year students (72.9%) and third-year students (77.7%) in the structural area. Table (7) indicates that the second- year students acquired an acceptable level of acquisition on ten out of thirteen phrasal verbs in the structural area of the test; the third and the fourth-year students achieved an acceptable level of acquisition in all structural items. Table (3) indicates that the students achieved the best acquisition level (96.7%) on item (14). The researcher attributes this finding to students' awareness of the grammatical rule which says, "A three- word phrasal verb is obligatorily inseparable". (Heaton, 1965: 56).

Table (3) also indicates that the students achieved the lowest acceptable acquisition level in the structural area on item (16) where. (51.7%) of the students achieved this level. The researcher attributes this finding to students' unawareness of the grammatical rule which says, " when the object of the phrasal verb is a long one, the particle should not be separated." (Heaton, 1965: 56).

Table (7) indicates that 100% of the third-year students acquired an excellent acquisition level in item (17) of the structural area of the

test. The researcher attributes this finding to the simple wording of the item, the familiarity of the phrasal verb **look into** to the students, the limited number of options (only two options) on each item in this area, and students' awareness of the grammatical rule which says: "The lexical part of the verb (the part of the verb that carries the meaning) cannot be separated from the particle that accompanies it". (Heaton, 1965: 56).

Table (7) also indicates that all of the fourth-year students showed complete acquisition of item (14) in the structural area (100%). The researcher attributes this finding to the students' awareness of the grammatical rule which says: "when the object of the phrasal verb is a long one, the particle need not be separated from the verb". (Heaton, 1965: 56).

#### **Acquisition Levels in the Semantic Area of the Test:**

Table(3) indicates that the students acquired an acceptable acquisition level in five out of eleven phrasal verbs in the semantic area of the test, (items, 4, 5, 6, 8, and 11). The mean of acquisition on this level was (55.5) as indicated in table (4).

Table (3) also indicates that (86.7%) of the students achieved the best acquisition level on choosing **destroyed** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **blown up** (Item 11). The researcher attributes this finding to the phrasal verb **blown up** itself which is probably the most familiar phrasal verb among all the phrasal verbs in this area. Besides, the simple wording of the item and its context (The brigde was **blown up** in the war) were strong clues which probably helped the students to choose the proper response. The table also indicates that (12.5%) of the

students achieved the lowest acceptable acquisition level on choosing **bribe** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **buy off** (item 1). The researcher attributes this finding to the unfamiliarity of the phrasal verb **buy off** to the students, and to the opaque meaning it carries that cannot be predicted from its constituent parts.

Table (5) indicates that the second- year students' acquisition level of the semantic area of the test was unacceptable. It reached only (49.5%) as indicated in table (6) whereas the third and fourth- year levels acquired acceptable acquisition levels in semantic of the selected phrasal verbs (77.7%, 87.4%) respectively.

Table (6) indicates that the second and the third- year students acquired an acceptable acquisition level in four out of eleven phrasal verbs in the semantic area of the test; whereas the fourth- year students acquired an acceptable acquisition level in nine of the phrasal verbs in this area. The researcher attributes this finding to the amount of exposure to English learning which the fourth year students had at the university which gave them more opportunity to practice phrasal verbs and to be more familiar with them.

#### **Acquisition Levels in the Collocational Area of the Test:**

Table (3) indicates that the students acquired an acceptable acquisition level on nine out of eleven phrasal verbs in the collocational area of the test. Table (4) indicates that the overall mean of the acquisition level in this aspect is (55.6).

Furthermore, table (3) indicates that (80%) of the students acquired the best acquisition level on collocating **let** with **down** to give

the meaning of **disappointed** in item (25). The researcher attributes this finding to the familiarity of the phrasal verb **let down** to the students. Besides, the context of the item served as a clue to the students to deduce its meaning.

Table (3) also indicates that (11.7%) of the students acquired the lowest acquisition on collocating **called** with **in** to give the proper meaning **visited** of the phrasal verb **called in** in item (30). The researcher attributes this finding to the opacity of the phrasal verb **called in** to the students, and to the new meaning produced by this phrasal verb which cannot be deduced from its constituent parts.

