

**Semantic and syntactic problems in
"Comprehending English phrasal verbs"**

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ABSTRACT

In this study the researcher intends to explain the phrasal verbs in the English language and their meanings which vary according to the context in which they occur, and the combinations of the verb with the particle. Besides, the researcher makes a test to be applied on the fourth year students of English language at Tikrit University, College of Education for women, English Department, to test their knowledge of the phrasal verbs and find out the problems that they may encounter in realizing and understanding the exact meaning of phrasal verbs. The number of the examined students are thirty eight examinees.

1- Definitions of the Phrasal verbs.

Phrasal verbs are two word verbs that include a verb followed by a particle (preposition or adverb) which alters the meaning of the verb. The two word verbs function as a single word in the sentence structure, such as, "John **pulled up** the rope."
(Parninkas, 1975:26)

Many grammarians such as (Courtney,1983; Celce & Larsen,1983; Turton & Manser, 1985; among others) define the phrasal verb as a combination that consists of a verb as a root and an adverbial particle or a preposition or a combination of the two which together have an idiomatic or a figurative meaning that

cannot be understood or realized from its individual constituents. Besides, **Crystal(1991:263)** explains the phrasal verb as " a type of verb consisting of a sequence of lexical element plus one or more particle, e.g. **come in, get up, look out for.**"

The term phrasal verb is generally illustrated as a verb plus particle combination or a lexical verb that has three separate parts , in phrasal verbs , the meaning of each part is different from the other,e.g. **get out of** means (avoid or gain from)(**Halliday, 1991:207**).**Roberts(1988:109)** states that "a phrasal verb is a verb and particle that has a very different meaning when they come together, for example,(**look out**) which means **be careful.**"

In addition, **Ghazala(2006:133)** clarifies that phrasal verbs are well established , extremely as popular idioms and they are a combination of a verb or an adverb or preposition such as" **up, down, on, of, in, out ,over,** etc.And it has a special idiomatic meaning that cannot be understood from the individual meaning of the verb plus the adverb or preposition taken together. So, as idiomatic items, many phrasal verbs cannot be exactly realized / understood by non-native students of English because they will find them difficult to realize.

Another notion of the phrasal verb is signaled out and analysed by Bolinger(1971) who points out that "being or not being a phrasal verb is a matter of degree", and knowing that the verb plus particle combination acts as a single word both syntactically and lexically, one would suspect that the phrasal verb would have the same characteristics as a single-word verb (**Cited in Darwin, 2007:67-68**).However, phrasal verbs, sometimes called multi-word verbs, are verbs that consist of two, or sometimes three, words. The first word is a verb and it is followed by an adverb, **turn down** or a preposition, **eat into**, or both , **put up with**. These adverbs or

prepositions are sometimes called particles. (**Wehmeier et al. 2007:R40**)

2- Definitions of the Idioms

An idiom is simply defined by **Hartmann et al. (1972:106-7)** as "a group of words which has a special connotation not usually equal to the sum of the meaning of the individual words, and which usually cannot be translated literally into another language without the special meaning being lost". The term idiom also can be clarified as a number of words , which when taken together , have a different meaning from the individual meanings of each word. It is important to realize that idioms are not only colloquial expressions as many people believe, but they appear in formal style and in slang, in poetry and in other aspects of language. (**Seidl & McMordie, 1988:12-13**)

Crystal,(1991:170) states that the term idiom is used in grammar and lexicology to point to a sequence of words which is semantically and syntactically confined and function as a single word. From the semantic point of view, the meaning of the individual words cannot be summed to produce the meaning of the idiomatic expression as a whole. While the syntactic view point states that the words often do not allow the usual variability they display in other contexts .

