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Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs by EFL Learners
(A Case Study of Omdurman Secondary Schools)

A Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the Requirements
for the Degree of MA in ELT

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Abstract

English phrasal verbs have been considered one of the major difficulties that face learners of English as a foreign language (EFL) or English as a second language (ESL). This study investigated the avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Sudanese learners. It also investigated the role of phrasal verbs types in any possible avoidance of phrasal verbs performed by Sudanese learners of English. Eighty (80) secondary school students at Omdurman Area took part in this study. A multiple-choice test was taken to them in which they were asked to choose a verb that they considered most suitable to complete the given sentences with there being two correct answers for each item. The findings of this study showed that Omdurman secondary schools ELT learners avoided using phrasal verbs and phrasal verb type had an effect on learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs. Therefore, it was concluded that the difference between L.1 and L.2 structure and semantic complexity of phrasal verbs might cause learners' avoidance. However, the results cannot conclusively prove that Omdurman secondary schools ELT learners in this study intentionally avoided using phrasal verbs. So, this study concluded that the underuse of phrasal verbs by Omdurman secondary schools ELT learners might partly interpreted as avoidance and partly be the result of ignorance and incomplete knowledge

مستخلص البحث

يعتبر استعمال الأفعال المركبة من أكبر المشكلات التي تواجه الدارسين للغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية أو لغة ثانية. هدفت هذه الدراسة للكشف عن الأسباب التي تؤدي لتجنب الطلاب السودانيين استعمال الأفعال المركبة كما هدفت الدراسة أيضا للكشف عن أي أثر محتمل لنوع الأفعال المركبة (الصريحة او المجازية) في تجنب استعمالها من قبل الدارسين السودانيين للغة الإنجليزية باعتبارها لغة أجنبية. شارك في هذه الدراسة ثمانون طالبا وطالبة من المرحلة الثانوية بمنطقة أم درمان حيث طلب منهم الإجابة عن أسئلة إختبار متعدد الخيارات مكونا من عشرين فقرة , وكان على الطالب أن يختار الفعل الأكثر مناسبة من بين البدائل الأربع المعطاة والتي من بينها بديلان صحيحان أحدهما فعل مركب والآخر فعل مكون من كلمة واحدة . أظهرت نتائج هذه الدراسة أن طلاب منطقة أم درمان الذين يدرسون بالمرحلة الثانوية قد تجنبوا استعمال الأفعال المركبة مفضلين استعمال الافعال ذات الكلمة الواحدة . كما وضح أثر استعمال نوع الافعال المركبة. كما خلصت الدراسة إلى أن أختلاف التركيب بين لغة المتعلم الأم (اللغة العربية) واللغة المتعلمة والتعقيد الدلالي للافعال المركبة في اللغة الإنجليزية يمكن أن يكون السبب في تجنب الطلاب لاستعمال الأفعال المركبة. كما خلصت الدراسة أيضا إلى أنه لا يمكن الجزم بأن طلاب منطقة أم درمان في هذه الدراسة قد تجنبوا استعمال الأفعال المركبة عن قصد وخلصت الدراسة أيضا إلى أن قلة استعمال الافعال المركبة من قبل طلاب الدراسة يمكن ان يفسر جزئيا على أنه تجنب وجزئيا أيضا على أنه جهل وعدم دراية كافية بالأفعال المركبة.

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Chapter One

Introduction

1.1 Background

Researchers as well as learners of English language agree, to a great extent, that the phenomenon of English phrasal verbs poses a great deal of challenge to non-native speakers who want to learn the language. The number of phrasal verb structures in English seems to be quite large.

Hook (1981) notes that “between three and four thousand such verbs exist in modern English and more continue to be added to the language. “ Despite the large number until recently, there has not been an explicit analysis of this structure. A large amount of literature has been devoted to account for the question of teaching EPVs to non-native speakers who study English as a second language (ESL) or as a foreign language (EFL). This stems from the fact that EPVs, especially the idiomatic type, constitute difficulty not only for learners of English but also for teachers, curriculum designers and material writers in the fields of ESL and EFL alike. Heaton (1968) makes the point that it has long been felt that this wide subject constitutes one of the major areas of difficulty for students learning English as a second or

foreign language “Further, Cornell (1985) indicates that EPVs have been 'discovered' as an important component in the curricula for English as a foreign language" (p. 269).

There are two types of evidence that help with understanding the kinds of problem that learners have when they use phrasal verbs. These are:

- experimental data, such as translation tests or multiple-choice tests in which learners have to select the most appropriate verb (phrasal verb or single-word verb) to fill in a gap in a sentence.
- Computer learner corpora, which are electronic collections of spoken or written texts produced by learners (such as essays or transcribed conversations).

On the basis of this evidence, we can identify a number of issues that seem to cause problems for many learners. The following main problems have been highlighted in relation to phrasal verbs of this type:

1- avoidance

2- style deficiency

3 - semantic confusion

4- lack of collocational awareness

5- using 'idiosyncratic' phrasal verbs

6 -syntactic errors

This study concentrated on the avoidance phenomenon. Phrasal verb plays an important role in communication especially in everyday language, from casual conversation to the more formal texts. Consideration recent studies (Dagut&Laufer.1985; Hulstijin & Marchena, 1989; Laufer &Ellision, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004), it can be inferred that some second language learners of particular languages, avoid using phrasal verbs in their conversations. The results showed some reasons for this avoidance including effect of context learning condition, first language structure, as well as proficiency level of the learners.

