

تحليل الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب السنة الثالثة في

قسم اللغة الإنكليزية بجامعة حمص عند استخدام

الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر

طالبة الماجستير: روان قدور

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المخلص

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى تحليل الأخطاء التي يرتكبها طلاب السنة الثالثة في قسم اللغة الإنكليزية بجامعة حمص عند استخدام الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر؛ وذلك من خلال إدراك التحديات التي يواجهها المتحدثون غير الأصليين، وتحديد الأنواع الأكثر شيوعاً من الأخطاء، والعوامل الأساسية التي تسهم في هذه الأخطاء، والاستراتيجيات التربوية التي يمكن أن تساعد الطلاب في التغلب على الصعوبات التي يواجهونها عند استخدام هذه الأفعال. أجريت هذه الدراسة استناداً إلى نظرية تحليل الأخطاء لكوردر (١٩٦٧)، وتعد هذه الدراسة مهمة لكل من المدرسين والطلاب في جامعة حمص؛ إذ إنّ تداول هذه الدراسة سيعزز الاستراتيجيات التربوية التي يتبناها المدرسون، وسيساعد الطلاب في تحسين كفاءاتهم في استخدام الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر. وقد تمّ جمع البيانات باستخدام البحث الكميّ للبيانات؛ من خلال اختبار يتكوّن من ٤٠ عنصراً، تُدار لعينة من ٥٠ طالباً في اللغة الإنكليزية في السنة الثالثة في جامعة حمص في سوريا، وتمّ تحليل تلك البيانات اعتماداً على الأخطاء التي ارتكبها الطلاب في أثناء الإجابة على أسئلة الاختبار. وبعد تحليل البيانات إحصائياً أظهرت النتائج أنّ معظم الطلاب قد ارتكبوا أخطاء في اختبار الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر، وقد صنّف البحث هذه الأخطاء إلى فئات أربعة: الفئة الأولى: الأخطاء المعجمية؛ والتي تبيّن أنّها من أكثر أنواع أخطاء

الطلاب شيوعاً. أما الفئة الثانية: سوء التشكيل؛ أما الفئة الثالثة: سوء الترتيب؛ والتي تتبع بدورها من العوامل ضمن اللغة الواحدة. أما الفئة الرابعة: كانت أخطاء في وضع حرف الجر. ومن المأمول أن تكون نتائج هذا البحث ذات نفع للمهتمين بتعليم اللغة الإنجليزية.

الكلمات المفتاحية: الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر، الأخطاء، نظرية تحليل الأخطاء، اختبار الأفعال المتعدية بحروف الجر.

Analyzing Errors Made by Third-Year Students of English at Homs University when Using Phrasal Verbs

Abstract

This paper aims to analyze errors made by third-year students of English at Homs University when using phrasal verbs. Recognizing the challenges faced by non-native speakers, the research identifies the most common types of errors, the underlying factors that contribute to these errors. The research is conducted on the basis of Error Analysis Theory by Corder (1967). A quantitative research approach was employed to collect data by means of a written test on phrasal verbs, consisting of 40 items given to a sample of 50 third-year students of English at Homs University in Syria, which would subsequently be analyzed

based on the errors made by the participants while responding to the phrasal verbs test tasks. It is hoped that educators and learners at Homs University will benefit from this study and enhance their teaching strategies which helps students improve their phrasal verbs usage. Upon analyzing the data statistically, it was found that the results demonstrate that a majority of the concerned students made errors in the phrasal verbs test. The results further indicate that the most common type of errors made by students were semantic complexity errors, followed by misinformation errors as the second category. The third type was classified as misordering errors, and the final classification of errors was identified as errors in particle placement. It is hoped that the findings of this paper will be advantageous for those interested in the teaching and learning process of English in Syria.

Key Words: phrasal verbs, errors, Error Analysis Theory, phrasal verbs test.

1. Introduction

Phrasal verbs (henceforth PVs), as part of multi-word lexical verbs, make up a significant part of the English language. Ruth and Stuart (1986) suggest that they play an important role in enhancing

learners' vocabulary by creating or modifying new verbs that convey different meanings. PVs are a common feature of English proficiency, and their importance is highlighted by their frequent use in everyday informal conversations, as well as their widespread presence in both written and oral communication, which serves as one of the main reasons why mastering them is essential in the process of learning English. It is important to note that PVs exemplify the ambiguity that exists at the intersection of grammar and vocabulary. Moreover, PVs are notoriously difficult to master, causing ongoing confusion for those studying English as a foreign language (EFL) and English as a second language (ESL). This challenge is particularly pronounced for learners whose first language (henceforth L1) is non-Germanic, such as Arab-speaking learners. In this paper, the focus is on analyzing errors made by third-year students of English at Al-Baath University in using PVs.

