

LEXEMIC REPRESENTATION OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS FROM THE PERSPECTIVE OF MULTILINGUAL LEARNERS IN THE PROCESS OF ACQUIRING NEW PHRASAL VERBS

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***Abstrak.** Kajian frasa kata kerja dalam Bahasa Inggris yang merupakan komponen penting dalam pembelajaran kosa kata mempersyaratkan para pelajar memiliki pemahaman yang memadai akan betapa rumitnya memahami leksikon. Dari kaca mata pelajar berlatar-belakang multi-bahasa, kajian semacam ini akan terhalang oleh adanya perbedaan representasi leksikon dari bahasa pertama ke bahasa kedua dan sebaliknya. Karya tulis ini mencoba menggunakan representasi skematik dari leksikon guna memilah frasa kata kerja ke dalam beberapa tingkatan kesukaran setelah diperbandingkan dengan perwujudan dari lexeme-nya dalam bahasa pertama (Bahasa Indonesia). Pemilahan ini diharapkan bisa digunakan untuk menarik kesimpulan terkait pemerolehan frasa kata kerja dan, selanjutnya, terkait pengajaran frasa kata kerja Bahasa Inggris sebagai bahasa asing. Lebih lanjut, pentingnya pemahaman akan bahasa pertama bisa menempatkan para pengajar Bahasa Inggris yang bukan penutur asli Bahasa Inggris pada status dan penghargaan yang semestinya seperti yang disuarakan oleh pendukung paradigma World Englishes, yang berpandangan bahwa tujuan belajar Bahasa Inggris adalah terbangunnya kemampuan berkomunikasi lintas budaya menggunakan Bahasa Inggris sebagai lingua franca.*

***Keywords:** lexicon, phrasal verbs, communication, World Englishes.*

Second language acquisition (SLA) has been termed ideal to conclude language learning processes experienced by adults, regardless of the number of language systems underlying themselves (Ellis, 1987; Dörnyei, 2005). The acquisition process guarantees more result than same process. Such is an excellent choice despite its being over simplifying (Klein, 1986; Yule, 2001; Gass and Selinker, 2009). The dichotomy however agrees on several areas including the presence of native speaker and the role of the learners learning for the optimal input one encounters and how these inputs correlate with the goal of the process, suffice it to say, competence. The components of competence that include lexicon, a phonological component, a syntactic component, a semantic component, and a sociopragmatic component may interact at various levels of

comprehension and speech production (VanPatten in VanPatten, Williams, Rott and Overstreet, 2004:29).

Native speakers (NS) or more competent interlocutors' presence within the interaction during language acquisition process yields benefits for learners. This interaction is crucial. Long (1996) cited in Mackey and Abbuhl (in Sanz, 2005:207) states that "negotiation work that triggers interactional adjustments by the NS [native speaker] or more competent interlocutor facilitates acquisition because it connects input, internal learner capacities, particularly selective attention, and output in productive ways" (451-452). This should indicate that the creation of contact between learners and their interlocutors bears more significance than the salient composure of the facilitators. Gass (in VanPatten, Williams, Rott and Overstreet, 2004) reminds us that no matter how rich the contextual information is such interaction does not determine that an acquisition process takes place (also Gass and Selinker, 2009).

However, more specifically in looking at how much interaction contributes to morpho-syntactic elements of acquisition, interaction merely provide convincingly evidence in the acquisition of vocabulary items. In the context of learners of Japanese as a second language studied by Loschky (1994) reported by Mackey and Abbuhl (in Sanz, 2005:209) interaction facilitates comprehension only in the level of the vocabulary items while the acquisition of grammatical structure may not be supported as much. More specifically, Milton (2009:218) summarizes Ellis' (1994) report that "most L2 vocabulary is learned incidentally, much of it from oral input". This emphasizes that much part of acquisition process takes place from verbal-communication within meaningful interactional contexts between the learners and their interlocutors, i.e. teachers. It also highlights the necessity to consider the scope of the interactions in relation with the needs for instructed or natural communication in L2.

All in all, the unquestionable benefit of the interaction in second language context is the provision of sufficient exposure to language use in social context. And this has long been the focus of studies on language acquisition and SLA (see Langacker, 1973; Ellis, 2008; McKay, 2008; Gass and Selinker, 2009; Tarone in Han and Odlin, 2006). The preconditioned contexts for acquisition needless to say hamper the action of the tutors or teachers in working with the students mostly in countries where English is

not spoken as the first language, for instance here in Indonesia (see Lowenberg, 1991; Lauder, 2008).

In the same vein, there are also questions whether the inclusion of teaching culture to learners of English as foreign language (EFL) are necessary. This paper follows the paradigm that views the target language culture should not be a part of the content of the English Language Teaching (ELT).