Table (5) indicates that the second- year students did not show an acceptable acquisition level in the collocational area as a whole (49.5%). The same table indicates that the third and the fourth- year students showed a higher acquisition level. Their acquisition levels on this area were (53%) and (64%), respectively. This finding is attributed to the year-level of the students in favor of the higher year- level. It is expected that the third and the fourth- year students were exposed to phrasal verbs more through their learning process.

Table (8) indicates that the second- year students acquired an acceptable acquisition level in only four out of eleven items. Their acquisition level in this area was (49.5%) which is considered unsatisfactory.

The third and the fourth- year levels acquired a better acquisition level. The third- year students acquired an acceptable acquisition level in ten out of eleven phrasal verbs in this collocational area. What sounds

strange is that the fourth- year students acquired an acceptable acquisition level on only nine out of eleven phrasal verbs in this area i.e less than the 3rd year. The researcher attributes this finding to the possibly negative attitude of the fourth- year students towards the test.

**Acquisition Levels in the Phonological Area of the Test:**

Table (3) indicates that the students did not acquire an acceptable acquisition level in all the five phrasal verbs in the phonological area of the test. Table (4) indicates that the mean of the acquisition level in this aspect is (36.7) which means that the students showed the lowest acquisition level in this area. Table (5) indicates that the acquisition levels for the three academic levels were almost similar: (33%, 38%, 34% respectively). It is apparent that the degree of exposure to English at the university was ineffective in improving students' level in this phonological area. This can be attributed to insufficient exposure to the stress rules of the phrasal verbs or to poor training in them.

Table (3) indicates that (45.8%) of the students showed an acceptable acquisition level in stressing the particle when the phrasal verb stands alone at the end of the sentence as in item (36); (31.7%) of the students showed acceptable acquisition level in stressing the direct object of a phrasal verb when it is a noun as in item (37); (35.5%) of the students showed an acceptable acquisition level in stressing the particle when the phrasal verb is a three- word verb as in item (38); (33.3%) of the students showed an acceptable acquisition level in stressing the adverb when it follows the phrasal verb which stands at the end of a sentence as in item (39); and (36.7%) of the students showed an acceptable acquisition in stressing the particle when the direct object is a pronoun as in item (40).

### Discussion of Errors Committed by the Students in the Four Areas of the Selected Phrasal Verbs

#### Phonological Errors:

Table (10) indicates that the highest percentage of errors committed by students was in the phonology area. It was found that (63.3%) of the students made phonological errors (items 36-40). Table (3) indicates percentages of errors committed by students in these items: (54.2%, 68.3%, 64.2%, 66.7%, and 63.3% respectively). In this respect the following results were found:

- a. Table (3) shows that in item (36), about (54.2%) of the students committed errors by stressing the verb **take** or both the **verb** and the **particle** instead of stressing the particle only **off** when the phrasal verb stands alone at the end of the sentence.
- b. In item (37), about (68.3%) of the students committed errors by stressing the verb **turned** or the particle **off** instead of stressing the direct object of the phrasal verb **strawberries** as indicated in (table 3).
- c. In item (38) moreover, about (64.2%) of the students committed errors by stressing the verb **comes** or the preposition **with** instead of stressing the particle **up** in the three-word phrasal verb.
- d. In addition, in item (39), around (66.7%) of the students committed errors by stressing the particle **on** or the verb **got** instead of stressing the adverb **well** that follows the phrasal verb and stands at the end of the sentence.

- e. Finally, in item (40), more than half the students (63.6%) committed errors either by stressing the verb **turned** or the direct object **them** of the phrasal verb instead of stressing the particle **off**.