1.2. Significance of the study

The present paper contributes to the advancement of grammatical competence and awareness among all individuals participating in the educational processes of English in Syria. This is achieved by providing them with a deeper comprehension of the errors they have

made when utilizing PVs to recognize prevalent patterns and the areas in which they encounter the most difficulties. Specifically, it provides a comprehensive analysis of the predominant categories of errors and the foundational elements that contribute to their occurrence, which can be exceedingly beneficial for learners.

1.3. Aim of the study

This study aims at analyzing errors made by third-year students of English at Homs University in Syria regarding their use of PVs, by addressing the subsequent research questions:

- 1) What are the most common types of errors made by third-year students of English at Homs University in using PVs?
- 2) What are the underlying factors that contribute to these errors?

2. Literature review

This section clarifies the Error Analysis Theory and emphasizes its significant contribution to providing a comprehensive understanding of the errors made by learners, along with its primary procedures. It wraps up with an overview of previous studies related to the analysis of errors in PVs committed by students.

2.1 Error Analysis Theory

Error Analysis (henceforth EA) was introduced by S.P. Corder in (1976). This method, embedded in the realm of applied linguistics, aims to elucidate the formal differentiation between the first language of learners and their target language, as well as to anticipate potential errors. Brown (2014) presents an alternative perspective on EA, asserting that EA is delineated as the systematic examination, scrutiny, and categorization of departures from the norms of the target language, followed by the elucidation of the underlying mechanisms employed by the language learner.

EA provides an in-depth examination of the errors produced by learners, moving away from reliance on the Contrastive Analysis (henceforth CA) approach that compares the learners' first language with the target language. The recognition of learning obstacles plays a crucial role in the development of specialized educational interventions as emphasized by Sharma (1980). Furthermore, he noted that the utilization of educational assessment can uncover both the advantages and drawbacks of the program. The examination of errors revealed that CA failed to accurately predict a significant portion of errors, as its primary emphasis was on investigating language transfer while neglecting

other error types. The objective of EA, as articulated by Corder (1975, p. 170), is indeed to ascertain the extent of the learner's knowledge and ignorance, and to “ultimately enable the teacher to supply him not just with the information that his hypothesis is wrong, but also, importantly, with the right sort of information or data for him to form a more adequate concept of a rule in the target language.”

According to Khansir (2013), EA does not operate under the assumption that errors made by learners are solely attributed to interference from their L1. Instead, errors can also stem from universal strategies within a theoretical framework of EA in second language acquisition (henceforth SLA) as examined through CA.

2.2 Error Analysis Procedures

Corder (1975) posited that a considerable number of researchers engaged in EA during the 1970s continued to prioritize language instruction. Indeed, numerous scholars who sought to deepen their understanding of SLA perceived the study of errors as inherently driven by an aspiration to enhance pedagogical practices.

Consequently, Corder (1975) proposed five steps in EA research to realize that objective.

The initial step in EA involves the collection of a sample of learners' language. As posited by Ellis (1997), various crucial factors play a significant role in shaping the data collected on learners' errors such as language, medium, genre, content, learner, level, mother tongue, and language learning experience. Ellis (1997) also accentuates the significance of these factors in the procurement of a precisely delineated sample of learner language, thereby facilitating the formulation of unambiguous assertions about the types of errors that learners generate and the specific circumstances under which these errors occur.

The second stage is error identification: According to Corder (1981, p.21) "every sentence is to be regarded as idiosyncratic until shown to be otherwise". Corder (1981) introduced a framework for error identification, where he made a clear distinction between overt and covert errors. It was explained that overt errors occur when a sentence violates the rules of the target language, rendering it incorrect. Conversely, covert errors occur when a sentence appears grammatically correct on the surface but fails to convey the intended meaning to the learner. Furthermore, Corder (1978) emphasized the significance of interpreting the learner's

utterance to discern between the intended message of the learner and what is actually conveyed.