World Englishes: Issues of Native-Speakerism

Within the framework of language acquisition theories, NNS and NS's roles have always been unequal. NSs always become the norm-carriers from which every move made while tutoring must accord with theirs. The role models for facilitating learning or acquisition are NSTs. The outputs of the acquisition process must also be predetermined by the native-like competence. In this regard, teacher's competence is a matter of dispute. The growing numbers of Education and Teachers Training faculties (FKIP) in direct respond to the needs of fresh teachers have not answered the questions about the quality of the graduates. People seem to be very difficult to satisfy when it comes to English proficiency. People's criteria of proficiency have so far been strongly influenced by exonormative parameters. Such will only benefit NSTs of English and put NNSTs into a problematic position that in the same time they have to provide a framework for learners' knowledge and endure the fact that the degrees of appreciation on their competence is being questioned.

The situation, however, has invited a new paradigm in viewing the new reality of how English should best be positioned also how globalization play major role. Considering the outcomes of globalization, NNSTs should engineer their own language learning. Modiano (2000:342) believes that with globalization, "the English language is making inroads into the consciousness of non-native English speakers in a manner which is securely cut off from the influences of education authorities." And the language itself should not be treated as a homogenous system with singular norms and grammatical system (Canagarajah 2006:231). This paper will follow the World Englishes (WE) paradigm to suggest a point of view that both supportive toward the development of English teaching in Indonesia and tolerant to the ecology of local culture and therefore local languages. Within WE paradigm, English as both a subject

and linguistic study is seen not to be an independent and homogeneous system instead it develops along with the development of its speakers and their cultures (see Kachru, 1997; Brutt-Griffler, 2002; Kachru, Kachru and Nelson, 2006; Kachru and Smith, 2008).

One of the issues that closely relates to the practice of ELT in Indonesia is native speakerism. Succinctly, it is not a view that is against NS. It is a line of thought that invites reevaluation of the role of NS in teaching English to speakers of other languages and promotes relevant appreciations to NNS in relation with the profession. Forwarding the supremacy of NS according to Anchimbe (2006) “clearly disregards other determinant factors in ELT such as professional training, educational qualification, experience, language proficiency, and sociocultural implications.”

Discussion: factors in the acquisition of new English phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs are one of the objects of study in English language within the vocabulary competence. In teaching vocabulary teachers motivate learners to project their vocabulary mastery to communicative competence. Hence, the early design of a vocabulary class is to develop a set of ability in communication. Based on the personal experience of the writer, in vocabulary class learners may analogize that vocabulary mastery is analogously the fuel in one's motorcycle/vehicle. Without enough fuel the distance that the learners can cover surely far less than expected. The distance in this analogy refers to fluency in using English for communication. The discussion that follows contains some notes from Vocabulary 01 and 02 classes tutored by the writer for freshmen of English Department of Jember University.

Problems with Phrasal Verbs

The overview of phrasal verbs construction in English sentences has never been a part of introductory part of the syllabus. Teachers may not be accustomed to giving limitations or scope of phrasal verbs. Such may be assumed of as being the result of the teachers' absence of knowledge about the phrasal verbs themselves. Perhaps for the teachers, phrasal verbs are only do-able by means of memorization, that is to say, that due to the less systematized samples (compare with verb tense study) learning phrasal verb needs only memorizing. The core definition of phrasal verbs itself may be confusing for some teachers, not to mention the learners, as there are at least two different versions. One definition of phrasal verbs loosely involves the incorporation of

a preposition or adverbs after the base verb (Thompson and Martinet, 1986:315) while the second limits phrasal verbs as “a verb that is made up of two parts: a ‘base’ verb followed by an adverb particle” (Swan, 1996, p. xxvi; also Cambridge International Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs) or verbal phrase construction with a verb followed by a preposition (McCarthy and O’Dell, 1999:26).

Below are types of phrasal verbs of English grouped based on learners’ perception. The grouping does not represent any school of thought in any grammar studies, syntax, or any other. It is based solely on personal point of view of the writer of this paper to as closely as possible aspire novice anticipation.

Contrastive Sense

These phrasal verbs is the most problematic as they appear to be the closest relative to the Indonesian verbs. This closeness unfortunately creates confusion, or even, contrastively, reluctance of learners to directly translate them into the corresponding Indonesian verbs. In one way, the components of the English phrasal verbs are ambiguous with the other phrasal verbs. Take for instance in the case of “turn off”. “turn” is a case in point while “off” is well identified with another particle “of”. Learners might have learnt that “of” is not so different with “off”. In a sentence like “I turned off the light” or “I turn the light off”, it may be a case in point that “off” indicates something negative as opposite to positive, zero in binary system as opposite to one, dark as compared with light. The adverb particle “off” means causing to stop operating. The particle is synonymous with “cut, switch off, turn out”. It is therefore quite possible that learners, mostly inexperienced ones, would mistakenly translate phrasal verbs having the same particle.

Alien Pair

This group of phrasal verbs concerns with idiomatic phrasal verbs. Phrasal verbs the likes of *run out*, *look up*, *black out*, *make out*, *take off* may be amongst the most difficult to predict and, therefore, to produce in L2 system. More strangely examples that refer to particular varieties of English like “square of” which is identical only for American variety of English will be much more confusing. In an utterance “I run out of gasoline”, learners may come to a conclusion that the activity being expressed involves movement from a particular place to another which may require the works of both legs.

Similarly, “It’s black out” cannot guarantee that it has more relevance with the absence of electric power rather than white component in a color spectrum.

