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A Corpus-based Study on the Use of Phrasal Verbs by Malaysian Learners of English: The Case of Particle *up*

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Abstract

In Malaysia, vocabulary is one of the important components of language syllabuses. However, the emphasis of language teaching and learning is generally on single-word units than multi-word units (MWUs). Despite the importance of this language form for successful language learning, previous studies have revealed that many language learners often face problems with word combinations (Channell, 1988; Nattinger and de Carrico 1992; Lewis 1993, 1997; Hunston 2002). Realizing the significant role of MWUs in language learning, this paper will highlight some preliminary findings from on-going research into the use of MWUs, in particular the use of phrasal verbs (PVs), amongst Malaysian learners of English. We will present an analysis of the lexicogrammatical behaviour of selected PVs with particle *up* comparing usage in a native speaker corpus (the Bank of English) and EMAS, a corpus of English produced by Malaysian learners. Our study so far has revealed some interesting features with respect to the common patterns of these PVs used by learners as compared with native speakers: sometimes because of cross linguistic factors, but very often because of learners' unfamiliarity with these common patterns. We will conclude this paper by discussing the implications for the teaching and learning of PVs in Malaysian classrooms.

Keywords

Multi-word units, Lexicogrammatical Behaviour, Phrasal verbs, Cross linguistic factors

1 Introduction

For many years, language teaching and learning was primarily concerned with mastering the grammatical structure or syntax of language, while the teaching of vocabulary has received little attention due to the "specialization in linguistic

research on syntax and phonology which may have fostered a climate in which vocabulary was felt to be a less important element in learning a second language" (Carter 1987:145). However, such views of looking at the learning of vocabulary of secondary importance have now changed, and more researchers, particularly those in the applied linguistics field, have realized the importance of vocabulary in language teaching and learning. Schmitt (2008:329) states that "One thing that students, teachers, material writers, and researchers can all agree upon is that learning vocabulary is an essential part of mastering a second language". Researchers have also found that the major problem for learners is not the grammatical aspects of language but rather with word combinations. "One particular aspect of vocabulary learning which deserves more attention than it has received up to now, and this is the problem of word combinability" (Bahns 1993:56). Channell (1988:115) reported that language learners often have problems in choosing the right combination of two or more words. Following this, more studies on the teaching and learning of multi-word units (MWUs) began to receive greater attention (Cowie 1992; Nattinger and de Carrico 1992; Hunston 2002; Lewis 1993, 1997).

In Malaysia, English is considered as a L2 and continues to be a compulsory subject taught at all levels in every Malaysian school. Previously, most of the language learning was limited to the traditional teaching of the 'closed system' of grammar while vocabulary received very little attention in language classrooms. The great emphasis on grammar was also reflected in the school syllabus, test and examination specifications, textbooks and reference materials used. In fact, examinations also emphasized learners' mastery of the language grammatical structures rather than knowledge of vocabulary. Language learning which highly focussed on learners' language accuracy rather than fluency has resulted students to feel less confident communicating in English as they fear of making grammatical errors which indicates their lack of mastery of the target language.

However, the present scenario has greatly improved and it seems that more vocabulary content has been included in the Malaysian school English language syllabus as a result of the increasing awareness among educators and academics on the importance of vocabulary in language learning. However, despite extensive research findings on the importance of MWUs in language learning, and the problems it may present to learners in mastering the language, textbooks and reference materials used in Malaysian schools remain unchanged, and seem to concentrate more on single-word vocabulary items, while the teaching of MWUs like PVs is still inadequate.

Obviously, learners need to be introduced to the wide range of MWUs in the target language in order for them to be successful language learners, and for their utterances to sound more 'natural'. Hence, syllabus, textbooks, reference materials

used in Malaysian schools should incorporate more MWUs than isolated words because “the more naturally multi-word units are integrated into the syllabus, the less ‘problematic’ they are” (Baker and McCarthy 1988:32). We believe that lack of awareness among teachers, syllabus designers, and reference materials providers of the importance of MWUs in mastering the L2 is perhaps one of the major reasons for the lack of attention given to this important aspect of language.

