



**The Difficulties of Translating English Phrasal Verbs  
into Arabic That Encountered Sudanese Secondary  
Students**

(A case Study of 3rd Level Secondary Students in  
Zalingei Town)

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### **Abstract.**

Phrasal verbs are created some problems to students' secondary schools in Zalingei town, the Capital of Central Darfur State, Sudan. Students are unable to form or put the phrasal verbs into sentences to express new concepts. Most of them are unable to translate phrasal verbs from English into Arabic Language, Which affects their performance in reading Arabic Language. Therefore, the study carried out to investigate these problems which encountered them so as to find solution to these difficulties. The descriptive analytical method was used. The population of the study includes students and teachers at secondary schools. The sample of the study comprises twenty students at 3<sup>rd</sup> level and ten teachers. The researcher designed two tools; a questionnaire for teachers and a test for female twenty students to collect the relevant data of the study. The study came up with these results;

More than 70% of the teachers agreed that learners need to know and understand the words before begin to translate. More than 60% of the teachers assured that the meaning of phrasal



verb is more difficult to the learners so that they are not able to translate them into Arabic.

The study recommended that;

The ministry of education should have given the opportunity of continuous training for all English language teachers at secondary schools. Teachers in their schools should have provided Students with various activities which contain most frequent English phrasal verbs in different contexts in order to practice them.

**Key words:** phrasal verb, translating, encountered, students, 3<sup>rd</sup> level



## Introduction

One of the most productive patterns of the English language is that of phrasal verbs. Studies dealing with the processes of word formation (Bauer, 1983; Quirk et al., 1985) usually disregard the study of phrasal verbs as a lexical and syntactic resource for word formation. Exception is made in the case of nominalized phrasal verbs and in those combinations which are occasionally formed by means of a hyphen, that is, creativity in word formation is frequently limited to the concept of word as one lexical and structural unit. Therefore, translation is science of art; this process is required for communication and gaining information about scientific fields. People need translation for studying about arts and to obtain knowledge on various fields of sciences.

The culture is the main thing that makes translation a perfect process .When the translator studies more on culture, and then this will facilitate his task in translation. These two languages belong to different settings and different language families. Arabic is classified as a member of the Semitic family of languages,



English as member of Latin family. Arabic is defined here as the official language spoken in more than twenty countries in the Middle East.

English is an Indo-European language and the official language of Britain, the United States, and most of the commonwealth countries. Syntactically, Arabic and English exhibit different word orders .Arabic is, for the most part, a synthetic language. For instance, nouns are inflected for case, and verbs are inflected for mood. Prosaically, each of the two languages has its own ways of versification and phonologically Arabic and English have different phonemic inventories. In addition, if one wants to assess the real hindrances of translation, one cannot ignore the geographical a distance between Arabic culture and English culture. Therefore, one may classify the main hindrances of translation, which affect the quality of the translation outcome into: lexical hindrances, prosodic hindrances, structural hindrances and cultural hindrances. The Sudanese culture considered as a strong and an effective culture which has many characteristics and features. This study is carried out to investigate the difficulties of translating



English phrasal verbs into Arabic which encountered by the Sudanese secondary students; particularly the 3rd level secondary students in Zalingei town.

## 1. Literature Review

Few studies have explored differences in using English phrasal verb out of their English contexts (Al-Adam, 2011; Charlop, et al., 2012; Ali Abu Humeid, 2013). Most studies have used samples with genders, samples mainly consisting of men, or samples with fewer females (Guan, 2011; Kulj, et al., 2011; Chung-ling, 2012). Using of phrasal verb linguistically speaking, has always been a part of human communication as it helps promote self-presentation. Although speakers of both sexes are equally prone to commit mistakes in matters concerning translating phrasal verb, their performance may be different based on how and why this or that phrasal verb is used the way it is used.

Looked at it from a lexical view point, translating phrasal verb from English into Arabic is one of the most difficult tasks for as a foreign language (EFL) students. When fully investigating this



grammatical phenomenon, it is found that the main problem remains not only in recognizing the equivalent of phrasal verb but also in understanding its use and usage in Arabic.

## 1.2 Forms and Meaning of Phrasal Verbs

### 1.3 Definition of phrasal verbs

Placing prepositions and adverbs after some verbs in English, in order to obtain different and various meanings, is a very frequent trend in modern English. These verbs are called phrasal verbs" (Thomson & Martinet, 2009). According to Potter: "Phrasal verbs are made up of a verb and a particle, a particle can be an adverb (such as "out" or "away") for example: "go out", "put away", or it can be a Preposition (such as "with" or "from") for example: "deal with", "shrink from".