The third stage involves describing errors: Saville–Troike and Barto (2016) noted that errors can be classified by language levels, including phonological, morphological, or grammatical aspects. They may also fall into broader linguistic categories like negative reconstructions or auxiliary systems, or specific elements such as prepositions, PVs, and articles. Ellis (1997) identified five unique types of errors as the following:

- Omission is the exclusion of necessary elements for grammatical correctness (e.g., “He very angry”).
- Addition involves the unexpected inclusion of elements in a well-formed statement (e.g., “I have camed”).
- Misformation refers to using one grammatical structure instead of another (e.g., “It was the best gift in (of) his life”).
- Misordering is the incorrect arrangement of words in a sentence (e.g., “Soccer is the most popular sport international”).
- Blends indicate the improper combination of two different words or phrases (e.g., “The only one movie I see”).

The fourth stage focuses on explaining errors. This stage seeks to understand the root causes of identified errors. As noted by Ellis and Barkhuizen (2005), researchers must determine where the errors originated. Richards (2015) studied errors from learners of diverse non-English backgrounds. He found that these errors fall into two main categories:

1. Interlingual errors: Ellis (1997) described L1 transfer as the influence of the learner's L1 on learning an L2, noting it significantly causes errors. Interlingual errors, as proposed by Krashen (1981), may arise as a result of EFL inaccurately applying the conventions of their native, stemming from their struggle to grasp the principles of the second language.
2. Intralingual and developmental errors: They manifest during the acquisition of a second language, particularly at a stage where learners have not fully grasped the language. These errors can also be attributed to the inherent complexities and challenges of the language itself.

The last stage is error evaluation. Saville-Troike & Barto (2016) emphasized assessing the severity of errors and their effects on understanding. Corder (1975) suggested two criteria: linguistic and communicative.

The linguistic approach categorizes errors as global or local based on rule violations in terms of their nature and quantity. Burt and Kiparsky (1974) distinguished between global and local errors. Global errors disrupt sentence structure, thereby impeding comprehension. In contrast, local errors affect specific elements without obstructing overall understanding. Richards, et al. (1992, p. 123) provided illustrative instances of both global and local errors as follows:

Global error: *I like take taxi but my friend said so not that we should be late for school.

Local error: If I heard from him I will let you know.

The communicative approach uniquely addresses errors. Seedhouse (1992) indicates that in real communication, individuals frequently do not respond to local errors that do not impede comprehension. This reflects how language naturally flows, where slight grammatical mistakes are disregarded as long as the intended message is clear. However, global errors are critical as they disrupt communication. Such errors must be corrected to ensure understanding.

2.3 Previous studies

A study on the challenges in learners' use of PVs is that of Kamarudin (2014). It investigates the extent to which Malaysian

English learners comprehend and use PVs in the English language. Two distinct methodological approaches, namely survey and corpus analysis, are employed to address the research inquiries. This includes examining individuals' perspectives on the lexical material featured in educational textbooks. The results suggest that, along with the learners' level of competence and gender, the characteristics of PVs and cross-linguistic elements, specifically the learners' native language, significantly impact Malaysian students' comprehension and usage of PVs. The challenges they face with PVs are exacerbated by inadequate and unsuitable information provided in textbooks and dictionaries. The outcomes of the examination on PVs also demonstrated that, generally, the learners under scrutiny exhibit a moderate comprehension of PVs, with over half of them achieving scores ranging from 50% to 79% in the PVs assessment, signifying an average level of performance. The PVs evaluation that was carried out further exposed the ongoing challenge that learners face in grasping this particular linguistic structure. Furthermore, it was identified that learners display a more proficient comprehension of PVs with literal meanings when compared to those with metaphorical meanings. The discovery from the investigation also unveils the inclination of learners to view PVs not as a single

lexical entity, but rather as two distinct units. Essentially, this highlights a lack of recognition of the consistent patterns and a deficiency in emphasis on highly frequent instances.

Subsequent research conducted by Monica (2020) seeks to analyze the errors of PVs employed by fifth-semester students of the English study program at Iain Bengkulu. This research uses a descriptive qualitative approach. The sample for this study comprised 28 students from Class C of the English Education Study Program at IAIN Bengkulu. In this research, the investigator selected a test as a tool to determine the most prevalent types of errors that students commit when using PVs, an observation checklist to analyze how frequently these errors occur, and interviews to understand the reasons behind these errors in PV usage. The findings revealed that students exhibited four categories of errors. Firstly, errors of misformation emerged as the most frequent errors made by students when using PVs, accounting for 47.02%, followed by errors of misordering at 42.55%, and then errors of addition at 8.03%. Lastly, errors of omission were recorded at 2.38%. According to the data collected from the observation checklist, the primary reasons for students' errors in using PVs were attributed to their insufficient

understanding of PVs and a lack of attention to learning them. Furthermore, the interview results confirmed that limited knowledge of PVs was the main factor contributing to the high number of errors. The interviews also indicated that distractions and anxiety were significant contributors to these errors. Most students struggled to maintain focus, often forgetting how to correctly construct PVs and the associated rules.