II Literature Review: MWUs and language learning

Erman and Warren (2000: 29) estimate that MWUs or ‘prefabs’, their choice for a cover term, account for 58.6 percent of spoken English and 52.3 percent of written English. Such evidence, they suggest, “makes it impossible to consider idioms and other multi-word combinations as marginal phenomena”. There is also convergent evidence that the sheer number of different MWUs may exceed the number of individual words in the lexicon (Jackendoff 1995; Mel’c’uk 1995; Pawley and Syder 1983).

Schmitt (2000) states that “language ability requires not only the ability to produce language through syntactic generation (via grammatical competence), but also the ability to use lexical chunks” (pg. 111). This is especially true if learners hope to gain the pragmatic fluency that comes from the right lexical phrase for the right functional situation. Ultimately language learners need both abilities to use language well. This importance suggests that we need to include instruction on lexical phrases in our language teaching which at present receives very little attention in Malaysian language classrooms. Nattinger and DeCarrico (1992) also argue that knowledge of lexical phrases is important for communicative competence because these phrases “provide the patterns and themes that interlace throughout its [conversation’s] wandering course” (pg. 121).

Despite the importance of MWUs in language learning, many language learners find this language element is difficult to learn and understand, thus hardly found in learners’ language production. A number of reasons have been reported by previous researchers to the avoidance and infrequent use of MWUs by language learners. Many multiword items have multiple meanings themselves. For example, Gardner and Davies (2007) found that the 100 most frequent phrasal verbs (PVs) in the BNC (e.g. *break up*, *set up*, *put out*) have 559 potential meaning senses, or an average of 5.6 per PV.

This acquisition of MWUs like PVs by language learners is further complicated by the fact that many classes of multiword items, such as PVs, are very common and highly productive in the English language as a whole (Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman 1999; Darwin and Gray 1999; Gardner and Davies, 2007; Moon 1997). Added to that, there has been general agreement that most MWUs are idiomatic in

meaning, and even though not all MWUs are idioms, all MWUs illustrate idiomaticity (Fernando 1996:30). Thus most language learners find them hard to learn and understand. Learners are even reported to totally avoid using PVs for instance or to replace PVs with their single-word unit equivalents which have equivalent meanings much easier to learn and understand (e.g. *make up*=create, *carry on*=continue, *come across*=discover, etc).

Added to that, learners' first language (L1) is another factor which may also influence their understanding and use of this important language form (Liao and Fukuya, 2004; Dagut and Laufer, 1985). Particle movement in most PVs is reported to cause avoidance among the Israeli learners of English as they do not have this structure in their L1 (Dagut and Laufer, 1985). Similarly, Hebrew learners were found to avoid PVs as such a grammatical structure does not exist in their L1, but were not avoided by Swedish learners who possessed such structure in their L1 (Laufer and Eliasson, 1993). There are other factors which have been highlighted by previous studies (e.g. inter language, natural input, etc) which are however, beyond the scope of the present investigation.

III Research Design

3.1 Research Questions

Taking into account the importance of MWUs in particular case PVs, and the problems frequently faced by language learners in understanding and using this language feature, the present study is therefore conducted to look at this issue within the Malaysian language learning context. As far as studies on MWUs particularly PVs is concerned, the researcher is unable to find any particular study focussing on Malaysian learners' understanding and use of PVs. There is a number of studies on lexis carried out in Malaysia which focuses on lexical errors (Abdullah, 2003; Tan, 1994; Ong, 2007) but one that mainly concentrates on PVs is so far not available. It is hoped that findings of the present study would help particularly teachers and educators in Malaysian schools, to get some insights on problems faced by their learners in learning MWUs like PVs, and to understand possible reasons to the occurrence of such problems which may assist them in looking for better ways of introducing and presenting this feature in their language learning classrooms.