Moreover, an idiom is a phrase whose meaning is difficult or sometimes impossible to guess by looking at the meanings of the individual words it contains. For example, **be in the same boat** has a literal meaning that is easy to understand, but it also has a common idiomatic meaning:

1-"I found the job difficult at first. But we were all in the same boat; we were all learning". Here ,**be in the same boat** means to be in the same difficult or unfortunate situation.(Wehmeier etal, 2007: R49)

3- Idiomatcity of Phrasal verbs:

Palmer (1988:226) points out that the literal phrasal verbs cannot be clearly distinguished from the idiomatic ones, and that is because there is a range of meaning from the most literal combination to the most idiomatic associated with most of the particles. The term **idiomatic** is not clear, and he mentions three ways in which this term may be used with phrasal verbs. **Firstly**, the combinations are usually ruled out by collocational restrictions, but we cannot give general rules regarding these restrictions. The following sentences are better taken into account:

2-A- I **helped** him **out**.(supported)

B- *I **aided** him **out**.

3-A- He **yielded up** all his property.(gave possession)

B- *He **abandoned up** all his property.

4-A- Can you **fit out** this expedition? (supply)

B- *Can you **equip out** this expedition?

Secondly, when the meaning of certain phrasal verbs can be guessed from their individual components, the phrasal verbs in this case are literal. Thirdly, when the meaning of the combination cannot be guessed from its individual constituents, it is idiomatic. Some examples of idiomatic phrasal verbs are **give up, give out, break out, break down**.(Ibid.:227)

Palmer (1988:227) also indicates that when the verb and its particle are closely related semantically, they cannot be separated,

and he mentioned three different syntactic patterns to explain his point:

A- If the phrasal verb is literal, non idiomatic, it is possible to put the particle in initial position as in :

5- **A**- Down he sat = He sat down.

B- In he went = He went in.

C- *Down he broke = He broke down.

B- If the phrasal verb is not idiomatic, the separation of the second element is possible when an ordinary adverb is used as in:

6- The troops **marched** briskly **in**.

C- If the verb-particle combination is idiomatic and transitive, the second element may precede the noun phrase and follow it if the verb combination is not idiomatic as in:

7- **A**- They **covered up** the crime. (idiomatic)

B- They **covered** the body **up**. (non-idiomatic) (*ibid.*:228)

4- Types of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs can be explained in terms of syntactic and semantic types:

4-1 Syntactic types:

Syntactically, phrasal verbs have been classified into three types, **(a)** a phrasal verb made of verb plus adverb, as in " the old lady was **taken in** by the salesman." (deceived) ; **(b)** a phrasal verb composed of verb plus preposition, as in " she **set about** making new dress." (started) ; **(C)** a phrasal prepositional verb consisting of verb plus adverbial particle plus preposition, as in " I cannot **put up with** him, he is always complaining" (tolerate).

(Courtney, 1983:v)

In this sense, **Heliel and Beaugrande(1994:143)** mention that these combinations may be considered as " **set of expressions**" of two or more words integrated into a unit which often has specialized meaning as a whole. Unlike free combinations, they are fairly stable, fixed and ready made.

As syntactic types, phrasal verbs have the same function in sentences as a single-word verb, except that the adverbial particle may be separated from the verb. Also the prepositional verb resists the separation of the particle, e.g. " she **looked after** her child / him", but not " she **looked** her child / him **after**." The latter sentence is not acceptable in English.(**ibid.**)

4-2 Semantic types:

Semantically, phrasal verbs can be classified into three types :
(a) a phrasal verb with non-idiomatic or literal meaning resulting from the individual lexical meaning, e.g. **come in, go out, stand up....etc**; (b) a phrasal verb with a metaphorical extension opposed to a literal one, e.g., "the matter was **hedged in** with difficulties". The preceding phrasal verb means (**associated with**). The same phrasal verb when used in a different context has another meaning. Consider the following sentence: "the field was completely **hedged in**". The phrasal verb used here means (**enclosed with a hedge**);(c) a phrasal verb whose parts tell us little or nothing about the idiomatic meaning of the whole, e.g., **sign off(in broadcast)(to stop transmission),catch on (to understand)**.

(**Beaugrande & Heliel, 1994:144**)

In this sense, **Arnold(1977:145)** suggests that the verb plus the particle form an integral whole if the meaning is not readily derived from that of the components, yielding a **set of expression**,

e.g., "**fall out**" for (quarrel). Combinations with no idiomatic meaning may be referred to as "free combinations" where in :

(1) the particle may retain its properties, e.g., "**come / come back**"(indicating direction); (2) the particle may mark a completive, e.g., "**eat /eat up**", inchoative, e.g., "**run / run off**" and or durative, "**talk / talk away**" ; (3) " the particle may be intensive, e.g., "**sing / sing out**".