**Semantic Errors:**

In this area the following results were found:

- a. Table (3) shows that, (87.5%) of the students committed errors in item (1) and failed to choose **bribe** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **buy off**. Most students chose **deceive** or **escape** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **buy off**. Only (12.5%) of them chose the proper response. Whereas (50%) of them chose **deceive**, (29.2%) chose **escape**, and (8.3%) chose **support** (see Appendix 2).
- b. Also (52.5%) of the students committed errors in item (2) and failed to choose the proper meaning **retreated** for the phrasal verb **fell back**. Most of them chose **attacked back** or **surrendered**. While (25%) of them chose **attacked back**, (16.7%) chose **surrendered** and (10.8%) chose **got down on its back** (see Appendix 2).
- c. As for item (3), about 50.8% of the students committed errors in this item and failed to choose stopped fighting as the proper meaning of the phrasal **laid down**. Comparatively, (24.2%) of them chose **hid**, (17.5%) chose **continued fighting** and (9.1%) chose **sold** (see Appendix 2).
- d. Table (3) also shows that (17.5%) of the students committed errors in item (4) and failed to choose the proper response **understood** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **took his ideas in**.



- e. Besides, (19.2%) of the students committed errors in item (5) and failed to choose the proper response ring as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **go off**.
- f. Moreover, (42.5%) of the students committed errors in item (6) and failed to choose **anticipating with pleasure** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **looking forward to**.
- g. Still (53.3%) of the students committed errors in item (7) and failed to choose discover as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **find out**. Whereas (36.7%) of them chose **solve**, (10.8%) chose **guess** and (5.8%) of them chose **layout** (see Appendix 2).
- h. Additionally, (42.5%) of the students committed errors in item(8) and failed to choose **performed** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **carried out**.
- i. Also, (52.5%) of the students committed errors in item (9) and failed to choose **insult** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **put him down**. While (33.3%) of them chose **neglect**, (12.5%) chose **conceal** and (6.7%) chose **blame** (see Appendix 2).
- j. Also, (57.5%) of the students committed errors in item (10) and failed to choose **escape** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **get away**. About (41.7%) of them chose **come early**, (42.5%) chose **escape**; (9.2%) chose **get up** and (6.6%) chose **get around** (see Appendix 2).
- k. Furthermore, (13.3%) of the students committed errors in item (11) and failed to choose **destroyed** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **blown up**.

**Collocational Errors:**

In this area the following results were found:

- a. Table (3) indicates that (20%) of the students committed errors in item (25) and failed to collocate **down** (the right verb complement) with **let** to give the meaning of the word **disappointed**.
- b. Also, (43.3%) of the students committed errors in item (26) and failed to collocate **up** (the right verb complement) with **brought** to give the meaning of the words **cared for until fully grown**.
- c. Besides, (49.2%) of the students committed errors in item (27) and failed to collocate **out** (the right verb- complement) with **turn** to give the meaning of the word **empty**.
- d. In addition, (45.8%) of the students committed errors in item (28) and failed to collocate **out for** (the right verb- complement) with **look** to give the meaning of the words **watch for**.
- e. Also, (51.7%) of the students committed errors in item (29) and failed to collocate **up with** (the right verb- complement) with **caught** to give the meaning of the words **became level with**. While (20.8%) of them collocated **on with caught**; (16.7%) chose **in by**, and (14.2%) chose **up to** (see Appendix 2)
- f. About (88.3%) of the students committed errors in item (30) and failed to collocate **in** (the right verb- complement) with **called** to give the meaning of the word **visited**. Comparatively, (41.7%) chose **to**; (37.5%) chose **for** and (9.2%) chose **back** (see Appendix2)

- g. Table (3) also indicates that (25.8%) of the students committed errors in item (31) and failed to collocate **off** (the right verb- complement) with **call** to give the meaning of the word **cancel**.
- h. Additionally, (45%) of the students committed errors in item (32) and failed to collocate **up to** (the right verb- complement) with **looked** to give the meaning of the word **respected**.
- i. Furthermore, (35.8%) of the students committed errors in item (33) and failed to collocate **down** (the right verb- complement) with **broken** to give the meaning of the word **went out of order**.
- j. Also, (50%) of the students committed errors in item (34) and failed to collocate **away** (the right verb- complement) with **got** to give the meaning of the word **spread**.
- k. Table (3) also shows that (33.3%) of the students committed errors on item (35) and failed to collocate **on** (the right verb- complement) with **get** to give the meaning of the word **ride**.