Additionally, Abdulmehdi (2021) investigates the difference in errors made by Iraqi college students regarding the use of idiomatic and literal PVs. A 30-item test consisting of recognition and production parts was conducted on 150 students at the College of Education, English department, University of Diyala. The results showed that the number of recognition errors was similar to that in production, and students made more errors when using PVs with idiomatic meaning. Abdulmehdi (2021) commented that this occurrence could potentially be attributed to insufficient familiarity or erroneous interpretation of PVs by the student. The heightened level of idiomatic expressions is present in certain PVs. The inadequate attention paid to this particular aspect in the educational resources provided to the students. The research findings indicated that Iraqi college students encounter challenges

with EPVs. A considerable number of errors made by students involve PVs with figurative meanings. The educators within the English department lack a comprehensive understanding of the importance of such verbs. Insufficient emphasis is placed on the instruction and clarification of PVs included in the curriculum.

4. Methodology and data collection

This section outlines the methodology employed in this research by detailing the instrument, the sample, and the analysis of the data obtained from the PVs test.

4.1 The Instrument

The primary data collection instrument employed in this research was a test comprising three tasks. The test was developed in the form of closed-ended fill-in-the-gap, multiple-choice, and completion questions. The test is a beneficial instrument for collecting data by measuring many variables that an individual or a group of learners may possess, such as skills, intelligence, expertise, and competence (Brown, 2019).

4.2 The sample

The sample chosen for this study comprised fifty third-year students of English at Al-Baath University in Syria. The PVs test was administered to five third-year English students to identify any ambiguous words or questions. Error Analysis by Corder (1967) is used as a guide for data analysis. The analysis of the data was carried out by categorizing the errors of PVs based on the specific task in every part of the test, and determining how often they occurred in each section. The data was examined through the presentation of numerical and percentage details for every section. This is achieved by supplying the frequency of errors in each task along with the overall percentages of errors across all tasks.

4.3 Analysis of the data obtained from the PVs test

Data collection was succeeded by participant response analysis. The first three stages of EA were adhered to as outlined below, omitting the final stage of error evaluation.

4.3.1 Collection of the Learners' language

Table 1.

Factors	Description
A. Language	English
Medium	A written test
Genre	3 questions (fill-in-gaps, multiple choices, and completion task)
Content	A variety of subjects such as daily life, communication, and sports-related matters
B. Learner	
Level	Varies from intermediate to upper intermediate.
Mother Tongue	Arabic
Language Learning Experience	A hall in the university

Table 4.3.1 Factors to consider when collecting samples of learner language.

4.3.2 Identification of PVs errors

Tables 2, 3, and 4 systematically present the accurate and inaccurate answers of the three tasks within the test.

Table 2.

Phrasal Verbs	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Pick up	20	40%	30	60%
Give back	29	58%	21	42%
Take off	31	62%	19	38%
Get down	24	48%	26	52%
Bring in	8	16%	42	84%
Use up	27	54%	23	46%
Play on	8	16%	42	84%
Mess around	6	12%	44	88%
Think over	7	14%	43	86%
Cut off	3	6%	47	94%
Turn over	8	16%	42	84%
Let down	11	22%	39	78%
Give up	14	28%	36	72%
Put off	2	4%	48	96%
Look into	7	14%	43	86%

Table 2. displays the frequency of accurate and inaccurate answers in the fill-in-the-gaps task, where participants were required to insert the provided PVs into the blanks, fundamentally

relying on their understanding of the semantic meanings of the PVs. The collected data revealed that the participants provided 545 inaccurate responses despite being provided with recommended PVs. Conversely, merely 205 responses were deemed accurate. The findings suggested that students faced greater challenges with idiomatic PVs, as evidenced by 208 incorrect responses compared to only 42 correct responses. Additionally, in the case of aspectual PVs, students provided 199 incorrect answers and merely 51 correct ones, whereas they recorded 138 incorrect responses and only 112 correct ones for literal PVs.