5- Semantic criteria of phrasal verbs:

Phrasal verbs are divided into three criteria of meaning as follows:

5-1 Literal phrasal verbs:

Literal phrasal verbs are those items where the particle retains its literal adverbial meaning as the particle **up** does in the following sentences:

8-A- I **hung up** the pictures on the wall.

B- I **hung** the pictures **up** on the wall.

C- I **hung** them **up** on the wall.

The phrasal verbs used in the preceding examples are simple and easy to understand and then to realize.(Celce & Larsen,1983:274)

5-2 Completive phrasal verbs:

Completive phrasal verbs are those where the particle indicates a complete action. The particles **up, out, off, and, down** all seem to be used in this way ; however , up is the one which most frequently used in this function:

9-A- I **tore up** the paper.

B- I **tore** the paper **up**.

C- I tore it up.

Other groups of completive phrasal verbs, as mentioned earlier, are inchoative such as, run / run off, durative as, talk / talk away, and intensive like, sing / sing out.

(Beaugrande & Helie, 1994:145)

5-3 Figurative phrasal verbs:

Phrasal verbs are regarded " figurative " when there is no systematic way of semantic criteria associating the verb and the particle. Examine the following sentences:

10-A- Sam **looked up** the information. (search for)

B- Sam **looked** the information **up**.

Some other examples of figurative phrasal verbs are, **turn up** (arrive or appear) **catch on** (understand) **look over** (review) etc. Such phrasal verbs are the most difficult for non-native student to understand and realize.

(Celce & Larsen, 1983:275)

Moreover; in the literal and completive uses of phrasal verbs, the particle may often be deleted with out affecting the acceptability of the sentence, whereas in figurative uses the result is usually an unacceptable sentence. Consider the following sentences:

Literal: A- I hung the picture **up** on the wall.

B- I hung the picture on the wall.

Completive: A- I tore the paper **up**.

B- I tore the paper.

Figurative: A- He looked the information **up**.

B- *He looked the information.

It is clear that the last sentence is not acceptable in English.
(ibid.:276)

Palmer (1988:224) says that in all phrasal verbs with a literal meaning there is a verb of motion and the particle indicates the

direction of the motion. There is another semantic feature of the phrasal verb as a whole, that of indicating final position. Consider these sentences:

11-A- He **ran** the flag **up**.

B- The pilot **flew** the plane **in**.

As noticed above, the operations were completed ; the flag was up (up the pole), and the plane was in (in the airport). Check these Other examples:

12-A- He **pulled up** the rope.

B- *He **pulled upwards** the rope.

To **pull up** in the first sentence means "to pull to final position"; to **pull upwards** doesn't have a meaning , hence, the first is semantically a phrasal verb, but the second is not. (**ibid.:228**)

6- Prepositional verbs:

Prepositional verbs form much closer combinations and they are often paralleled by phrasal verbs, **e.g.**,

13-A- He **came down**.

B- He **came down** the stairs.

Moreover, with prepositional verbs , as with phrasal verbs, there is usually a sense of direction and often terminal point.(**Palmer,1988:227**)

It is possible to find sentences illustrating a phrasal verb, prepositional verb and a sequence of verb plus prepositional phrase, consider the following sentence:

14- We **walked under** the trees.

This sentence can either mean that, we walked to a place under the trees (**prepositional verb**) or that we did our walking under the

trees (**verb plus preposition**). The following sentence , for instance, has three meanings :

15- He **ran down** the road.

This sentence can mean he "**disparaged**" **the road** (phrasal verb), "**descended the road in a run**"(prepositional verb), or " **did his running somewhere down the road**" (verb plus preposition).(Ibid.:228)

Bolinger, (1971:28) explains that all prepositional verbs have two characteristics, first, the verb is a verb of motion , and second , the preposition has a meaning similar to that of the adverbs of the phrasal verbs, motion plus terminus. Check the following sentences:

16 - He walked across the bridge.