Some phrasal verbs have two particles; both an adverb and a preposition for Example: "get on with", "stand up for" (cited in McMillan, 2005:2).

They are one type of the English verbs that operates like a phrase, more than a word. This means that phrasal verbs are unlike single and simple verbs in the sense that they are a set of words (verb+ adverb/preposition). It has been noted that this type



of verbs has been called differently such as: discontinuous verbs, compound verbs, verb and adverb combination, verb particle construction, two part word verb and three part word verb (McArthur, 1992). Other grammarians like Parrott and Crystal call the multi word verbs. Parrott (2000) defines multi word verbs as being "made of a verb (e.g. *come, get, give, look, take*) and one or more particles. Particles are words that we use as adverbs and /or prepositions in other contexts (e.g. *away, back, off, on, out*)" (P.108).

According to some grammarians, multi word verb is the best name for this linguistic phenomenon to refer to all the forms phrasal verbs can take (verb+ adverb + preposition/ Verb + adverb + preposition). These possible combinations are distinguished by two different names for some other grammarians. When the particle is a preposition, the combination is called a prepositional phrase. When the particle is an adverb and a preposition, the combination is called a phrasal prepositional phrase. The name multi word verbs seem the best name since it covers all these forms. Phrasal verbs are best described as a lexeme; that is a unit of meaning that may be greater than a word





(Crystal, 1995). They may be obtained from combining the same verb with different particles. Therefore, different meanings are obtained (e.g. *break away, break in, breakout*). The same multi word verb may have more than one meaning (e.g. I broke the chapter down into small units, or the car broke down just outside London). Other verbs are combined only with one particle, and generally have only one meaning (e.g. log on)(Parrott, 2000). Jepsen (1928) defines phrasal verbs as: short) verbs are frequently used in connection with adverbs and prepositions in a way that the meaning of the combination can be in no way deduced from the meaning of the meaning of each word separately, for instance *put in, put off, put out, put up, make out, make for, make up, set down, set in, set out, set on, set up...*"(Cited in Fraser, 1976:64).

## 2. The Significance of The Study:-

One of the most important and productive patterns of the English language is that of phrasal verbs. Therefore, this study will be



significant to pupils at basic, secondary schools, students at university level, translators, and teachers of EL at different levels.

### **3. Objectives of the Study**

The main objective of the study is:

- To investigate the causes of difficulties that encountered students' secondary school with translating English Phrasal verbs into Arabic.

### **4. Questions of the Study:-**

The study should answer the following question.

- 1-To what extent do the difficulties of translating English Phrasal verbs into Arabic encountered students' secondary schools in Zalingei?

### **5. Hypothesis of the Study:-**

- 1-The lack of knowledge of the most learners of English Phrasal verbs produces inaccurate translation into Arabic Language.

### **6. Methodology of the Study:-**



The study used the descriptive analytical method. The population of the study comprises 3<sup>rd</sup> level students and teachers of English language, both of them at secondary schools in Zalingei town, Central Darfur State. The researcher selected (30) thirty participants as a simple random sample of the study to represent the whole population. The researcher used two tools; part one is a questionnaire for ten teachers, five teachers from Zalingei secondary school for girls and the rest of them from Khalid Ibn Alwaleed secondary school; and part two is a test for twenty students at zalingei secondary school for girls.

## **7- Analysis and Discussion**

### **Part one**

#### **4.1. Analysis of Students' Test**

The test consists of knowledge made up of five English phrasal verbs chosen according to the scale of most common phrasal verbs in English and five prepositions. Learners are asked to translate them by explaining those using synonyms into Arabic.

**Table (1) "Student's explanations of the phrasal verb" hand in"**



The first table shows that all the students, that is 100% have given wrong answers. All of the students' definitions of the phrasal verb "hand in" were: to put something in hand. The high percentage of the wrong answers given by the third year students' show that, this phrasal verb is unknown to the majority of them.

### Table (2) "Students' explanations of the phrasal verb "turned down"

The second table shows that 100% of the students have not answered. This indicates that they are ignorant totally this phrasal verb. This phrasal verb cannot be guessed from its individual components. No one of them has given the right meaning and apparently; they have come across it before.