**Structural Errors:**

In this area the following results were found:

- a. Table (3) shows that (15.8%) of the students committed errors in item (12) when they separated a three- word phrasal verb by choosing alternative (a) *I can't put his arrogant manner up with*, in the aforementioned item. This type of error also appears in items (14 and 24).

- b. Table (3) also shows that (11.7%) of the students committed errors in item (13) when they separated the part of the phrasal verb **look** that carries the meaning from the particle **after** that accompanies it as in alternative (b). *She looks them after*. This type of error also appears on items (17, 18 and 22).
- c. Moreover, (12.5%) of the students committed errors in item (15) when they chose alternative (a). *My friend has arranged to pick up me at 6 o'clock*. The error in this alternative is that the object comes after the particle.
- d. Table (3) shows that (48.3%) of the students committed errors in item (16) when they separated the long object of the phrasal verb **her extraordinary smart appearance** from the particle **in** as in alternative (b). *He was taken by her extra ordinary smart appearance in*. The same type of error also appears in items (20 and 21).
- e. Finally, (17.5%) of the students committed errors in item (19). They chose alternative (a) *-The show is over completely-* in which the adverb **completely** comes after the particle **over**.

### **Causes and Sources of the Errors Committed by the Students in the Selected Phrasal Verbs**

#### **A. Ignorance of the grammatical /phonological rule:**

- i. In item (36) about (54.2%) of the students stressed the verb **take** or both the **verb** and the **particle** instead of stressing the particle **off** only when the phrasal verb stands at the end of the a sentence.

The source of this type of error can be attributed to students' ignorance of the grammatical /phonological rule which says: "Within a sentence the stress is on the particle when the phrasal verb stands alone at the end of a sentence." (Seidl, 1990: 10)

ii. In item (37), around (68.3%) of the students stressed the verb **turned** or the particle **off** instead of stressing the direct object of the phrasal verb **strawberries**.

This phonological error may be caused by the students' ignorance of the grammatical rule which says: "The direct object of a phrasal verb is stressed when it is a noun." (Seidl, 1990: 26).

iii. In item (38) around (64.2%) of the students stressed the verb **comes** or the preposition **with** instead of stressing the particle **up** in a three- word verb.

The cause of this phonological error is probably the student's ignorance of the grammatical rule which says, "The particle is stressed when the phrasal verb is a three- word verb." (Seidl, 1990: 16/17)

iv. In item (39) quite a good percentage (66.7%) of the students stressed the particle **on** or the verb **got** instead of stressing the adverb **well** that follows the phrasal verb and stands at the end of the sentence.

The cause of this type of phonological error could be the students' ignorance of the grammatical/ phonological rule which says, "Within a sentence, the stress is on the adverb which stand at the end of a sentence." (Seidl, 1990: 11)

v. In item (40), about (63.3%) of the students stressed the verb **turned** or the direct object (the pronoun-**them**) of the phrasal verb instead of stressing the particle **off**.

The cause of this type of phonological error is perhaps attributed to the students' ignorance of the grammatical rule which says, "The stress is on the particle when the direct object is a pronoun." (Siedi, 1990: 25)

The previous findings are consistent with Baker, 1982; Cornell, (1985); and Hourany, (2002).

#### B. Idiomaticalness:

i. About (87.5%) of the students failed to choose **bribe** in item (1) as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **buy off** (see appendix 2 for the percentages of the choices of each alternative for this item).

The cause of this semantic error is attributed to idiomaticalness. Students failed to deduce the meaning of the phrasal verb from its constituent parts, as obviously, it is opaque.

ii. As for (2), about half of the students (52.5%) failed to choose **retreated** as the proper meaning of the phrasal verb **fell back** (see Appendix 2).