3.2 Methodology

This paper will discuss some of the problems faced by Malaysian school learners in understanding some very common PVs. The selection of PVs is based on the results of prior PVs test conducted with school learners in Malaysia. The PVs test results indicate that the top four adverbial particles (AVPs) with high number of errors

include *up, down, out and off*. However, this paper will only concentrate and discuss on the combination of lexical verb (LV) with AVP *up*.

Following this, corpus investigation is carried out to look at the actual use of *up* in the PVs construction by language learners in their written and spoken texts. The English of Malaysian Students (EMAS) Corpus which consists of about 400,000 words of both written and spoken data collected from Primary 5, Form 1 and Form 4 learners in Malaysia will be used to inform the researchers on the regular patterns produced by learners as compared to those by native speakers. The Bank of English (BoE) Corpus is used as a reference corpus to represent the common and frequent patterns of written and spoken English produced by native speakers, which accordingly will inform researchers on the norm or standard usage of PVs by native speakers. At present, this corpus contains approximately 450 million words and is further divided into 20 sub-corpora which comprises of written and spoken texts taken from wide range of sources including papers, books, magazines, public radio, etc.

3.3 Data Gathering

As the EMAS corpus consists of untagged data, the first stage (Stage 1) then involved tagging process using CLAWS which is an automated part of speech (POS) tagger. All instances of adverb particle will be tagged as AVP by the CLAWS tagger. This will help the researcher particularly in extracting all instances of PVs in LV+AVP structure (e.g. I *picked up* the phone) and eliminate prepositional verbs (PRPVs) in LV+PRP form (e.g. He *ran up* the hill).

Stage 2 involves transferring the tagged data to language analysis software: Wordsmith Tool version 5 (WS5). This stage involved software (WS5) queries to identify and report every instance of AVP *up* found in the EMAS corpus. The AVP could be immediately adjacent to the lexical verb (LV+AVP), or within two words (LV+X+AVP) as in:

pick (LV) *up* (AVP) the phone
pick (LV) it (X) *up* (AVP)

Even though PVs can also appear within three words (LV+X+X+AVP) or more, the present investigation will only focus on those of two (e.g. *pick up*), and three (e.g. *pick it up*) varieties because it was reported that occurrences of PVs with longer separations are relatively infrequent (Gardner & Davies, 2007, p.345). Moreover, considering the learners' level of language learning (primary and secondary school level), it is considerably difficult for them to produce PVs with longer separations.

Table 1 below summarizes results from data gathering process in Stage 2.

Table 1: Frequency of AVP *up* in EMAS

Adverb particle (AVP)	LV+AVP and LV+X+AVP construction (<i>f</i>)
<i>up</i>	946

The next stage (Stage 3) involved software (WS5) queries to identify all instances of LV and their inflections that are frequently attached to AVP *up* in both LV+AVP and LV+X+AVP structures. Result of this stage was a production of a list of LV lemmas frequently attached to *up* in both structures. For the purpose of the present study, only the top six LV lemmas frequently attached to *up* were considered for further investigation. Summary of results obtained from data gathering in Stage 3 is presented below:

Table 2: LV lemmas frequently attached to AVP *up*

Adverb particle (AVP)	LV lemmas in LV+AVP and LV+X+AVP structure (<i>f</i>)					
<i>up</i>	wake (230)	pick (165)	get (53)	set (38)	go (19)	make (7)

Upon completing all the three stages of data gathering discussed above, the researchers were then provided with a list of PVs to be analyzed in the present investigation which include the top six LV lemmas frequently attached to AVP *up* in the EMAS corpus: *wake up*, *pick up*, *get up*, *set up*, *go up* and *make up*.

3.4 Data Analysis

The data analysis will focus on lexical and grammatical patterns of PVs produced by learners in the EMAS corpus, which will inform researchers on common problems faced by learners in understanding and using the selected PVs. Besides consulting the BoE corpus as a main reference to understand the common lexical and grammatical patterns of PVs by native speakers, the researcher will also refer to the Collins COBUILD Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (CCDPVs) as an additional reference to further understand the various meanings of a particular PV. Finally, based on the patterns identified, the researcher will provide some explanations to problems faced by learners in understanding and using these PVs, taking into account possible factors including learners’ lexical knowledge, unawareness of patterns as well as influence of learners’ L1.