17- He ran up the hill.

In these sentences, there is the motion act of walking or running in relation to the bridge or the hill , and the terminus position , across the bridge , up the hill.

He also suggested that prepositions in such cases are " ad-prep " since they combine the functions of prepositions and adverb. They can be compared both with the prepositional complexes and with the sequence of adverb and preposition. Consider the following sentences:

18- He walked through the door.(passed through)

19- He walked into the house.(entered)

20- He walked down across the street.(descended)

In sentence **(18)**, preposition and adverb are fused to a single form ; in **(19)**, they make a complex preposition ; in **(20)**, they remain apart.(ibid.:29)

7- Difficulties of phrasal verbs:

Phrasal verbs are so difficult to understand by non-native students and speakers of English because of their idiomaticity. Thus, **Heaton(1965:V)** points 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 is the phrasal verb in which an adverbial particle combines with a verb to form a collocation possessing a new meaning. The phrasal verb must be considered as a unit, for its meaning can rarely be inferred from a knowledge of the verb and the particle separately.

Taha (1972:V) shows that the subject of idioms (those expressions whose meaning and use is unpredictable from a knowledge of their parts) is an ever-present and troublesome difficulty for non-native learners of the language. he states the reason for the adoption of the term " **adverb-preposition**" or "**ad-prep**" is that only a distinction between a so called preposition and a so called adverb which is one of stress and juncture.

Thus, in the sentence " she was **called down** the stairs ", the word **down** which receives a primary stress and which immediately follows a terminal juncture, is called a preposition. But in " she was **called down** ", the word **down** which receives secondary stress and which is not immediately preceded by a terminal juncture, is called an adverb.(**Ibid.:2**)

Phrasal verbs are considered as instruments or tools when someone wants to speak English natively. In this regard, **Hook (1981:5)** argues that phrasal verbs are an essential tool to speaking English natively, but the difficulties of such combinations arise from the fact that their meanings cannot be predicted or expected. So , the

students may find themselves at a loss when trying to understand or realize idiomatic phrasal verbs.

Besides , **Turton & Manser(1985:3-4)** state that if someone wants to speak English fluently, he has to be able to use phrasal verbs whose meanings and use are very difficult for non-native students, and realizing those idioms correctly requires a good knowledge and a degree of proficiency acquired by non-native students.

Furthermore , some phrasal verbs are used idiomatically, so, they can be considered as pure idioms and can be treated accordingly. In this respect **Baker (1992:62)** writes:

Idioms are frozen patterns of language which allow little or no variation in form and, in the the case of idioms often carry meaning which cannot be deduced from their individual components . And some idioms are misleading;they seem transparent because they offer reasonable literal interpretation and their idiomatic meanings are not necessarily signaled in the surrounding text. A large number of English idioms have both literal and idiomatic meaning, e.g. ;go out-with means(have a romantic or sexual relationship with someone) and take someone for a ride means(deceive or cheat someone in someway).

In addition, **Alexandra (2001:257)** states that phrasal verbs, as lexical items, are undoubtedly one of the most difficult tasks in learning a second language. The meaning of one single word, if unknown or unclear, can make a whole perfectly grammatical

sentence incomprehensible. Phrasal verbs are elements of the English lexicon that are especially problematic for non-native students learning English as a foreign language, that is because the meaning of already known verbs changes drastically when combined with different particles.

8- Statement of the problems :

Understanding and using English phrasal verbs / idioms correctly by the non-native students require a hard degree of proficiency that is hard for the non-native students to acquire. So the difficulty in this aspect of English language lies in the idiomatic phrasal verbs. Thus, **Celce & Larsen (1983:256)** point out that there are few non-Germanic languages that have phrasal verbs, therefore; most ESL/EFL students will find such verbs strange and difficult. Yet they are important parts of colloquial and standard English that no one can speak or understand conversational or informal English easily without the knowledge of phrasal verbs.