### Table (3) "Students' explanations of the phrasal verb "ran into"

The statement(1)	Students translation	No	%	Students answer
you have to <b>hand in</b> the report by the next week	يجب عليك ان تشارك هو عندو يد اريد ان اسالم مافي يدي ان اقدم تحمل على مضارع بسيط	20	100	0



The statement(3)	Students translation	No	%	Students answer
<u>Iran into</u> your mother yesterday at the market	انا جريت انا ذهبت انا آتي	20	100	0

As can be seen in table (3) 100% of the students have not able to translate the phrasal verb without being defined. It seems that they had no idea about it at all. There was a confusion between the verb "ran into" however, supposes that the students tried to obtain the total meaning by gathering the meaning of the two parts; the meaning of "ran" and into".

**Table (4) "Students' explanations of the phrasal verb "looked into"**

The statement(4)	Students translation	No	%	Students answer
The police <u>looked into</u> the matter	الشرطة تنظر في الامر الشرطة تتحقق في الامر الشرطة تبحث في الامر	20	100	3



The table (4) shows that this phrasal verb is an opaque one. It is not a well-known phrasal verb as it rarely occurs 85% of third year students have not answered. Most of them have provided wrong answers.

The statement(5)	Students translation	No	%	Students answer
We can <u>count on</u> him	يمكننا مساعدته التحري معه هل ممكن انا اسالك يحسب	20	100	0

**Table (5) "Students' explanations of the phrasal verb "count on"**

Table (5) shows that 100% of them have not translated it. All students have given wrong answers; among them there is a translation which seems to be a literal one which is; "to use something to do something else". Other translations have no possible explanations like: "to accept", "to give" except that they are attempt based on intuition to find the right meanings. No correct answer has been given. , at least, no minor relation



between the phrasal verb meaning and the meanings given (to investigate, to help, to ask, etc...).

**Table (6) "Students' explanations of the preposition "above"**

The statement(6)	Students translation	no	%	Students answer
The picture hangs <b>above</b> my bed	في فوق تحت اعلى جنب خلف	20	100	6

As can be seen in the sixth table 30% of the students have found the right answer and presented the right meaning. It is a well-known preposition. Yet, 70% have presented wrong answers.

**Table (7) "Students' explanations of the preposition "after"**

The statement(7)	Students translation	no	%	Students answer
The cat ran <b>after</b> the dog	أسرع بعد خلف مثل	20	100	8



Table (7) shows that 40% of them have provided right answers. It is a common English preposition. The students are familiar with this combination. 60% have provided wrong answers.

**Table (8) "Students' explanations of the preposition "by"**

The statement(8)	Students translation	no	%	Students answer
He lives in the house <u>by</u> the river	جانب جوار قرب بعيد	20	100	10

Table (8) shows that 50% of the students have translated correctly a preposition and the other 50% have wrongly answered, that means students also face difficulties in translating prepositions into Arabic.

**Table (9) "Students' explanations of the preposition "in front"**

The statement(9)	Students translation	no	%	Students answer
Our house is <u>in front</u> of school	جوار قرب امام بعيد	20	100	6





Table (9) shows that 30% of the students have translated correctly the sentence while, 70% of them have given the wrong answers. The right meaning of the item in the source language does not always lead to a right translation [equivalent] in the target language (problem of equivalence).

**Table (10) "Students' explanations of the preposition "off"**

The statement (10)	Students translation	no	%	Students answer
The cat jumped <b>off</b> the roof	قفز يتعلق	20	100	16

The table (10) shows that 80% of the students have given right answers of the preposition "off" and only 20% have given wrong answers. The students consider that the preposition "off", which in most of the cases holds the idea of finishing.

## Part two

### 4.2 Teachers' questionnaire analysis

**Table (1) "the majority of learners face difficulties in translating English phrasal verb and preposition into Arabic"**

Variable (1)	Frequency	Percent
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Agree	4	40%
Strongly agree	6	60%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

The statically analysis in table one variable (1) shows that; 40% represent by 4 of the teachers are agree with the assumption "the majority of learners..."and 60% by 6 of them strongly agree with the idea.

**Table (2)"the meaning of phrasal verb and preposition are more difficult so the learners do not translate them into Arabic"**

Variable (2)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	3	30%
Strongly agree	4	40%
Neutral	1	10%
Disagree	2	20%
Strongly disagree	0	0%%
Total	10	100



The above table shows that 30% support the assumption "the meaning of phrasal verb and preposition" that introduce by 3 teachers agree the notion; and 40% of them strongly agree the idea this introduce by 4 of them whereas, only 10% of them are neutral nevertheless 20% of the teachers are disagree the assumption.