IV Results and Discussions

My analysis of the selected PVs with AVP *up* has revealed a number of problems with respect to learners' use of the selected PVs and possible factors associated to the occurrence of such problems.

4.1 Inappropriateness in usage of PV *pick up* associated to lexical knowledge of learners

In general, my analysis indicates that lexical knowledge of the learners has great influence on the use of high-frequency PV *pick up*. Detailed analysis of the EMAS corpus, has illustrated many instances of inappropriate use of PV *pick up* by language learners. In fact, learners at all level of language learning investigated in the study (primary and secondary school levels) face similar problem particularly in distinguishing meanings and use of PV *pick up* (to lift something up from somewhere) and the lexical verb *pick* as commonly understood and used by native speakers. Frequent association of *pick up* with plant objects like *flowers* (≠131 or 79.4%) and *rambutans* clearly illustrate this problem, as shown in a sample of concordance lines below:

and Rozi went to a pond. They wanted to **pick up** the rose *flower*. Both of them 1
went to the river near their house to **pick up** some *daisies*. However, they wer
very attractive. Azura and Liya began to **pick up** some *flowers*. The boys were on
under the tree. I climb up the tree and **pick up** the *rambutans* and threw them to
were in red colour. Ah Meng decided to **pick up** the *rambutans* to eat. At that

Even though *pick up* can be used in the sense of picking up flowers/rambutans from somewhere at a lower place (e.g. ground/floor), detailed examination, looking at longer texts produced by learners, indicates that this is not what they meant. Learners' intended meaning is 'to pick flowers/rambutans from the trees/plants' and not 'to pick up flowers/rambutans from the ground/floor'. Clearly, confusion in the use of *pick* and *pick up* in such contexts has resulted in inappropriateness in usage which we think many learners are not aware of. Even though both *pick* and *pick up* are clearly distinguished in their L1 by two different terms (*petik*=*pick* and *ambil*=*pick up*), it is rather surprising that learners are still confused with their usage.

Despite the inappropriate use of *pick up* discussed above, detailed analysis shows that learners are however, able to appropriately address another core meaning of *pick up* which is commonly associated with phone/telephone as shown below:

and immediately rang her house. She **picked up** the *phone* just as the first

With an idly yawning, I woke up and **picked up** the **phone**. It was called by
 at the corner of my room rang. I quickly **pick up** the **phone** and heard a similar
 good morning! Who is speaking?" mother **picked up** the **phone** and answered it.
 one willing to get out from the room to **pick up** the **phone** except mother. "Hello

Even though there are only a small number of instances of *pick up* with these collocates ($\frac{9}{165}$ or 5.45%), this does provide an evidence that learners are quite familiar with the appropriate use of *pick up* in this sense. This clearly suggests that confusion usually arises when *pick up* is associated with plant objects like *flowers/rambutans* rather than non-plant objects (phone/s). Clearly, this confusion needs to be well-addressed in language classrooms.

4.2 Inappropriateness in usage of PVs *wake up* and *get up* and its relation to learners' L1

No doubt that learners' L1 can greatly influence learners' understanding and use of PVs. It has been reported that non-existence of PV structure in learners' L1 can make the learning of this language form in L2 more difficult to learners. One very clear example taken from the EMAS corpus to illustrate the influence of learners' L1 is inappropriate use of PVs *get up* and *wake up* particularly with noun *dream*. Consulting the BoE corpus, native speakers would commonly say *wake up from my dream* as shown in a sample of concordance lines below:

Sometimes during the night you may **wake up** from a **dream** that gives you the
 Cup in Indian Wells. I hope I never **wake up** from this **dream**," Moya said after
 in 1990). I'm only just starting to **wake up** from the **dream**. It doesn't seem
 to confront the real world. When I **woke up** from my **dreams**, the fun in my
 no end. The sad thing is that I just **woke up** from a **dream** that the green earth

Learners on the other hand, produced **get up from my dream* as shown in the example below:

were excited and happy that I finally **get up** from my **dreams**. After examined
 [SMPM-P-f4- (20)]

This suggests that learners have problems to differentiate meanings and usage of *wake up* and *get up* in the context above. One possible explanation is probably because in Malay language, both *get up* and *wake up* are represented with one single lexical term '*bangun*' as shown below.