In addition, the researcher states that the separate parts of idiomatic phrasal verbs tell us little or no thing about the meaning of the whole, for example, the student may be fully familiar with the words **pick&up** and their meanings as individual words, but this knowledge does not help him/her when he/she wants to know the idiomatic meaning of **pick up** in "business is picking up". Hence, phrasal verbs are very difficult to understand / realize and the problem of such lexical items is due to the degree of their idiomaticity. So, the student should take into account the contexts in which such combinations occur. The test on page(15) shows few syntactic and many semantic problems facing the students while they are trying to comprehend the phrasal verbs and give their meanings.

8-1 Syntactic problem:

The researcher assumes that the syntactic problem that the student may face in understanding or realizing the meaning of idiomatic phrasal verbs is , sometimes, duo to some lexical features such as transitivity, word order and the object used. Some phrasal

verbs have completely different meanings when they are used transitively/ intransitively, consider the following sentences:

21- A-"Harold **turned on** the radio." (vt)

B-"Harold **turned on** to punk rock."(vi)

22- A-"Bibi **came across** a new recipe for fudge."(vt)

B-"Bibi really **came across** well."(vi)

(Celce & Larsen, 1983:266)

The preceding examples show that the same phrasal verb can be used transitively or intransitively with completely different meanings. The idiomatic phrasal verb used in sentence(21a)means "allowed the electric current to flow," whereas in (21b)it means "was strongly attracted by". In sentence(22a)and(22b), the phrasal verb **came across** means "met by chance" in the first and "made a good impression" in the second. Because this sort of phrasal verb is used transitively or intransitively with completely different meanings, the student may be puzzled by them and his task will be fruitless if he does not focus on the context to guess the meaning of such combinations.(ibid.:267)

Moreover, word order, may cause another problem for the student who may find himself stuck when he attempts to understand / realize sentences like the following :

23-A-"I saw the plan **through**".

B-"I saw **through** the plan".

(Seidl & McMordie,1988:102)

The meaning of sentence (23a) is completely different from that of sentence (23b).The first means "I preserved until the plan was completed"; and the second means "I recognized the deception of the plan." (Ibid)

(Courtney, 1983:648) thinks that the sort of object causes another problem for the student. When the object used is a person, the meaning of the phrasal verb differs from that when the object used is a thing. Consider the following sentences:

24-A-"I listened to the speech carefully, but I still couldn't **take** it all **in**."

B-"The salesman finds it easy to **take in** old ladies and persuade them to give him their money."

The phrasal verb **take in** used above has two different meanings. It means "understand" in sentence (24a) and "deceive" in sentence (24b). Thus, the student should pay more attention to the object used in the context with which he/she is dealing. (ibid)

8-2 Semantic problem:

In comprehending the meaning of the phrasal verb, the researcher found out through the test on page(15) that the students found the first and the second type of the phrasal verbs ,i.e., the literal and the completive ones, are easy and will not cause problems for them because their meanings can be easily understood from their individual parts. For instance, the student can easily understand / realize the meaning of the phrasal verbs **sit down** and **tear up** as **يجلس** and **يمزق** and because these verbs and their particles retain their literal adverbial meanings. So there is no problem when comprehending the meaning of this type of phrasal verb.

The third type of phrasal verbs,i.e., the idiomatic one, is the most difficult to realize and understand as its meaning cannot be inferred from its individual constituents. For example, the student may not be able to understand an idiomatic phrasal verb such as **give out** exactly because he will not be able to get the real meaning of such combination from its separate components. This verb-

combination contains several meanings when it is used in different contexts. Consider these sentences: (Khalaili,1979:63)

25-"Our food supplies were about to **give out** when the search party found us" (تنفذ)

26-"For no apparent reason, the car engine suddenly **gave out**." (تعطلت)

27-"A boy standing in the street is **giving out** leaflets to the people passing by." (يوزع)

28-"The news caster **gave out** the news of the air disaster in a depressed voice." (أعلن/أذاع)

29-"Burning rubber **gives out** an unpleasant smell." (ينتج/يخرج)

9- Data Analysis

In this research the researcher has made an analysis about the answers of the students to show the variations of the answers and how they understand the phrasal verbs and their meanings.