**Table (3) "both of the phrasal verb and preposition are difficult because they are belong to the different culture"**

Variable (3)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	5	50%
Strongly agree	4	40%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	1	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

Table three clarifies that 50% of the teachers agree the notion "both of the phrasal verb and preposition" and 40% of them



advocate the idea strongly agree such as only 10% of the teachers are disagree with assumption.

**Table (4) "the lack of knowledge of the most learners of ph v and pre in accurate of translation into Arabic language"**

Variable (4)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	4	40%
Strongly agree	1	10%
Neutral	4	40%
Disagree	1	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

The above table illustrates that 40% of the teachers are agree with the variable "the lack of knowledge of the most..."and 10% of them strongly agree with notion nevertheless 40% of all the teachers are neutral and only 10% of them disagree with assumption.

**Table (5) "because English ph v is compound of two or more words that make the learners cannot able to translate them into Arabic"**



Variable (5)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	5	50%
Strongly agree	0	0%
Neutral	4	40%
Disagree	1	10%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

Table five displays that 50% of the teachers are agree with the idea "because English phrasal verbis compound of two..." and 40% of them are neutral whereas 10% of them are disagreeing with the notion.

**Table (6) "the learners need to know and understand the words before begin to translate"**

Variable (6)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	7	70%
Strongly agree	3	30%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100



Table six unveils that 70% of the teachers are agree with assumption "the learners need to know and understand..." and 30% of them are supporting the notion strongly agree and the researcher also agree with them.

**Table (7) "lack of contextualization and grouping of phrasal verb constitutes difficult translation"**

Variable (7)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	6	60%
Strongly agree	3	30%
Neutral	1	10%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

Table seven clarifies that 60% of the teachers are agree with the notion "lack of contextualization and grouping of phrasal verb..." and 30% of them advocate with the idea strongly agree whereas only 10% of them are neutral.



**Table (8) "the difficulties come from the different nature of Arabic and English"**

Variable (8)	Frequency	Percent
Agree	4	40%
Strongly agree	2	20%
Neutral	0	0%
Disagree	3	30%
Strongly disagree	1	10%
Total	10	100

Table eight displays that 40% of the teachers are agree with the assumption "the difficulties come from the different nature of..."and 20% of the total number support the idea strongly agree whereas 30% of them are disagree and only 10% of them are strongly disagree with the notion.

**Table (9)"Students make mistake is not because of their ability to translate the ph v and pre, but to understand the various uses of these pre and ph v".**

Variable (9)	Frequency	Percent
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Agree	6	60%
Strongly agree	2	20%
Neutral	2	20%
Disagree	0	0%
Strongly disagree	0	0%
Total	10	100

Table nine illustrates that 60% of the teachers are agree with the idea "students make mistake is not because of their ability ..." while 20% of them are strongly agree with the assumption and only 20% of them are neutral.

### Conclusion

The test is made up to investigate the students' knowledge of the meaning of the English phrasal verbs and preposition. It was hypothesized that if they do not know their meanings, they will not be able to translate them even when they are relying on the context. The results of the test show that in most cases, when there is an ignorance of the meaning of the phrasal verb, there is an inability to translate. Through this test, learners of English





have proved that when phrasal verbs are unknown and totally new for them, they cannot translate them in a right way. When the phrasal verbs are known to them they have translated them correctly. The context can be a saving and a helping factor to produce a right and an appropriate translation but this is not true for all the types of phrasal verbs. Through this test, a worth-mentioning point that has been noted is learners' inability to express their thoughts and ideas in English. Some common phrasal verbs were easy to be translated; yet, the learners have not translated them in the first five sentences. The second part of the questionnaire is to see the teachers' opinion about this topic and most of them are agree and strongly agree with the assumptions of the study. To conclude this study, the researcher found that the learners of English are unable to translate the English phrasal verbs and preposition into Arabic because they do not know their meanings in the source language. How could a translator transmit the meaning of what is unknown, unfamiliar, unclear and not understood for him? The findings show that the learners truly confront considerable difficulties in their process of translating phrasal verbs. Through these findings, the researcher



found that 3rd year learners of English are unable to translate the English phrasal verbs correctly into Arabic because of their total ignorance leading to confusing them with similar simple verbs; to translate them literally, or to depend on the context which is not always helpful for them. The above tables show that no one translated the first five sentence at all that means the students are (100%) unable to translated the phrasal verbs yet ( 30%) of them are translated the prepositions. Therefore, the study is recommended that; the ministry of education should be given the opportunity of training for all teachers at secondary schools and Students must provide with various activities which contain most frequent English phrasal verbs in different contexts in order to practice them.

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