I	<i>wake up</i>	at	6.00	in the morning.
Saya	<i>bangun</i>	pukul	6.00	pagi.

She helped the old lady to *get up* from the chair.
 Dia membantu orang tua itu untuk *bangun* dari kerusi.

The above examples clearly illustrate that learners' L1 may have influenced learners to think that both *wake up* and *get up* can also be used interchangeably as '*bangun*' in their L1, regardless of context. This suggests that the teaching and learning of PVs should also consider this factor and providing learners with clear distinctions between meanings and usage of these PVs in both L1 and L2 is obviously necessary.

4.3 Grammatical structure of PV *wake up* in relation to learners' level of learning

Analysis of *wake up* in the learner corpus also illustrates that learners particularly those at a primary school level seem to have problem in producing the correct grammatical structure of *wake up* with pronouns in which AVP *up* is placed before the noun (*wake up me*) instead of after the noun (*wake me up*) as shown below:

house wife. Every morning, my mother **wakes up me** a 5.00 a.m. She always prepare
 [SRGK-S-s5-(29)]

However, this problem does not appear to learners at a higher level of learning (secondary school) as many instances of this PV are grammatically formed. There is a possibility that frequent meetings with PV *wake up* throughout the language learning process help to improve learners' awareness and understanding of the correct structure of *wake up* with pronouns and eventually able to produce them appropriately in speech or writing. Added to that, learners' tendency to directly translate phrases or sentences from L1 to L2 is probably another reason to the incorrect structure of *wake up (bangun)* in the above sense as illustrated in the example below:

'*emak membangunkan saya*'
 *'mother wakes up me'

In learners' L1, pronoun *me (saya)* is placed at the end, after the verb, which is different from the L2 structure in which pronoun *me* should be placed in between LV *wake* and AVP *up*. Thus, when learners translate this sentence directly from their L1 to L2, the L1 structure is indirectly replicated, which then results in inappropriate grammatical form of *wake up* with *pronouns* discussed above.

4.4 Problems associated to non-literal PV *make up* and its relation to learners' L1

Overall, my analysis has also indicated that learners seem to show better understanding of literal PVs than the non-literal ones. For instance, the literal meaning of PV *wake up* (to become conscious again after being asleep), *get up* (to move from a lower position or level to a higher one / get out of bed), *go up* (to move from a lower position to a higher one) and *make up* (to invent something, sometimes in order to deceive people) appear to be less problematic to learners. In fact, most instances of these PVs in the EMAS corpus are associated with their literal rather than non-literal meanings.

However, confusion can be clearly observed when these PVs are used metaphorically and one clear example to illustrate this can be seen in the use of PV *make up*. When *make up* is used metaphorically associating it with making a decision, learners seem unable to distinguish the *make up* + mind and make + decision structures as shown below:

the answer. Finally, Dwiki **made up** his **decision**. He was going to steal and rob
[SMART-S-f4-(08)]

Even though both structures have similar meaning, the difference lies in their lexical and grammatical pattern. Consulting the BoE corpus, PV *make up* is always collocated with the noun (*mind*) while proper verb *make* is always associated with noun (*decision*) as shown in a sample of concordance lines below:

sleep visited us," Mary **made up her mind** to go herself. Ebenezer did not
may very likely help you **make up your mind**. <p> So, if the cost of Newsweek
working in this process. I **made up my mind** because I know that what's being
reached, the 706 agency will **make** a **decision** regarding whether there is
have at least 10 days to **make** your **decision**. If you ever have less than 10
a week in court, Rawley **made** his **decision**. He accepted criticisms of the

Clearly, learners' unawareness on lexical and grammatical patterns of *make up* is probably one of the possible reasons to the inappropriate use of this PV in the above context. This problem is then further extended as both structures are represented by the same phrase '*buat keputusan*' in their L1 (Malay) as shown in the examples below.