The cause of this semantic error is attributed to idiomaticalness. The phrasal verb produced a new meaning and as a result the students failed to predict it from its constituent parts.

This finding is consistent with Cornell's, (1985); Hijjawi's, (1987); Doushaq and Sawaf's, (1988); and Hourany's, (2002).

C. L1 Interference:

i. About (88.3%) of the students made errors in item (30) (see Table 3), by collocating **back**, or **to**, or **for** with **called**, instead of collocating the right verb complement **in** to give the meaning of **visited**.

This error might have been caused by L1 interference. Most students chose **called to** or **called for** as equivalent to colloquial Arabic nada 'ala نادى على which means **shouted at** (see Appendix 2).

L1 interference plays a role in L2 learning (see 2.1 above).

This finding is consistent with Hijjawi's, (1987); Doushaq and Sawaf's, (1988); Bdour's, (1989); Saleem's, (1991); and Zughoul's, (1991).

ii. As for item (28) a little less than half the students (45.8%) failed to collocate **out for** with the verb **look** to give the meaning of **watch for**. They chose **out on**, or **forward to** or **down on** influenced by their mother tongue. In colloquial Arabic **look out on** is used to mean **look out for**.

The cause of this error is likely to be L1 interference. This finding is consistent with Hijjawi's, (1987); Doushaq and Sawaf's, (1988); Bdour's, (1989); Saleem's, (1991); and Zughoul's, (1991).

D. Incomplete Acquisition of L2 rules:

i. In item (6), about (42.5%) of the students failed to choose **anticipating with pleasure** as the proper equivalent of **looking forward to**. The cause of this error is attributed to students' incomplete acquisition

of L2 lexical terms. There is a big difference between the system of Arabic (L1) and English (L2) in this regard.

ii. Likewise, (48.3%) of the students' committed errors in item (16) when they separated the verb **taken** from the particle **in** when the object is a long one.

The cause of this structural error may be attributed to the students' incomplete acquisition of the grammatical or structural system of L2.

c. As for items (13 and, 17), the students made errors when they separated the lexical part of the verb from the particle. The cause of this type of error is probably due to the students' incomplete acquisition of L2 structural system.

The previous findings are consistent with Hijjaway's, (1989); Zughoul's, (1991); Doushaq and Sawaf's, (2000); and Hourany's, (2002).

#### **Academic Level Effect:**

The fourth question of the study was:

*"Are there any significant differences at (0.05) in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to academic level (year)?"*

To answer this question a univariate F- Tests- of the academic level effect with (2.117) degrees of freedom was used to test the significance of the level effect. Table (16) below shows the results of this test.



**Table (16)**  
Univariate F- Tests of the Level Effect with (2.117)  
Degrees of Freedom

Area of the Test	Hypoth. SS	Error SS	Hypoth. Ms	Error Ms	F	Sig. of F.
Semantics	56.01667	397.57500	28.00833	3.39808	8.24241	0.000
Structures	45.41667	298.55000	22.20833	2.55171	8.89926	0.000
Collocations	124.71667	447.65000	62.35833	3.82607	16.29828	0.000
Phonology	1.06667	147.60000	0.53333	1.26154	0.42276	0.656

Results related to the fourth question, which are presented in table (16), indicate that there are significant differences in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University attributed to their academic level (year-level) in favor of the fourth-year and the third- year students in the semantic area of the test at (0.05) level. Results also indicate that there are significant differences in the acquisition level of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University attributed to their academic level in structure area of the test in favor of the fourth- year students at (0.05) level. Results also indicate that there are significant differences in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University attributed to their academic level in collocational area of the test in favor of the third and the fourth- year students at (0.05) level.

This result is logical and is consistent with reality. It is expected that the fourth year students acquisition of phrasal

verbs since they have spent more time studying English at the university more than the 2<sup>nd</sup> and third year students.

**Gender Effect:**

The fifth question of the study was:

*"Are there any significant differences at (0.05) level in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to gender?"* (see 1.3. above.)