Schachter (1974) drew attention to the importance, in error analysis, of examining not only the L2 forms actually produced by the learners of a foreign language in their attempts to express themselves in L2, but also the L2 forms they seem consistently to avoid using. She also noted the close interrelation between such avoidance phenomena and the Contrastive Analysis approach to L2 teaching and learning: avoidance is the reverse side of negative transfer, since learners tend to avoid using in L2 those structures

that have no parallel in their L1 and therefore provide them with no pattern for transfer. Of course, as Kleinmann (1977) has pointed out, “avoidance” implies that the structure in question is known to (i.e., can be passively recognized by) the learners, but not freely used by them; failure to use a structure or word that is unknown to the learners is an indication merely of ignorance, not of learning difficulty. Now a prime constructive purpose of error analysis is (or should be) to identify the sources of a learner's difficulties, as a necessary preliminary to helping him or her overcome them.

1.2 Statement of the problem

In Sudanese Secondary school context, teaching English phrasal verbs is neglected and teachers avoid teaching them in spite of its existence in English secondary schools syllabus. Many teachers have negative attitudes towards phrasal verbs and think that they are difficult, confusing and less important so they prefer to teach other vocabulary instead of them. Also, they are neglected in Sudan Secondary School Certificate Examination. Therefore, students at secondary schools find them difficult and tend to avoid using them.

1.3 Objectives of the Study

This study is a response to the dilemma the EFL learner faces when dealing with phrasal verbs phenomena. The main objectives of this study, is to

investigate, first the possibility of avoidance of phrasal verbs by Sudanese EFL learners, second the effect of phrasal verb type on their performance in using or avoiding this kind of verbs.

1.4 Questions of the study

Based on previous studies and literature, this study considers the following questions:

- 1) Do Sudanese learners of English in the present study avoid using phrasal verbs?
- 2) Does semantic nature of different types of phrasal verbs (figurative verbs and literal) affect their performance to avoid this structure?

1.5 Study Hypotheses

In an attempt to answer the study questions, these hypotheses are set:

1. Sudanese learners of English in the present study avoid using phrasal verbs and prefer to use single -words equivalents.
2. Sudanese learners of English in the present study avoid using figurative phrasal verbs more than literal ones.

1.6 Significance of Study

This study mainly aims at investigating the tendency of avoiding phrasal verbs by Sudanese learners of English. So, the findings of this study may encourage Sudanese EFL learners to be aware of the importance of phrasal verbs and learn how to properly use phrasal verbs in spoken and written English. Also, the findings of this study may be helpful for textbook designers. They can emphasize common phrasal verbs frequently used in press and media instead of providing lists of phrasal verbs that hardly used outside of classrooms.

1.7 The Study Limits

This study addressed the problem in all parts of the Sudan but because of real logistic obstacles, it was conducted at Khartoum States in Greater Omdurman (Omdurman and Umabda Localities). With samples chosen from Omdurman Ahlia Model Secondary for boys, North Umbada Model Secondary School for Girls and South Umada Model Secondary for Girls.

1.8 Definitions of terms

Definitions of the terms of this study are as follows:

1.8.1 **Avoidance** refers to a situation when an EFL/ESL learner knows the existence of the rules of a certain structure but is not sure about the details,

and therefore when there is a need to use this structure, he or she tries to use another structure to serve the same or similar purpose.

1.8.2 **Literal Phrasal** verbs refer to verbs whose meanings are known from the meaning of the components: get up, come in, and go away

1.8.3 **Figurative Phrasal** verbs refers to verbs whose meanings are idiomatic and cannot be known from combination of semantic components: brush upon, go off, and give up.

1.9 Abbreviations of the study

1.9.1 **EPV** stands for English phrasal verbs

1.9.2 **ESL** stands for English as a second language

1.9.3 **EFL** stands for English a foreign language

1.9.4 **L1** refers to a person's first language

1.9. 5 **L2** refers to a person's first language

1. 9. 6 **SLA** refers to second language acquisition

Chapter Two

Literature Review and Previous Studies

2.1.1 Phrasal Verb Phenomenon

2.1.2 History of Phrasal Verbs

Several linguists have attempted to explain the history of the phrasal verb (Kennedy 1920, Yassin 1981, Konishi 1958, Meyer 1975, Traugott 1972), but almost all refer to Kennedy's 1920 Monograph as the basis of their definitions. Kennedy was one of the first to attempt to trace the development and use of the phrasal verb or, as he calls it, the verb-adverb combination, from the Old English period to the present. He finds, and most linguists agree, that the pattern was not very common in Old English. Instead, there existed in Old English a related compound, one in which the verb contained a prefixed particle.

Yassin (1981) mentions that in Latin, the particle is attached at the beginning or prefixed as in *com-* (with) and *pello* (drive) for *compel* or *de-* (down). and (*swallow*) for *devour*. Yassin states that likewise many English verbs were formed in the Latin manner, for example, *bypass*, *overestimate*,

downplay, *overlook*, and *overcome*. Meyer (1975) also compares the particle in the phrasal verb to Latin prefixes, but he states that 'the two word verb has much more flexibility and subtlety than the Latin verb with its prefixes.' He uses the phrasal *shoot off* in a variety of meanings to illustrate his point: They shot! rocket off in space; He shot off his gun; William Tell shot the apple off; He is always shooting off his mouth Meyer recognizes that the phrasal verb probably began as a type of Anglo-Saxon verb to which was prefixed a particle that showed direction or movement.