Table 3

Phrasal Verbs	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Look after	36	72%	14	28%
Shut off	22	44%	28	56%
Told off	15	30%	35	70%
Look up	19	38%	31	62%
Ran into	26	52%	24	48%
Build up	29	58%	21	42%
Pointed out	18	36%	32	64%

Come from	28	56%	22	44%
Handed over	11	22%	39	78%
Searched for	20	40%	30	60%
Fade out	15	30%	35	70%
Call back	11	22%	39	78%
Pick up	13	26%	37	74%
Take off	11	22%	39	78%
Start over	12	24%	38	76%

Table 3. presents the occurrence of correct and incorrect responses in the multiple-choice task, in which participants had to select the appropriate answers that pertain to the syntactic features of PVs. The collected data revealed that participants encounter more obstacles when dealing with separable PVs, as demonstrated by 276 incorrect responses in contrast to merely 224 correct ones. Conversely, students experienced fewer difficulties in handling non-separable PVs, as evidenced by 110 correct responses and only 90 incorrect ones. Concerning the second part of this task, the results implied that students face a higher number of challenges with intransitive PVs, as shown by 112 inaccurate

responses in contrast to merely 38 accurate ones. Moreover, about transitive PVs, respondents provided 76 erroneous answers and only 24 correct ones.

Table 4

Phrasal Verbs	Correct		Incorrect	
	Frequency	Percentage	Frequency	Percentage
Speed up	19	38%	31	62%
Figure out	21	42%	29	58%
Look forward	25	50%	25	50%
Pass away	23	46%	27	54%
Put on	15	30%	35	70%
Cheer up	17	34%	33	66%
Doze off	21	42%	29	58%
Tear down	29	58%	21	42%
Drop in	17	34%	33	66%
Bring back	32	64%	18	36%

Table 4. demonstrates the occurrence of correct and incorrect responses in the completion task where the participants were required to fill in the missing particles in the designated gaps. The collected data unveiled that individuals generated 281 incorrect answers as opposed to only 219 correct ones in the context of selecting the appropriate particles for the gaps.

4.3.3 Description of PVs errors

Based on the collected data, student errors during the test were classified into four main categories, which will be detailed below.

4.3.3.1 Errors of semantic complexity

The researcher found that semantic complexity errors were the most common among students, with 545 incorrect responses. These errors arise from misunderstandings of the complex meanings and structures of PVs in English. Many PVs have meanings that are not easily deduced from their constituents. This complexity often leads to confusion, especially for non-native speakers. As shown in participants' responses in Task 1, idiomatic PVs are particularly challenging, with 208 incorrect responses exceeding correct ones by 42, due to their inclusion of

metaphorical meanings that differ from their literal translations.

Such intricacy carries the risk of misinterpretations and erroneous usage of PVs based on their semantic nuances. Some examples provided by the respondents encompass the following:

- Following his retirement, Mr. Eblekji give back control of the company to his son.
- My parents are thinking over buying a new apartment.

In the first instance, the students opted to utilize the PV ‘give back’ in place of employing the PV ‘turn over,’ resulting in confusion and improper application. Several PVs possess idiomatic meanings that are not readily inferable from the constituent words, as some students use the PV ‘thinking over’ instead of ‘looking into’ which means to examine something or consider it carefully, yet the meaning is not obvious from the individual words.

4.3.3.2 Errors of misformation

Through analysis of the data obtained from the test, the second category of errors made by students was misformation, which occurred 281 times. Misformation, as described by Dulay (1982), involves using incorrect morphemes or structures. This error is common as learners often mistakenly swap particles in PVs. Each

PV requires specific particles to accurately convey its intended meaning. Some examples given by the participants include the following:

- If the driver doesn't **speed on**, they will never reach their destination early.
- Before heading to the party, Emmy **puts out** her new dress.

In these cases, misinformation arises from students' uncertainty in choosing the right particle. As a result, they associate the particle 'on' with 'speed' instead of 'up'. The same error occurs in the next example, where 'out' is wrongly used instead of 'on' to create the PV 'put on' denoting the act of wearing clothing.

Acquiring a comprehensive understanding of both the verb and the particle as a cohesive unit is imperative.