To answer this question a univariate F- Tests- of the gender effect with (1.118) degrees of freedom was conducted to test the significance of the gender effect. Table (17) below shows the results of this test.

**Table (17)**

Univariate F- Tests of the Gender Effect with (1.118) Degrees of Freedom

Area of the Test	Hypoth. SS	Error SS	Hypoth. Ms	Error Ms	F	Sig. of F.
Semantics	0.00755	453.58412	0.00755	3.84393	0.00196	0.965
Structures	1.47973	342.48694	1.47973	20.90243	0.50982	0.477
Collocations	4.62048	567.44619	4.92048	4.80887	1.02321	0.314
Phonology	0.84639	147.82027	0.84639	1.25271	0.67565	0.413

Results related to the fifth question, which are presented in table (17), indicate that there are no significant differences in the acquisition of the selected English phrasal verbs between English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University due to gender variable at (0.05) level.

This finding is consistent with Jayousi (1986) but inconsistent with Hijawi (1987) who found out that gender variable was significant in favor of the male students.

**Recommendations:**

This study aimed at identifying the errors and difficulties that English major undergraduate students at Yarmouk University encounter in the learning process of some selected phrasal verbs and their possible causes. It also purports to highlight the effects of the academic level and gender variables on this learning process. The researcher presents the following recommendations in the light of the previous results of the study.

1. It is recommended that English Department at Yarmouk University should earnestly take care of this important linguistic phenomenon of phrasal verbs by providing more practice for English major undergraduates in the linguistic courses offered by the department. Pronunciation textbooks should be designed to help students speak correctly. Activities should include listening to conversations and informal English because phrasal verbs generally occur more frequently in the spoken than in the written language.

2. It is also recommended that textbooks should include the most important and most frequently used phrasal verbs for active mastery. Since the quantity of phrasal verbs is great, the mastery of phrasal verbs sounds an unrealistic goal for a foreign learner of English. However, students should be

exposed to as much input of phrasal verbs as possible. Follow-up activities which include exercises focusing on comprehension and production of phrasal verbs are recommendable.

3. The school curriculum should also stress the introduction of phrasal verbs before students come to the university.

4. Further research is recommended to be conducted on the effect of certain syntactic features of phrasal verbs such as (transitivity, intransitivity, separability, inseparability, transparency, and opacity) variables on the acquisition of phrasal verbs.

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## **Appendix (1)**

### **Questionnaire**

**Dear referee,**

Dr...

The researcher is studying the acquisition of some selected phrasal verbs by English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in Jordan. Your outstanding knowledge and experience in the field of teaching English at universities have encouraged me to ask you for refereeing this instrument.

Enclosed is a questionnaire, please advise whether the items represent the intended design of the research.

Please accept my sincere thanks and best wishes.

Item No	Area	Remarks
1, 3, 4, 7, 8, 15, 25, 26, 27, 31	transitive (optionally separable)	
9, 37, 40	transitive (obligatory separable)	
6, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 20, 21, 22, 24, 28, 29, 30, 32, 38	transitive (obligatory inseparable)	
19	intransitive (obligatory separable)	
2, 5, 10, 11, 23, 33 34, 36, 39	intransitive (obligatory inseparable)	
3, 7, 15, 20, 23, 24, 27, 28, 32, 33, 35, 38	transparent	
1, 2, 4, 5, 6, 8, 9, 11, 12, 13, 14, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 26, 28, 29, 30, 31, 32, 34, 36, 37, 39, 40	opaque	



**D.Ayat Khalid Al – Q udah**

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Dear students,

The researcher is studying the acquisition of some selected phrasal verbs by English major undergraduates at Yarmouk University in Jordan. I will be grateful to you if you respond to this questionnaire. Your responses shall be used only for scientific research purposes.