Q1: Give the meaning of the underlined phrasal verbs in the following sentences:

1." Things are looking up." (Courtney,1983:372)

The underlined phrasal verb means " **improving**". Thirty of the students realized it as: **increasing, resembling**. And the others did not give any meaning at all.

2. " He thinks he is running out of time."

(Wright,1999:13)

The meaning of the underlined phrasal verb is "**losing, missing**". Fifteen of the students gave the correct meaning, while the others understood it as: **wasting, killing the time**

3. " Most families went through quite a lot during the war".

(Seidl & McMordie,1988:125)

The underlined phrasal verb used above means "**suffered**". Thirty four of the students comprehended it inappropriately as: **escaped, came, survived**. Whereas the rest of them understood it correctly.

4. " Children ought to look up to their teachers."

(Leech & Benity,2001:391)

The meaning of the underlined phrasal verb is "**respect**". Fifteen of the students gave the correct meaning, while the others gave incorrect meaning as: **looking at, imitate, paying attention**.

5. " Wipe that drawing off the board before the teacher sees it."

(Cowie & Mackin,1975:363)

The underlined phrasal verb means "**erase**". All of the students understood it as: **delete, remove, clean**.

6. " Lydia turned up at the last moment."

(Leech etal,2001:393)

The correct meaning of the underlined phrasal verb is "**arrive, appear**". Thirty two of the students comprehended its meaning as: **change, turn, hesitate**. While the rest of them gave the correct meaning.

7. "We can always depend on John Smith to come up with a good solution for any problem we might have."

(Makkai &Boater,1999:77)

The underlined phrasal verb means "**find, offer**". Few of the students gave the correct meaning, whereas, the others gave the wrong meaning as: **conclude, give, suggest**.

8. " The boy broke the window with a hammer."

(Ghazala,2006:104)

The underlined phrasal verb means: "**destroy**". All of the students gave the correct meaning.

9. " The boy **broke with** his mates yesterday."

(Ibid)

The meaning of the underlined phrasal verb is " **to separate, leave, abandon**" half of the students gave the correct meaning, while the left half gave the wrong meaning such as: **escape, fall, quarrel.**

10." The door came to."

(Meyer,1975:14)

The underlined phrasal verb means:" **closed completely**". Some of the students realized it as :**opened, pushed**. And some of them left it without giving any meaning and few of them gave the correct meaning.

Q2:Encircle the suitable phrasal verb that fits the underlined words:

1." A rocket will have started on its 35 million mile trip."

a. **set up** b. **set off** c. **set aside** d. **set about**

(Alexander,1967:28)

The correct answer is "**set off**". Only twelve of the students chose the correct answer.

2." They cancelled the strike." A. **called up** b. **called for**
c. **called off** d. **called on**

(Quirk & Greenbaum,1973:384)

The underlined word means " **called off** ". thirty five of the students chose the correct answer, while the others did not .

3." They visited the man." a. **called on** b. **called for** c. **called up**
d. **called off**

(Ibid.:349)

The appropriate meaning for the underlined word is " **called on** ". eighteen of the students chose the correct answer and the others did not.

4." Some prisoners escaped from the jail last week."

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-
- a. **broke in** b. **broke up** c. **broke a way** d. **broke off**

(pal & prem, 2006:V-77)

The correct equivalent meaning for the underlined word is " **broke away** ". Half of the students gave the correct answer and the other half did not.

- 5." The army has defeated the rebellion after along struggle."

- a. **put off** b. **put a way** c. **put in** d. **put down**

(Workman,ND:7)

The suitable answer for the word is " **put down**". Only five of the students did not choose the correct phrasal verb. Whereas the others did.

- 6." The school decided to abolish the uniform, and let the pupils wear what ever they liked."

- a. **do a way with** b. **do for** c. **do up** d. **do out**

(Vince, 2008:171)

The appropriate meaning for the underlined word is " **do away with** ". about twenty seven of the students chose the wrong answer, while the rest of them chose the correct ones.

- 7." Two police cars stopped outside the door."