Please	<i>make up your mind</i>	now.
Sila	<i>buat keputusan</i>	sekarang.

He *made a decision* to stop working.

Dia *membuat keputusan* untuk berhenti kerja.

This suggests that learners' L1 is another possible reason to the inappropriate production of **make up + decision* by learners, as they may assume that both structures can be used interchangeably as *'buat keputusan'* in their L1.

4.5 Unawareness of other collocates of PVs *set up*, *go up* and *pick up* that create core meanings of these PVs.

Another problem with respect to PVs is learners' unfamiliarity with other core meanings of PVs. In the case of *set up* for instance, there is a large number of instances of *set up* (≠35 or 92.1%) being associated with collocate *camp/camps*.

In the morning, after breakfast, we **set up** the **camps**. The first activi
When we arrived the destination, we **set up camps** quickly because there
As we arrived at the campsite, we **set up** our **camps**. After that we wa
ul place, they clearly the place to **set up camps**. After they set up th
eplace to set up camps. After they **set up** the **camps** they participated

The high frequency of *set up* to co-occur with collocates *camp/camps* clearly suggests that learners' have a rather limited use of this PV. Association of *set up* with other common collocates such as *shop/home/school* which is also used in similar sense; to build (e.g. '...transport children and to *set up* schools in the areas affected by the...') does not appear in the EMAS corpus which further proves learners' limited understanding and use of this PV.

Similarly, in the case of *go up*, it is rather surprising that another common meaning of *go up* (to increase such as in *price/cost/fees* etc), which appear very frequently in the native speaker corpus does not appear in the learner corpus. Learners' unawareness of other common collocates of *go up* (e.g. *price/cost/fees*) which creates the meaning of *go up* in the sense 'to increase' is possibly a reason to the existence of such problem.

Another example is shown in learners' restricted and inappropriate use of *pick up* with collocate *flower/s*. Native speakers also frequently use *pick up* in the sense of picking up someone who is waiting to be collected (e.g. '...arrived at her ex-husband's house to *pick up* their son at 10:30 a.m. Saturday.'). which is another core meaning of *pick up*. However, there are instances in the learner corpus showing inappropriate use of *pick up* with object people as shown below:

Mamat quickly jumped into the river to help the girl. Mamat **picked up** the girl

[SMMA-P-f1-(18)]

Faizal ran to the river and jumped into it. The girl is almost drown and so weak. I

and Azmer help Faizal **picked up** the girl

[SMTI-P-fl-(17)]

This inappropriateness of usage is possibly due to learners' unawareness of the context in which *pick up* is commonly used in this particular sense. However, such problem does not appear in the texts produced by those at a higher school level (Form 4) as they are able to address *pick up* in the above sense appropriately as shown in the examples below:

be the most perfect day ever. My mom **picked me up** from school. Although I was that case, for sure I'll go, would you **pick me up** around 8 o'clock". "OK... wi number so he could call my parents to **pick us up**. A little while, my dad did up. A little while, my dad did came to **pick us up**. He drove straight to the ho ne nearby and he called my parents to **pick us up** and took Aliza to the nearest

This suggests that length of language learning probably helps to increase learners' understanding of *pick up* in the above context. Longer exposure to the target language has probably allowed learners more opportunities to meet this PV and helped to improve their understanding on meanings and appropriate usage.

4.6 Unfamiliarity with non-core meanings of PVs *pick up*, *set up* and *wake up*

It is expected that learners at this stage of learning are less familiar with many non-core meanings of PVs as they are not very much exposed to this kind of meanings. Non-core meanings not only appear less frequently in the native speaker corpus, they are frequently used metaphorically by native speakers, which learners may find difficult to understand them. For instance, the association of PV *pick up* with habit/skills (e.g. 'They are able to *pick up* their partner's behaviour') does not appear in the learner corpus possibly due to the non-literal meaning of *pick up* in this context. Learners may find it difficult and strange to associate *pick up* with abstract nouns like habit/skills rather than with concrete objects like flowers/books/phones etc. Similarly, association of PV *set up* with financial-related activities like business/company/fund (e.g. '...investors in a joint-stock company to *set up* a business organization'), which is commonly found in native speaker corpus, hardly appear in the learner corpus. However, this is not surprising and the non-occurrence of such association is expected as it commonly appears in economic or business type of texts. On the other hand, EMAS data consists of primary and secondary school students' texts which are highly narrative and descriptive in nature.