Kennedy's analysis of Old English literature is an interesting display of the occurrence of what he terms verb-adverb combinations (phrasal verbs) as opposed to the verbs combined with prefixes to form compounds. For example, Kennedy notes that in the first 300 lines of *Beowulf* there is a 5:1 ratio of the prefixed verb compound to the verb-adverb combinations, in the Old English *Genesis* a 25:1 ratio, in *Juliana* (11. 1-300) a 20:1 ratio, in Book II, chapters 1 and 2, of Alfred's translation of Bede's *Ecclesiastical History* a 27:1 ratio, and in Aelfric's *Saints' Lives* a 20:1 ratio. Although the prefixed verb compound was more frequent in the Old English than the Middle English period, the Middle English period saw a marked increase in the use of the verb-adverb combination, although, as Kennedy states, "it is not easy to conclude from the varying types of (literature available just how far this usage

advanced in each century and dialect. “Konishi (1958) suggests that “in Old English the position of the prepositional adverb was rather irregular as the Old English word-order was, but the modern type of the combination was very rarely used. “ He is, however, more specific about the change from a prefixed verb compound. to a verb with detached suffix. He suggests a progression such as the following: outgo (I) - out go (II) - go out (III). He mentions that although English has some type I forms, such as *downplay*, *overlook*, and *upset*, they are quite different in meaning from related type III forms~ *down*, *look*, *over*, and *set* . Furthermore, type I is no longer productive. According to Konishi (1958), “The type I originated in a synthetic stage of the language and the principle of the combination which they represent has died out, so that as a rule we cannot form any new compound verbs on the same pattern.” Konishi further suggests that type I and type II struggled for prominence, with type II gaining out because of the analytic developments within English and the loss of inflections. Then, with the establishment of a fixed word order, and for the probable reasons suggested by Meyer, type II shifted to type III. As the new pattern grew, the older one weakened. Some prefixes are no longer used in combination, for example, the prefix *to*, as in the Old English *to-breatan*, *to blawan*, *to brcan*. According to Meyer, 'Its functions are taken over by the second elements *up*, *down*, *off*, *out*,

through' as in. his examples *beat up, beat down, beat out, blow off, blow out, break up, break down, and break through.*” Konishi analyzes Kennedy's statistics on the use of prefixed verb compounds and verb- adverb combinations in Old and Middle English and notes a gradual increase in the use of the latter, from 5.6% to 17% to 14% to 26% of all verbs counted.

Kennedy (1920) has suggested that after becoming predominant in the Middle English period, the verb-adverb combinations would have enjoyed great advancement had it not been for the inrush of a large number of Romanic verbs with inseparable prefixes', such words as *apprehend, ascend, extend, and secure*. Konishi offers a different perspective, however. He agrees with Kennedy as far as the written or formal language is concerned, but he suggests that the influx of Romanic verbs probably did not affect the language of the common man as significantly. Instead, he believes that the Romanic verbs helped drive out the native prefixed verb compounds that the verb-adverb combination had been struggling with for predominance. According to him, “The verb-adverb combination had succeeded in conquering its original enemy by the hands of the newcomer, so that the obstacle had been got out of the way for its startling progress at the early period of Modern English.”

Throughout the Old English and the Middle English periods, the phrasal verb combinations which are noted in the literature have a literal meaning and, according to Meyer “By the time of Chaucer, the English language versions of the Bible, and Shakespeare, the two-word verb was a fixed pattern for the creation of new verbal concepts” Konishi notes that by the Renaissance, 'the verb-adverb combination advanced into full-fledged development.' Meyer (1975) checks the *Oxford English Dictionary* to date the introduction of certain particles used in combination between the ninth and sixteenth centuries. Interestingly enough, the list corresponds to the seventeen particles he describes as 'the most productive':

9th century-in, on, out, up

10th century-away, by, off

11th century- over, through

12th century-down, under, about

13th century-*along, aside*

15th century-*back*

16th century-across, around

Kennedy (1920) notes that by the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries, there was a great diversity in the use of the combination. Whereas such combinations had earlier been used in their literal meanings, they began to be used in more figurative ways. This plus the fact that there was a “tendency to shift the sentence-stress so as to encourage the use of a verb and a following adverbial particle instead of a verb with an inseparable prefix were strong influences in helping to increase the number and significance of the combinations in Modern English. Some combinations may have acquired metaphorical, or figurative, meanings, but they did not necessarily lose their original instead there was a kind of semantic spreading. For example, *burn out* retains its original meaning of *become extinguished* in the campfire burned itself out. It expresses a different meaning in He *burned himself out working at that job (ruined his health)*. During the eighteenth century, forces developed that worked against the increase of phrasal verb combinations. One force was the view of grammarians, who generally regarded Latin as a model for language; and careful writers avoided the phrasal combination, preferring a Latinate word. For example, such a word as *request* was preferred to *ask for*, and such a word as *extinguish* was preferred to *put out*. Also prescriptive grammars ruled against constructions in which a preposition ended a sentence

sentence, in the usage often referred to as the 'parasitic preposition', even though such prepositions were often actually particles of phrasal verb combinations. Furthermore, phrasal verb combinations with metaphorical meaning were abhorred as being imprecise. Nevertheless, the combination endured, probably continuing in popular usage on the colloquial level before emerging again into popularity during the late nineteenth century. Konishi (1958) suggests sociological influences on the language when stating his reasons for the increased use of the combination. The Industrial Revolution and the modern development of science have made English life and thought scientific and speedy. The people of the 19th century developed their vocabulary in that direction. The generalization and ambiguity of the native monosyllabic words, and the inadaptability and prolixity of foreign imported words could not in colloquial speech answer the purpose of those who needed distinct and concise, concrete and instinctive words in the age of science and speed.

Kennedy (1935) states several reasons for the tendency of Late Modern English toward the increased use of phrasal verbs. As stated earlier, he suggests that the change from literal to metaphorical use is on reason. Meyer notes that this occurs particularly when the particle is used with a transitive

verb, transitive nature of the action denoted by the verb allowed for numerous variations in the sense of the second elements.' Kennedy also suggests that the desire of speakers to strengthen or emphasize an idea and to vary the expression of an idea has led to the increased use of phrasal verbs. Kennedy also mentions the speaker has led to the increased use of phrasal verbs. Kennedy also mentions the desire for rhythmical effect as a factor, for the addition of the particle makes 'a speaker's trochaic phrase out of the monosyllabic verb' (1935:302). Kennedy's last reason, 'linguistic laziness', resulting from the speaker's avoidance of erudite polysyllabic words, may not have been empirically proven in linguistic science, but it demonstrates the thinking of some earlier grammarians concerning the phrasal verbs.