Thanks a lot for your cooperation

**Researcher:**

**Ayat Khalid Qudah**

Please tick the proper choice:

Year Level:

1st year     2nd year                       3rd year     4th year

Gender:

Male             Female

I. Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in each sentence (a, b, c, or d):

1. Sami is very cunning, but he could not buy the police off to get out of his involvement in the robbery.

- a. support                                      c. deceive                                      b. bribe  
d. escape

2. As soon as the enemy fell back, the patriots returned to their villages and towns.

- a. retreated                                      c. attacked back  
b. got down on its back                      d. surrendered

3. The rebels laid down their arms though their fate was certain.

- a. sold    c. stopped fighting  
b. continued to fight                      d. hid

4. The teacher was not sure that the students took his ideas in.

- a. wrote    c. included  
b. understood                                      d. approved

5. He set the alarm clock for 5 a. m. but it did not go off.

- a. ring    c. break off  
b. wind    d. go away

6. I have not seen my brother for three years; I am really looking forward to meeting him..



14. a. That man sets up for a doctor, but I think he has no qualifications.  
b. That man sets up a doctor for, but I think he has no qualifications.
15. a. My friend has arranged to pick up me at 6 o'clock.  
b. My friend has arranged to pick me up at 6 o'clock.
16. a. He was taken in by her extra ordinary smart appearance.  
b. He was taken by her extra ordinary smart appearance in.
17. a. She is looking the lost pen for.  
b. She is looking for the lost pen.
18. a. The police are looking the crime into.  
c. The police are looking into the crime.
19. a. The show is over completely.  
c. The show is completely over.
20. a. who is going to wash out these clothes that I wore last week?  
c. who is going to wash these clothes that I wore out last week?
21. a. The publishing house put hundreds of important English books out last year.  
b. The publishing house put out hundreds of important English books last year.
22. a. He did away with his old hat.  
b. He did with his old hat away.

**D.Ayat Khalid Al – Q udah**

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23. a. He is back now; let's go to see him.  
b. He is now back; let's go to see him.
24. a. Sami looked on Mary down.  
b. Sami looked down on Mary.

III. Provide the right verb-complement which may best give the meaning of the underlined word in each item:

25. The boss **let** her \_\_\_\_\_ when she asked for a raise.  
disappointed

- a. up            c. off            b. down            d. under

26. My cousin was **brought** \_\_\_\_\_ on my grandfather's farm near our village.

cared for until fully grown

- a. up            c. out            b. about            d. by

27. Checking for the theft, the police asked everyone on the bus to **turn** \_\_\_\_\_ their pockets and handbags.

empty

- a. back            c. off            b. in            d. out

28. "**Look** \_\_\_\_\_ \_\_\_\_\_ the child. We don't want to miss him.", the mother asked her daughter.

watch for

- a. out on            c. out for            b. forward to            d. down on

29. Although the student was absent for a term, he soon **caught** \_\_\_\_\_ the other students.

became level with

- a. in by      c. up to      b. up with      d. on with

30. My friend **called** \_\_\_\_\_ us when he passed by our street.

visited

- a. back      c. for      b. to      d. in

31. Because the war broke out, the young couple decided to **call** \_\_\_\_\_ the wedding.

cancel

- a. out      c. off      b. on      d. up

32. Every boy in the school **looked** \_\_\_\_\_ the headmaster. respected

- a. up to      c. back at      b. out for      d. about for

33. He could not make coffee because the coffee-machine had broken \_\_\_\_\_.

went out of order

- a. over      c. down      b. off      d. through

34. The news of his resignation soon **got** \_\_\_\_\_.

spread

- a. off      c. away      b. about      d. across

35. It is so easy for a horseman to **get** \_\_\_\_\_ his horse.

ride

- a. to            c. on                            b. at                            d. above

VI. Indicate the correct position of the stress in (a, b, or c) in each of the following:

36. a. What time did the aeroplane 'take off?    b. What time did the aeroplane take 'off?.

c. What time did the aeroplane 'take 'off?

37. a. What turned you 'off strawberries?

b. What 'turned you off strawberries?

c. What turned you off 'strawberries?

38. a. She usually 'comes up with the right answers.    b. She usually comes 'up with the right answers.

c. She usually comes up 'with the right answers.