Similarly, native speakers also associate PV *wake up* with issues or crisis that raise people's alertness and awareness such as global warming/HIV/garbage problem/environmental problem etc. (e.g. 'When will governments *wake up* to the global

warming crisis and...'). The use of *wake up* in this context indicates that people do not only literally *wake up* from sleep, as commonly understood and used by learners, but they may also *wake up* from the state of being unconscious or unaware of the issues or crisis happening around them. Considering the metaphorical use of *wake up* in this sense, the nature of data in the learner corpus itself, and the learners' level of learning, it is expected that the use of *wake up* in this sense is unlikely to appear in the EMAS corpus. Accordingly, introducing learners to the non-core meanings of *pick up*, *set up* and *wake up* discussed above is not really important particularly to learners at lower level of language learning as these meanings are less useful to them.

V Conclusion

Overall, my analysis of the six selected PVs with AVPs *up* above indicates a number of problems associated to learners' understanding and use of these PVs. In general, learners show less difficulty in understanding literal and core meanings of PVs which usually involve physical movement of people (e.g. 'I *went up* to my room') or concrete objects (e.g. 'I ran out from my bedroom to *pick up* the phone') rather than abstract object (e.g. 'Mary *made up* her mind to go herself'). The non-literal PVs are either infrequently appear or inappropriately addressed by the learners. Learners' infrequent use of metaphorical PVs suggests that this type of PV is more difficult to understand and thus hardly produced. However, it is important to note that some common PVs are frequently used metaphorically (e.g. The plane *took off*, Don't *give up*, Please *look up* the meaning in your dictionary, They managed to *put out* the fire in few minutes, Don't *look down* on her, etc) and they are considered as core meanings of the PVs. Since they are very common in the native speakers' discourse, thus they are very useful in everyday settings and deserve more attention and better treatment in language classroom.

A number of factors have been identified which may contribute to the infrequent and inappropriate use of PVs above. Learners' lexical knowledge, unawareness of common collocates and patterns, unfamiliarity with context of use and most importantly, learners' L1 are some of the possible factors which can influence learners' understanding and use of these PVs. Thus, it is equally important for language teachers to take these factors into account and explanations with respect to learners' L1 and L2 is clearly necessary to facilitate better understanding of this language form. We also believe that increasing learners' familiarity with the common collocates and patterns of PVs are a useful and more meaningful way of introducing PVs to learners.

It is also found that learners at a lower school level face more problems with PVs in comparison to those at a higher level, particularly in producing appropriate

grammatical form of PVs. This suggests that length of language learning may be another possible contributing factor to better understanding and use of PVs by language learners. However, Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999, pg. 275) suggested that it is important to develop an early awareness of separable and inseparable PVs in learners because without having clear understanding of the separation concept in PVs, learners may have vague picture of PVs form and accordingly result in inappropriate usage of this language feature. Thus, it is equally important that basic rules of PVs (e.g. separability) need to be introduced at a very early stage of language learning to encourage better production at a later stage.

In short, this analysis has illustrated that Malaysian school learners in general, do understand and produce PVs in the oral and written texts, but usage is very limited and sometimes inappropriate, due to factors discussed above. Thus, it is our hope that findings of the present investigation help to improve awareness of teachers and learners in particular, on the importance of PVs particularly in communicative competence, as well as common problems commonly faced by learners with respect to usage, and possible factors associated to the learning of this language form. With better understanding of these issues, it is our hope that this language element will receive better treatment in language classrooms in Malaysia.

Notes

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