The current use of the combination is so popular that by analogy many Latinate extend out. Usually, however, the majority of verbs which combine are, forms have acquired redundant particles: *refer*, back proceed *forth*, and extend *out*. Usually, however, the majority of verbs which combine are according to Bolinger (xii), "common Germanic monosyllables, and the particles are a limited number of highly frequent adverbs and prepositions.

Today linguists note the great proliferation of the combinations and explain the phenomenon from tendencies within the language. Barber

(1964:103) states that new words are often formed 'from existing resources'.

Onions suggests that the phrasal verb combinations are particularly rich of new meaning, saying that 'the number of such combination is practically limitless.' Konishi and Traugott both see the influence of American English in encouraging the use and development of the compounds. Konishi (1958)

states that America 'with its new conditions and the linguistic freedom that prevail there helped encourage the development of new idioms.' Traugott (1972) notes that although the use of phrasal verbs was declining after the eighteenth century, 'In America it became increasingly productive during the [Modern English] period and is known as one of the major differences between British and American English (though the distinction is becoming less and less clear with the continued borrowing of "Americanisms" into British English. In conclusion, the history of the phrasal verb reflects a history of the English language. The phrasal verb's development was influenced by the loss of inflections and the use of function words, such as prepositions, to demonstrate word relationships. Sociological factors, including the prescriptive tendencies of the eighteenth century inhibited its growth in formal usage. The structure's productiveness, however, combined with general trends in the past century to avoid foreign borrowings and seek new lexical items from within the existing corpus of English, encouraged the

phrasal verb combinations' growth in informal usage. Today many linguists see the increased use of these combinations in a positive way, suggesting they add flexibility to the language. According to Baugh (1957: 402-3)

“The historian of language can view this development [the use of phrasal verbs] only as a phenomenon going on actively for over four hundred years, one which shows no tendency to lose its vitality and which has its roots in the most permanent and irresistible source of linguistic phenomena, the people.

2.2 Definitions of Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs are a very common type of multiword unit in English (Schmitt, 2000 p. 99). They are variously termed as “compound verbs”, “group-verbs”, “verb-adverb combination”, “merged verbs”, “separable “ploy-word verbs” and etc. The definitions have become a controversial issue among researchers who tried to classify which multi-verbs (verb particle combination) should be called phrasal verbs. For example, some researchers believe that *look at* could be considered a phrasal verb but others do not (Sroka, 1972, p 14). The result of significant disagreement among researchers has become an obstacle that keeps EFL learners from learning phrasal verbs in the proper way (Gray 1999, p75).

As a preliminary definition, Bolinger (1971) pointed out that phrasal verbs should be termed lexical unit rather than words. He believed that

phrasal verbs function as “lexical unit in the strict sense of a non-additive compound or derivative, one that has a set meaning which is not the sum of the meaning of its part”(p.xii).

Referring to the London Student Grammar of Spoken and Written English(Biber, Johnson, Conard, Leech, Conard, & Finegan, 1999 p.403) phrasal verbs are combination comprising a verb followed by an adverbial particle (*e.g., carry out, find out, or pick up*). Although these adverbial particles (*e.g. out, in, up, down, on, and off*) have meaning showing position and direction of movement, they are often used with extended meanings. Moreover, some phrasal verbs contain two particles (*e.g. put up with, get on with, and stand up for*). Such verbs are sometimes called “phrasal prepositional verbs” (Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, & Savrtvik, 1985, p.116).

Longman Dictionary of phrasal verbs defines phrasal verbs as "idiomatic combination of a verb and adverb, or a verb and preposition (or verb with both adverb and preposition) 20 Grammarians such as Eduard (1998:93) describes phrasal verbs as combinations of a lexical verb and adverbial particle". Verbs as *give up, fall out, take in* are considered by him to be multi- words verbs that are equivalent to one lexical item. Heaton (1985:103) considers that "phrasal verbs are compound verbs that result from combining

a verb with an adverb or a preposition, the resulting compound verb being idiomatic."

2.3 Types of Phrasal Verbs

According to Workman (1993), phrasal verbs, another type of multi-word verbs, can be generally categorized into four major categories as the following:

Type 1: Phrasal verbs are intransitive. They do not have to take object. Apart from this, the verb and the particle must stay together. For example:

a- We get on very well.

b- My car broke down

Type 2: Phrasal verbs are transitive and separable. When they separable, the object can be inserted either between the verb and the particle or after the particle as illustrated in (c) and (d) respectively. However, if the object is a pronoun, it must be inserted between the verb and the particle as illustrated in (e):

c- Mark threw away the ball.

d- Mark threw the ball away.

e. Mark threw it away

Type3: Phrasal verbs are transitive and inseparable. The noun object or the pronoun object must be only inserted after the particle. For example:

f- I came across an interesting article last night.

g- * I came an interesting article across last night.

h- * I came it across last night.

Type 4: Phrasal verbs are always transitive and consist of two particles that are inseparable.

i- He always looks down on the other people.

j- * He always looks other people down on.

k- He always looks down on them.

l - He always looks the down.

2. 4 Semantic Domains of Phrasal Verbs

Phrasal verbs can be also classified by semantic domain, based on their core meanings. Most phrasal verbs have core meanings in only one domain; however, Many of them have multiple meanings, especially activity verbs.