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

(Ibid)

The correct equivalent phrasal verb for the underlined word is " **drew up** ". Only four of the students chose the correct answer, whereas the others did not.

- 8."The soldiers exploded the bridge yesterday."

- a. **blew over** b. **blew up** c. **blew out** d. **blew in**

(Wyatt,2006:4)

The suitable synonym for the underlined word is "**blew up**". Thirty two of the students chose the inappropriate answer.

- 9."We must postpone the meeting for another week."

- a. **put in** b. **put off** c. **put back** d. **put a way**

(Acklam,1992:13)

The correct answer for the underlined word is "**put off**". Seventeen of the students gave the correct answer, and the others never did.

10." My friend was obliged to remain in his bed because of a fever."

- a. **keep out of** b. **keep to** c. **keep up** d. **keep a way**

(Cowie & Mackin,1975:174) The suitable synonym for the underlined word is "**keep to**". Only four of the students gave the correct answer, while most of them did not give the right answer at all.

Q3:Read the following text carefully, then state whether the given meaning of the underlined phrasal verbs is TRUE or FALSE, and if false give suitable meaning.

Football hooliganism

From Mr R.J. Middleton

Sir, I am writing in response to H.SMITH'S letter of 18th June, complaining about the number of police at football matches. Does he realize that violent crime during and after games has **gone up** by 30% in the last five years? If this level is to be **brought down** , then we must support our police in their attempts to **crack down on** violent behaviour, and not criticize them.

Why should people **get away with** anti-social and even dangerous acts in the name of sport? Our football supporters are **coming in for** a lot of criticism worldwide and other governments are beginning to **look into** the possibility of stopping our clubs playing in their countries. We shouldn't **rule out** the possibility of stricter punishments for football hooligans; if a few examples were made and the people responsible were **put away** for along time, we

might earn the respect of other countries. If we continue to **let** hooligans **off** lightly, then we may have to **do away with** the idea of international matches completely.

It is easy to criticise the police for ruining sports events, but we must remember who is really responsible _____ the hooligans.

Yours faithfully,
R.J.MIDDLETON
(Acklam,1992:10)

- 1- Gone up = increased (T)
- 2- Brought down = decreased, lessened, depressed (T)
- 3- Crack down on = to be tolerant with (F). **(to enforce laws or rules strictly or to act firmly against)**
- 4- Get away with = punished severely (F). **(to do something bad or wrong without being caught or punished for it)**
- 5- Come in for = give or deliver (F). **(receive)**
- 6- look into = find out, inspect, investigate (T)
- 7- Rule out = vote for or support (F). **(not to consider, not to allow, decide against)**
- 8- Put away = to put in the right place or out of sight (T)
- 9- Let off = to permit to go or escape from penalty (T)
- 10- Do away with = depend on (F). **(to put an end to, stop or get rid of)**

As for the students, nine of them answered only the first two correctly and answered the others wrongly. While the others did not answer any item correctly at all .

11- Conclusions :

The primary concern of this study is to investigate the competency of the students, at Tikrit University, College of Education for Women, English department, in understanding the meaning of English phrasal verbs. In this respect, the researcher has come up with the following findings:

- 1- By examining the results of the test of this study, it has been shown that the lack of knowledge concerning the given phrasal verbs has led to a large number of errors committed by many students who participated in the test.
- 2-Wrong answers in the test reflects the students' misunderstanding of phrasal verbs and their combinations.
- 3-It is also noted that the students are unfamiliar with many phrasal verbs; that is why few correct answers were noted.
- 4-Many students cannot realize the difference between idiomatic and non idiomatic phrasal verbs in fixed expressions because their meanings cannot be inferred or understood from their individual components.
- 5-It has been noted that the students cannot understand or give the proper meaning of the difficult verb-particle combinations and they gave the meanings of the simple ones.
- 6-The analysis has indicated that the students adopt or resort to literal realization as a solution when they encounter difficulty in understanding any verb particle combination.
- 7-It is shown from the results that this verb –particle combination has been ignored and not been taught properly at the college.
- 8-The researcher has noted that most of the problems that the student faced were semantic problems, and few syntactic problems were noted.

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