4.3.3.3 Errors of misordering

The researcher found misordering errors to be the third most common error type, with 276 occurrences. Dulay (1982) states that misordering errors occur when morphemes are placed incorrectly in phrases or sentences. This highlights the difficulties learners face in correctly arranging words in PVs due to their

separable or inseparable nature, as shown in the subsequent example:

- *Isabella looks her little sister after.

One frequent error lies in the separability of PVs, where certain PVs allow separation from their objects, whereas others do not as in the example above. It is a common challenge for students to discern which verbs are capable of separation or must remain inseparable, resulting in inaccuracies in their application.

4.3.3.4 Particle placement errors in transitive vs. intransitive PVs

The researcher identified particle placement errors in transitive and intransitive PVs as the fourth student error category, with 188 instances noted. Understanding particle placement in PVs is crucial for both native and non-native English speakers, as it greatly affects language clarity. Particle positioning varies based on whether the verb is transitive or intransitive. Non-native English speakers frequently make particle placement errors, leading to unnatural or inaccurate sentences.

Transitive PVs require a direct object to fully convey their intended meaning. When using transitive PVs, the particle can appear before or after the object. Errors can happen if learners place the particle incorrectly when the object is missing or when using a pronoun, which should follow the verb and pronoun, as shown in the subsequent example:

- *She picked up it.

In this instance, students encounter difficulties with this construction, especially when the object is a pronoun. They incorrectly place the particle ‘up’ between the verb and the object, instead of intervening the pronoun ‘it’ between the verb and the particle.

Intransitive PVs do not require a direct object, simplifying their use but possibly causing positioning errors. The particle always follows the verb and cannot be separated from it by an object. Errors can occur when learners try to position a particle where an object typically goes, as shown in the following example:

- *The plane off took.

In this specific case, students often struggle with positioning the particle ‘off’ in a position commonly designated for the object.

Intransitive PVs limit particle placement because there's no object to separate from the verb.

4.3.3 Explanation of PVs errors.

Upon identifying and analyzing the errors that the students exhibited in the test, it is essential to identify the factors influencing these errors in the PVs test. Various elements contribute to the difficulties faced by third-year English students at AL-Baath University regarding PVs as follows:

One significant factor contributing to students' errors is interlingual errors, which are indicative of negative transfer stemming from the learner's first language. This interference has the potential to hinder learners from comprehensively understanding the distinctive characteristics of the target language, resulting in an inadequate acquisition process. The structural disparities that exist between English and the learner's native language, specifically the Arabic language in the context of this study, may result in erroneous assumptions regarding the formation of PVs, particularly in selecting the appropriate particle to attach to the principal verb. For example, students frequently engage in errors within this task as they erroneously associate the verb 'look' with the particle 'on' to

signify the act of anticipating something with delight, thereby leading to grammatical errors. Additionally, in the context of the fill-in-the-gap task, students frequently commit errors since they tend to rely on direct translations from their L1, leading to the improper use of the PV 'give back' instead of the PV 'turn over' to convey the meaning of delivering business on behalf of another person.

Another factor leading to students' errors is insufficient familiarity and exposure. Learners frequently experience inadequate exposure to the English language, which may impede their capacity to acquire the full range of grammatical constructs and vocabulary. Numerous language learners experience difficulty with PVs due to the relatively infrequent emphasis placed on them in comparison to other grammatical constructs. They typically confront PVs at a more advanced phase of their learning process, which may lead to insufficient familiarity. This lack of familiarity can lead to inaccuracies, as learners might not have experienced adequate exposure to these constructions within contextual settings. The unpredictability associated with PVs can, in certain instances, stem from the employment of erroneous particles, whereby a learner

might articulate ‘speed away’ instead of the accurate ‘speed up’ thus indicating a misunderstanding of the specific particle that ought to follow the verb. Furthermore, insufficient exposure to authentic language utilization, such as engaging with reading materials and listening to native speakers, can impede students' capacity to internalize the appropriate application of PVs. In the absence of practical examples, learners may revert to incorrect forms that they have either memorized or are already acquainted with.

The concluding factor contributing to students' errors is intralingual factors, which arise from the inherent complexities present within the English language itself. Learners may misorder elements due to a lack of understanding of English syntax or the specific rules governing PVs. For example, students face challenges with separable and non-separable PVs as they erroneously classify the PV ‘come from’ as separable and ‘told off’ as non-separable. Furthermore, many students lack awareness of the correct placement of the particle when the direct object is a pronoun, which leads to them frequently placing it incorrectly before the pronoun, and as a result, they often struggle to use PVs accurately.