Longman Grammar of Spoken and Written English (LGSWE) mentions seven common semantic domains of phrasal verbs:

- Activity intransitive, e.g. get on, look out, move in.
- Activity transitive, e.g. bring in, fill in, get out of, keep up, pull up, pull down, make up, take in.
- Mental transitive, e.g. make out, find out, give up, look forward to.
- Communication transitive, e.g. bring up, call in, come out with.
- Occurrence intransitive, e.g. break down, grow up, set in.
- Aspectual intransitive, e.g. carry on, go ahead, hang on
- Aspectual transitive, e.g. keep on, start off.

2.5 Attitudes towards phrasal verbs

There have been three article-length studies of attitudes towards phrasal verbs in English (as well as occasional – and sometimes inaccurate – statements about such attitudes dotted throughout the literature on phrasal verbs). Claridge (2000: 212) charts attitudes towards multi-word verbs (including phrasal and prepositional verbs) up to around 1800, basing her material largely on Sundby et al. (1991). Claridge shows that there were no direct proscriptions of phrasal verbs in her material, but that negative

comments were sometimes made about individual constructions – although she adds that, the negative terms used [such as *vulgar* and *improper*] are in general not very helpful” (2000:213), and does not attempt to analyze their meanings. She concludes that, the prescriptivists, and probably most people then, seem to have had a rather neutral or tolerant attitude towards these verbal combinations (phrasal verbs and other multi-word verbs)” (2000:278).

2.5 Types of Difficulty

2.5.1 Large quantity

Phrasal verbs are troublesome for EFL learners to produce and comprehend as a result of large quantity (Niran Klumbangly.205, p 10) In fact; they were regarded as the fruitful source of new words in English (Bollinger, 1971, xiii). Obviously, the adverbs (*e.g. over, off, out, down, away and back*) can promptly coin new phrasal verbs by combining with common verbs (*e.g. be, come, go, do, make, take, put, and give*) (Celec-Murcia & Larsen-Freemen, 1999, p. 431). Cornell (1985, p. 2270) also indicated that at least seven hundred of the phrasal verbs have been used in everyday English conversation). Moreover, EFL learners have to consistently deal with new phrasal verbs. According to Darwin and Gray (1999, p.66), mastering phrasal

verbs becomes more difficult to EFL learners because native speakers of English unconsciously comprehend phrasal verbs. For example, they always understand the underlying meaning and the use of particles.

This allows them to consistently create new phrasal verbs. This view was supported by Armstrong (2004, pp.214-215) who pointed that native speakers of English are able to unintentionally comprehend the syntactic behaviours of phrasal verbs. For example, they unintentionally know that the phrasal verb in (a) allows to the particle to be separated from the verb (b) does not.

(a) Jo tore the contract up.

(b) *Jo came the letter across.

Such knowledge of native speakers of English enables them to constantly comprehend and create new combinations all the time.

2. 5.3 Semantic complexity

Apart from the large quantity of phrasal verbs, the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs is a formidable obstacle that keeps EFL learners from mastering them. (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999,p 431) It is certain that dealing with idiomatic phrasal verbs is a very difficult task for EFL learners. According to the meaning of idiomatic, Hart (1999, p. vi) proposed

that idiomatic means that there is no way to know the word and particle mean together by knowing what the verb and particle mean separately. For instance, EFL learners might know the meaning of *drop* and *by* but that did not help them comprehend that *drop by* means *to visit someone*. This shows that combining separable meanings of each element in phrasal verbs sometimes does not help EFL learners to clearly understand their whole meaning. Even though many EFL learners are aware of the importance of phrasal verbs, the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs makes them feel that phrasal verbs are far-fetched to master (Cheon, 2006, p.1). Besides, phrasal verbs are similar to single-word verbs in that they usually have more than one meaning (Biber, Johnson, Leech, Conrad, & Finegan, p. 408). Some phrasal verbs (e.g. *check out*) can have multiple meanings (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p.434). Therefore, EFL learners are often confused with phrasal verbs whose meanings are based on contexts. (Yi, 1996, p.6).

2.5.4 Complex structure

One of the factors making ELF learners, unable to properly use phrasal verbs, is the complex structure of phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs can be categorized, as mentioned above, in a number of different types (i.e. separable phrasal verbs or inseparable phrasal verbs). Therefore, EFL learners who do not have

phrasal verb structures to their L1 may find the very difficult to produce and comprehend (Yi, 1996, p7). EFL learners' difficulty in dealing with phrasal verbs may be also partly due to the fact that teachers are not sufficiently aware of the semantic systems and rules underlying these complicated combinations (Armstrong.2004, p241).

Moreover, EFL learners are also required to comprehend the complex structure of phrasal verbs; for example, they need to comprehend whether certain transitive phrasal verbs are separable (i.e. whether the pronoun object must be inserted before the particle as in “He pick it up”) . This may make EFL learners confused about the way to appropriately use phrasal verbs and eventually lead them to avoid them in spoken and written language.

Besides, a particle in phrasal verbs and a preposition in prepositional verbs are similar to form. Hence, phrasal and prepositional verb are difficult for EFL learners to distinguish (Kubota. 1997, p.4). Also, Rauta2008, Para2) pointed out that many EFL textbooks do not provide EFL learners with differences phrasal and prepositional verbs and classify both of them as “English phrasal verbs”. This might cause great confusion among EFL learners because phrasal and prepositional verbs have different syntactic behaviors.

According to Quirk, Greenbaum, Leech, and Svartvik (1985, pp. 1156-1157), every prepositional verb must be transitive but some phrasal verbs are intransitive.