39. a. Fuad and the new man got on 'well.

b. Fuad and the new man got 'on well.

c. Fuad and the new man 'got on well.

40. a. You used to like strawberries. What turned you 'off them?

b. You used to like strawberries. What 'turned you off them?

c. You used to like strawberries. What turned you off 'them?

**Appendix (2)**

The Phrasal Verb Items in Which Students Acquired Below (50%) in the Test

Item No.	Phrasal Verb Items and Alternatives	%
3	Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in each sentence (a, b, c, or d): The rebels <u>laid down</u> their arms though their fate was certain. a- sold b- continued to fight *c- stopped fighting d- hid	9.1% 17.5% 49.2% 24.2%
29	Provide the right verb- compliment which may best give the meaning of the underlined word in this item: Although the student was absent for a term, he soon caught _____ the other students. <u>became level with</u> a- in by * b- up with c- up to d- on with	16.7% 48.3% 14.2% 20.8%
2	Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in this sentence (a, b, c, or d): As soon as the enemy <u>fell back</u> , the patriots returned to their villages and towns. * a- retreated b- got down on its back c- attacked back d- surrendered	47.5% 10.8% 25% 16.7%

\* the correct response



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Item No.	Phrasal Verb Items and Alternatives	%
9	Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in this sentence (a, b, c, or d): Fuad was angry because his boss continued to <u>put him down</u> . a- neglect * b- insult c- blame d- conceal	33.3% 47.5% 6.7% 12.5%
7	Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in each sentence (a, b, c, or d): The teacher wanted to <u>find out</u> the difficult points about these exercises. a- guess b- lay out c- solve * d- discover	10.8% 5.8% 36.7% 46.4%
36	Indicate the correct position of the stress (a, b, or c) in the following: a- What time did the aeroplane 'take off? * b- What time did the aeroplane take 'off? c- What time did the aeroplane 'take 'off?	29.2% 45.8% 25%
10	Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in the following (a, b, c, or d): "I am sorry I was late, I was caught up in a meeting and couldn't <u>get away</u> . a- get up * b- escape c- come early d- get around	9.2% 42.5% 41.7% 6.6%

\* the correct response

Acquisition of Some Selected Phrasal Verbs by English Major Undergraduates.....

Item No.	Phrasal Verb Items and Alternatives	%
40	Indicate the correct position of the stress in (a, b, or c) in the following: * a- You used to like strawberries. What turned you 'off them? b- You used to like strawberries. What 'turned you off them? c- You used to like strawberries. What turned you off 'them?	36.7% 30% 33.3%
38	Indicate the correct position of the stress in (a, b, or c) in the following: a- She usually 'comes up with the right answers. * b- She usually comes 'up with the right answers. c- She usually comes up 'with the right answers.	33.3% 35.85% 30.85%
39	Indicate the correct position of the stress in (a, b, or c) in the following: * a- Fuad and the new man got on 'well. b- Fuad and the new man got 'on well. c- Fuad and the new man 'got on well.	33.3% 37.5% 29.2%
37	Indicate the correct position of the stress in (a, b, or c) in the following: a-What turned you 'off strawberries? b-What 'turned you off strawberries? *c-What turned you off 'strawberries?	33.3% 35% 31.7%

the correct response \*

**D.Ayat Khalid Al – Q udah**

Item No.	Phrasal Verb Items and Alternatives	%
I	<p>Choose the proper meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in the following (a, b, c, or d): Sami is very cunning, but he could not <u>buy</u> the police <u>off</u> to get out of his involvement in the robbery.</p> <p>a- support                      * b- bribe                      c- deceive                      d- escape</p>	<p>8.3%                      12.5%                      50%                      29.2%</p>
30	<p>Provide the right verb- complement which may best give the meaning of the underlined word in the following:                      My friend <b>called</b> _____ us when he passed by our street.</p> <p><u>visited</u>                      a- back                      b- to                      c- for                      * d- in</p>	<p>9.2%                      41.7%                      37.5%                      11.6%</p>

the correct response \*