5. Conclusion

This section outlines the main conclusions of the study based on the collected data, pedagogical implications, and recommendations for further research.

5.1 Main conclusions

The results derived from the PVs test unambiguously demonstrated that, in general, the participants involved in this research display a poor understanding of PVs, as evidenced by the fact that more than half of the answers were incorrect, with only 1102 and 648 being correct in the PVs test, thereby reflecting a subpar performance. On the one hand, it was clear that the most common errors observed in the PVs test were attributable to semantic complexity, manifesting in a frequency of 545 occurrences in contrast to a mere 205 correct responses. Therefore, it suggested that students continue to face challenges in comprehending this particular linguistic structure, particularly about the high-frequency PVs frequently encountered in everyday situations (e.g. ‘take off’, ‘pick up’, ‘give up’). Moreover, the findings suggest that idiomatic PVs present a greater obstacle for learners than their literal

counterparts, which go in line with the findings of Kamarudin (2014) and Abdulmehdi (2021). Therefore, it is of utmost importance for learners to engage with a diverse range of PV meanings, encompassing both literal and idiomatic interpretations, which possess practical relevance for their learning.

It was apparent that the second most prevalent errors identified in the PVs test were instances of misinformation, as they manifested 281 times in contrast to 219 accurate responses. The findings of the current research also suggested that students frequently produce PVs inaccurately by interchanging one particle for another, a phenomenon that necessitates more effective intervention within language pedagogy, highlighting the importance of teaching both the verb and the particle as a cohesive unit.

Furthermore, it was clear that the third most common errors noted in the PVs test were errors of misordering, as they appeared 276 times compared to 224 correct responses. The test clarified the challenges encountered by learners in the accurate arrangement of words within PVs due to their separable and inseparable nature.

The final category of errors identified during the PVs was related to misplacement of particles within both transitive and intransitive PVs, which manifested in 188 occurrences as opposed to only 62 correct responses. The findings of the current study also demonstrated that learners face difficulties in the positioning of the particle within both transitive and intransitive PVs. They erroneously situated the particle between the verb and the object pronoun, instead of correctly positioning the pronoun between the verb and the particle.

On the other hand, the underlying factors that contribute to these errors can be divided into three categories. Firstly, interlingual errors reflect negative transfer arising from the learner's L1. This interference can obstruct learners from fully grasping the unique features of the target language, leading to an inadequate learning process. Secondly, insufficient exposure and familiarity, as learners often encounter limited interaction with the English language, can hinder their ability to acquire the complete range of grammatical structures and vocabulary. This factor goes in line with the reasons for errors found in Kamarudin's (2014), Monica's (2020) and Abdulmehdi's (2021) studies. Thirdly, intralingual factors emerge from the intrinsic complexities found within the English language itself, as learners may misarrange components due to a lack of

comprehension of English syntax or the specific rules governing PVs.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

Students of English need to be skilled in understanding PVs. Therefore, specific teaching strategies can help improve learners' grasp of PVs. Indeed, this research holds considerable significance for both teachers and students English at Al-Baath University. On the one hand, reading this dissertation allows educators to gain a deeper understanding of how students deal with PVs and whether they encounter challenges in their usage. By concentrating on frequent errors and their underlying reasons, teachers can develop more efficient educational settings that address the unique requirements of their learners. Therefore, educators need to prioritize the teaching of both the grammatical and semantic features of PVs, as this emphasis considerably enhances students' academic performance relating to PVs. On the other hand, this study holds considerable importance for students, as it facilitates a more effective enhancement of their understanding of PVs. Students should be aware of the significance of PVs as a marker of language fluency, thereby enabling them to construct personalized study plans aimed at the mastery of PVs.

Furthermore, it is essential for them to systematically engage in the integration of PVs within their everyday conversations and academic contexts if they seek to sound more natural and spontaneous. All in all, teachers should help students master the syntactic and semantic aspects of PVs and teach them how to these constructions as a crucial component of both grammar and vocabulary.

5.3 Recommendations for further research

There are some limitations in this research concerning age, number, and gender. Concerning age, the study focused on the errors young individuals use in PVs without investigating the errors children or the elderly commit. Hence, Future research is required to investigate whether there is an influence of age on the way of using PVs. Furthermore, this research was conducted comprehensively without accounting for the gender of the

participants. Consequently, future research may incorporate gender as a factor and examine its potential influence on the utilization of PVs.

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