Apart from this, with phrasal verbs that are separable, a direct object can be inserted either between a verb and a particle. But when the direct object of phrasal verbs is the pronoun object, it must be inserted before the particle. On the other hand, the particle in prepositional verbs must be separated from the verb. For example:

a- She called on her friend *She called her friend in.

b- She called on them. * She called them on

2. 6 Avoidance Phenomenon

2.6. 1 Definition of Avoidance

In fact, avoidance is a situation when EFL/ES L learners know the existence of a rule of a certain target language structure but they are uncertain about the details. Accordingly, the attempt to use another structure serving the same or similar communicative purpose when they have to produce the certain target language structure. Kano (2006, p 7) states that avoidance is defined in two different ways. According to Tarone (1981, as cited in

Kano 2006, p.8) avoidance can be viewed as a communication strategy which “attempts to bridge the gap between the linguistic knowledge of the second-language learner and the linguistic knowledge of the target language interlocutor in real communication situations” (p. 288). On the other hand, Ellis (1994, as cited in Kano 2006, p. 8) states that avoidance has been seen as one of the manifestations of language transfer. Manifestations besides avoidance include errors (negative transfer), facilitation (positive transfer), and over-use. Furthermore, avoidance implies some passive knowledge of the structure being avoided. As Kleinmann (1977, 1978) argues, “to be able to avoid some linguistic feature presupposes being able to choose not to avoid it, i.e., to use it” (p. 97). Despite the fact that many research papers have been written on avoidance, there are still unanswered questions regarding the identification of avoidance and the reasons behind its occurrence.

2.6.2 Types of avoidance

According to Brown (1994, p. 128-129), avoidance can be semantic, topical, lexical, phonological, morphological, graphological, or void. In semantic avoidance, second language learners avoid talking about certain concepts. For topical avoidance, learners avoid talking about certain topics

and they devise certain strategies for such a purpose. They may change the topic of the conversation, pretend not to understand, or not to respond to the speaker. For lexical avoidance, learners avoid using some lexical items. When avoidance is phonological, learners prefer to use words that are easier to pronounce. Additionally, learners may avoid words they do not know how to spell and; thus, we have graphological avoidance. Regarding void avoidance, learners prefer using words that have translation-equivalents in the mother tongue to those that do not have.

2.7 Previous Studies

In a chapter of her unpublished MA dissertation, Ralph (1964:37-48) presents some twentieth-century criticisms of phrasal verbs as Americanisms and slang or as having excessive semantic range. Since her main purpose is to discredit these claims, Ralph does not attempt to analyze them systematically or to place them in their social, historical or linguistic context. Brinton (1996) also discusses twentieth-century attitudes towards phrasal verbs and complex verbs, focusing mainly on post-1950 materials. She suggests that twentieth-century critics of phrasal verbs sense a lack of semantic precision... and frequently point out that a single verb, semantically more specialized and generally Latinate, can often replace the construction with its native verbs of

broad meaning (1996:191). However, Brinton discovers that, in recent years, the objections [to phrasal verbs] seem to have subsided; handbooks now define phrasal verbs but do not proscribe against them" (1996:189). Thus, while Claridge suggests that before the nineteenth century phrasal verbs were not yet proscribed, Ralph and Brinton show that, by the twentieth century, negative attitudes were frequently expressed, although less so towards the end of the century. From these findings, it would appear that the nineteenth century was a formative period in the development of attitudes towards phrasal verbs.

Yi (1996) (University of Texas at Arlington / unpublished master) studied "Phrasal verbs for ESL students in Taiwan". Questionnaires were used to elicit data from subjects. Contrastive analysis was employed to describe the similarities and differences between English phrasal verbs and Mandarin compound words. In addition, errors analysis was employed account for the majority of Taiwanese learners` errors. The results of the study revealed that literal phrasal verbs were easier than idiomatic ones for Taiwanese learners to produce. Moreover, they also made mistakes because of the confusion among the four syntactic categories of phrasal verbs. In addition, Taiwanese ESL learners constantly did not avoid producing phrasal verbs. Finally, more advanced learners had more knowledge in

comprehending and using phrasal verbs than less advanced learners.

The aforementioned studies show that EFL/ESL learners applied the avoidance strategy when encountering difficulty in dealing with complex structures and semantic complexity of phrasal verbs.

Chapter Three

Methodology

This chapter describes the subjects, the materials, the procedures, the validity of the test, the reliability of the test, and the method of data analysis.

3.1 Subjects

To investigate whether students avoid using phrasal verbs, eighty (80) subjects were chosen for this study. All of the subjects were selected from three schools in Omdurman area (Ahlia Model Secondary School for Boys, North Umadda Model Secondary School for Girls and South Umadda Model Secondary School for Girls) in the academic year of 2013 AD. All subjects were selected from the third class. On average, they had seven year's experience in learning English. Particularly, these students achieved good marks in the English tests taken early in this academic year. For most of the subjects, the primary goal of learning English was to pass and get high scores marks in Sudan Secondary School Certificate Examination to attend prestigious universities; however, they had limited exposure to English outside the classroom. Therefore, they were considered as EFL learners

3.2 Materials

3.2.1 Target Phrasal Verbs

The 20 target phrasal verbs in this study were selected by the researcher. All phrasal verbs used in this study had been taught to the learners. Moreover, most of the sentences of the study test were taken from student's textbook. Among the 20 phrasal verbs, 5 literal phrasal verbs whereas 15 were figurative. All of the 20 phrasal verbs are included in Table (1) below:

Phrasal verbs	Single-word verbs
<p>a. Literal</p> <p>start out turn back come in take away get up go away</p> <p>b. Figurative</p> <p>hold up turn down break in carry out break out look into die out take off stop over keep on put up put out</p>	<p>begin return enter remove rise leave</p> <p>delay refuse enter by force do start suddenly investigate disappear leave interrupt continue stay extinguish</p>

3.2.2 Types of Research Test

To ensure the production of the target phrasal verbs, the research instrument used in this study is a multiple-choice test. The multiple-choice test was chosen because it was capable of providing fairly strong conclusions for avoidance and the ease of administration as well as the convenience of scoring (Sjohom 1995, p224).

The test used in this study was a multiple-choice test developed by the researcher (Appendix 1). The test consisted of 20 sentences, each with four verb choices below in order to fill in the blank. Two of the verbs were correct answers (but one was phrasal verb and the other its single-word equivalent) and the two remaining were distracters.

3.3 Procedures

The procedure of the study consisted of two important parts: administration and scoring.

To collect the data for the study, a multiple-choice test was taken by all subjects in three sessions. All subjects were required to complete the test provided in (20) minutes. The subjects were also given special instruction to choose the most suitable answer to complete the sentence as there were actually two correct answers for each of them. The researcher assigned a

score only to the correct choices and no score to the wrong choices.

3.4 Validity of the test

Validity is defined as the extent to which a test measures what it is supposed to measure and the extent to which inferences and actions made on basis of test scores are appropriate and accurate. To achieve this, the study test was shown to two referees to review and comment on the design and content of the test. The two referees are Ph D holders. (See appendix2). In their judgment, they stated that the test appears to measure the factors that it is required to measure. Also, they suggested some amendments on the content and the researcher included them.

3.5 Reliability of the test

Reliability is the degree to which the results of a test are dependable and consistently measure the particular student knowledge. To achieve this in the current study, a random sample of 25 students from a secondary school had been taken the study test and a week later, the same twenty five students took the test for the second time. Then the researcher marked the tests and to calculate correlation between marks obtained by students in the test, the following Pearson Correlation Coefficient formula was used.

$$r_{xy} = \frac{\sum (x - \bar{x}) \times (y - \bar{y})}{\sqrt{\sum (x - \bar{x})^2 - (y - \bar{y})^2}}$$

$$r_{xy} = \frac{2536}{2625}$$

$$= 0.96$$

So a high positive correlation can be seen that means the test was reliable.

The test was manually scored, only the correct phrasal verbs were counted in the calculation in order to answer research questions. Moreover, the data analyzed in terms of 1) percentage 2) The mean and standard deviation for all subjects.

In summary, this chapter has shown the research instruments, research tools, procedures in collecting data and validity and reliability of the study test. In the next chapter, the raw scores and the results of statistical calculation will be presented.

Chapter Four

Data Analysis

This chapter reports the results of the phrasal verb test taken by eighty (80) students at Ahlia Model Secondary School for Boys, North Umbadah Model Secondary School for Girls and South Umbada Model Secondary for Girls in Omdurman area. The results based on the scores of the phrasal verb test from the total population of subjects.

1. Scores of the phrasal verbs test from the total population of subjects.

Table.1 Scores of the phrasal verbs test from the total population of subjects

	Phrasal verb	Single-word	Wrong response	No response
N=80	664	852	72	12
Percentage	41%	53%	4%	0.75%

Table1 shows the scores of the phrasal verb test from the total population of subjects. The scores of the phrasal verb test show that from the total population of 80 subjects, there were 1600 possibilities to choose phrasal verbs and single-word verbs. From the total answers (1600), in 664(41 %)

cases, the subjects preferred to use phrasal verbs. 852 (53%) cases show that the students avoided using and opted for single-word verbs.

Fig 1. Summary of Phrasal Verb Usage Found in the Phrasal Verb Test

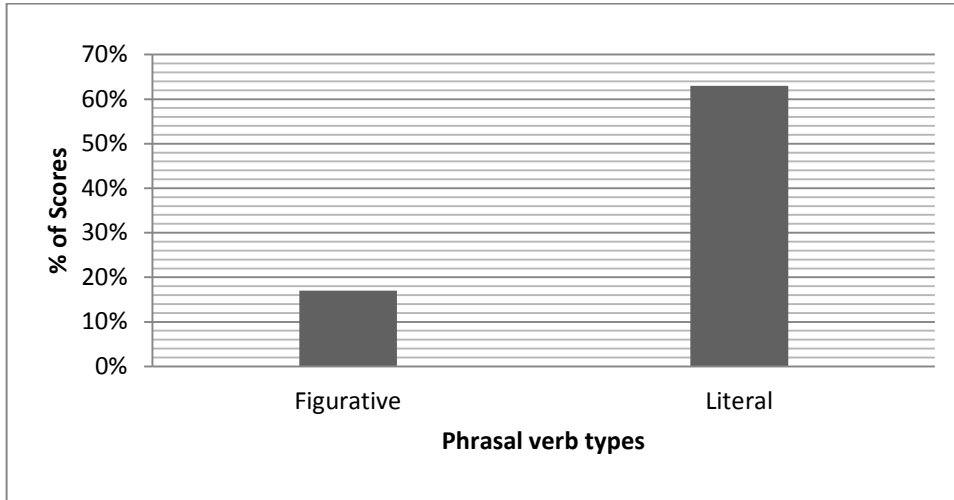


Fig 2 shows phrasal verb usage found in the phrasal verb test. Of the 1600 possible occurrences of phrasal verb, 112 were figurative and 480 were literal. Among the 664 phrasal verbs chosen by the subjects, 281 (17%) were figurative and 383 were literal.

Table2. Phrasal Verb Test from the Total Population of Subjects

Test	n	Max	Min	Mean	S.D
Phrasal Verb	80	3	20	8.3	2.8

Table 2 shows the maximum, minimum, mean and standard deviation of phrasal verb test scores for the total population of subjects. As for the phrasal verb test, of the total population of 80 subjects, the maximum and minimum scores were 20 and 3, respectively. The mean of the test is 8.3 and standard deviation (S.D) was 2.8 **4.2**

The mean is the average and it is computed as the sum of all the observed outcomes from the sample divided by the total number of events. The mean tells where the centre of the data set is.

Standard Deviation shows how much variation or dispersion from the average exists. A low standard indicates that the data points tend to be very close to the mean; a high standard deviation indicates that the data points are spread out over a large range of values.

4.2 Discussion of research results

In general, the Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners in the present study avoided using phrasal verbs in the phrasal verb test. To clearly interpret the results, the detailed discussion is divided into two parts based on the two research questions as follow:

4.2.1 Research Question1: The students avoid using phrasal verbs

To see whether Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners avoid

using phrasal verbs, the results of the present study test was analyzed. The assumption of the present study in (research question one) was that Omdurman area secondary school EFL learners avoid using phrasal verbs preferring single-word equivalents. The results of the present study test clarified that, Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners avoided using phrasal verbs and preferred single-word verbs. The reason of the avoidance of phrasal verbs might be because of the difference between L1 and L2 (Dagut & Laufer, (1985), Laufer, Eliasion 1993; Liao & Fukya, 2004). As Dagut and Laufer (1985) mentioned, the phrasal verb structure is a characteristic Germanic languages. Therefore, there is no parallel structure in Arabic. As a result of this structural difference L1-L2, learners might prefer to use a more familiar structure single-word verb. They are not confident enough and not used to the idea of using phrasal verbs.

4.2.2 Research question 2: The students use more literal phrasal verbs than figurative one:

Research question two investigated whether difference in phrasal verb type (figurative vs. literal) affect the avoidance of phrasal verb by Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners. The study test results made it clear that, Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners used figurative phrasal verbs (17%) remarkably less than literal ones (63%). In Dagut and Laufer (1985)

study Hebrew speakers avoided using figurative phrasal verbs more than literal ones and in Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) research Dutch learners avoided figurative phrasal verbs despite the L1 and L2 similarity. Lioa and Fukuya (2004) in their study of Chinese speakers found that there was no interaction between groups (native speakers, Chinese advanced and intermediate learners) and phrasal verb type which means all three groups preferred literal more than figurative. The reason for Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners' avoidance might be semantic one since figurative phrasal verbs meaning is not derived from the meaning of its two parts and this idiomatic meaning made learners confused. On the other hand, finding the meaning for literal verbs is easier since it included the combining meaning of two parts,

Chapter Five

Conclusion, Findings and Suggestions for Further Studies

5.1 Conclusion

This study was done to investigate whether Omdurman secondary schools students avoided using phrasal verbs and whether type of phrasal verbs affected students' performance in using or avoiding phrasal verbs.

The subjects of this study were eighty (80) students at Ahlia Model Secondary School for Boys, North Umadda Model Secondary School for Girls and South Umadda Model Secondary School for Girls. All subjects were asked to take the phrasal verb test containing 20 items developed by the researcher. After that, the test was manually scored and analyzed in term of percentage, mean and standard deviation of the phrasal verbs scores from the total population of the subjects.

5.2 Findings

The findings of this study can be summarized as follows:

- From the phrasal verb test scores of total population of subjects it can be

inferred that Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners were likely to avoid using phrasal verbs by replacing them with single-word verbs which they find easier.

- The study also showed that Omdurman area secondary schools EFL learners used figurative phrasal verbs less than literal ones.

5.3 Suggestions for further research

Based on the findings and conclusion of the present study, the following suggestions are made for further research;

1. Few studies have been done among Sudanese EFL learners to address the problem of the avoidance of phrasal verbs. Further studies on the avoidance of phrasal verbs among Sudanese EFL learners are highly recommended in order that the results can lead to practical implications.
2. A part from a multiple-choice test, a translation test and recall test are the recommended elicitation tests for investigating the avoidance of phrasal verbs among Sudanese EFL learners.

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Appendices

Appendix .1

The phrasal verb Test

Choose the most appropriate verb to fill in a gap in each sentence:

1. The rain will ----- the work on the new road.

- a. go ahead b. stay c. hold up d . delay

2. The local council ----- his request to open a shop.

- a. cheered up b. turned down c. refused d. offended

3. They had ----- a first floor window.

- a. broken in b. entered by force c. make for d. delivered

4. Poverty does not disappear through welfare and charity but through economic activities ----- by both men women.

- a. put down b. carried out c. done d. prevented

5. He was 29 years when the war -----

- a. broke out b. started suddenly c. looked down d. satisfied

6. She ----- her coat and went out.

- a. put on b. set up c. dressed in b.
complained

7. The poachers always ----- with their catch.

- a. get away b. stand by c. destroy d. escape

8. The police are ----- the crime.

- a. looking into b. setting off c. investigating d. finishing

9. Some animals will ----- forever.

- A. die out b. think over c. consider d. disappear

10. Our plane ----- on time for Port Sudan.

- a. turn over b. took off b. left d. opened

11. We ----- early in the morning.

- a. started out b. began our trip c. made up d. closed

12. We intended to ----- in Cairo.

- a. come out b. stop over c. establish b. interrupt
our trip

13. There was a sandstorm but the plane ----- flying.

- a. filled in b. kept on c. started b. continued

14. The pilot decided to ----- to Khartoum Airport.

- a. turn out b. return c. go off d. fly

15. He decided that he would drive back to the town instead of -----
-- for the night at the hotel.

- a. putting up b. handing over c. stopping d. staying

16. _ “I’m sorry I hurt you I didn’t mean to say those things, I was angry”

- “Just ----- I didn’t want to see you for a while”

a. leave b. go away c. give back d. raise

17- “You have to ----- the back door.”

a. come in b. adopt c. enter d. put up

18- In prison he had ----- his watch and every thing he had possessed.

a. taken away b. taken after c. returned d. removed

19- When the weather is nice, I love to ----- early.

a- get up b. rise c. release d. move

20- Ahmed always forgets to ----- the fire when he leaves.

a. put out b. break into c. extinguish d. foresee

Appendix .2 List of the Referees

1. Dr Amna Mohammad Badri from Alahfad University for Women
2. Dr Mohammad Al-Amin Al-Shingeeti from Al-Ribat Al-Watani University