Ambiguous Pair

Some other phrasal verbs are those with two different meanings. As one meaning is troublesome at times, the case with two or more different meanings can give more difficulties. When teaching the phrasal verbs like *turn down*, *do up*, *take off*, teachers must be aware of the potential conflicts between the first meaning and the second. Introducing the different meanings for the same set of phrasal verbs may not be as simple as it may seem. Take for instance *turn down*.

Meaning 1	Meaning 2
She <i>turned down</i> the stereo. (= made it not so loud)	She <i>turned down</i> the invitation.(= refused it)

Table 1. Ambiguous Phrasal Verbs

(Taken from: McCarthy and O’Dell, 1999:26)

When asked about the meaning for each phrasal verb, most learners would find that the first is clear while the second is not as clear, if not unknown to them. The L2 production that employs the second is of course not as convincing.

Redundant Pair

Redundancy becomes another point in phrasal verb study that we need to look at. Let’s observe an example of phrasal verb “look for” in a sentence “*I am looking for my glasses*”. The case with this example given in Thomson and Martinet (1986, p. 315) may mislead students to thinking that the design of the print implies certain emphasis. The italicized NP (*I*) and VP (*am looking for*) clearly indicate difference in the probable intended message by the authors compared to the last NP (*my glasses*).

Coping Strategies

It is also the concern of this paper to see how learners employ the strategies to recuperate such obstacles. When asked about what would they do to escape from the troubles of determining the relevant phrasal verbs, most would say that they do not know any specific strategies. Suffice it to say that learners would tend to consider principles in their first language system. This of course, invites them to generalize the system onto the English production (selection) of the problematic phrasal verbs.

One example would be that phrasal verb “go off” like in “My alarm clock went off” or “Police made precautionary acts to anticipate that the bomb may go off anytime.” In the first example, the possible translation by learners may be that the alarm clock is broken. Therefore the consequences of such sentence might be that the person whose alarm clock went off did not wake up as planned, or that he needs to get a new alarm clock. Certainly, in communication the learners’ incompetence is not due to any problems of learning that he encounters. Yet the problem is more on the quality of the phrasal verb.

The second example amplifies the potential failure of any learners to comprehend effectively this type of phrasal verb. The use of particle “off” may not lead learners to anticipate positive connotation of the phrasal verb “go off”. More immature learners may simply guess that the bomb may not explode at all. But the other information provided by the interlocution betrays his belief. “Why would the police make any precautionary act if the bomb is not active?” In contrast, the use of adverbial “anytime” suggests that the police is in desperate anticipation that something bad may happen at any point in time with potential damage. Perhaps, informing the learners that “go off” means “explode” may not help solving the puzzle. The nature of “off” that connotes negative, inactive, stop, or zero may hinder them from believing the prescribed meaning of the phrasal verb itself.

The significance of considering error-analysis in methodical language acquisition process owes to the original hypothesis proposed by Corder (1982:8) who believes that “some at least of the *strategies* adopted by the learner of a second language are substantially the same as those by which a first language is acquired”. Generally speaking, leaving aside the controversies of sequence of learning, in the context of multilingual learners, the strategies of learning language *n+1* may be deduced from the ones employed during the acquisition or learning of language *n*.

From the perspective of interlanguage, the L1 system becomes the sole resource from which learners base their construction of L2. Under socio-cultural-specific situation of communication, i.e. monocultural communication, between speakers of English as foreign language in the context of expanding circle countries (see Kachru in Kachru, Kachru and Nelson, 2006; Kachru and Smith, 2008) both learners and their

interlocutors would tend to use the same L1 system. The mediation of such communication should best be performed by teachers with sufficient understanding of the L1 system, i.e. NNSTs, for feedback to be given constructively.

L1 System	Interlanguage	L2 System
Saya mencari alasan yang baik.	I'm looking an excuse.	I'm looking for an excuse.
Saya mencari buku saya.	I'm looking my book.	I'm looking for my book.

Table 2. Interlanguage of Phrasal Verbs

In the case of “setuju” (agree with), the problems are more complex as the L1 and L2 systems have different depth.

L1 System	Interlanguage	L2 System
Saya setuju dengannya.	I agree you.	I agree with you.
Saya setuju dengan pendapatmu.	I agree with your opinion.	I agree with your opinion.

Table 3. Problems with Diction

While the synonyms of the lemme “setuju” in L1 system carries different lexemes (menyetujui, sepakat, bersepakat, sepaham, more colloquially *klop*) the English version of the base “agree (with)” may give a totally different lexemes (approve, settle) or even more complex phrasal constructions (*come to an agreement, reach an agreement, reach a decision*) which to multilingual minds would be considered as having different coordinate organization, thus, carrying different lemme.

Are NNSTs capable of bridging this gap between lemme and lexeme? (see –De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor, 2005) Are NSTs capable of doing the same? Are there any benefits of being NS to mitigate the gap between conceptually universal feature of particle “off” (and many others) and the denotative meaning of the lexeme? Having the same cognitive and linguistic background with the learners, should NNS be benefitted? When someone is lost in his own backyard, who will provide him better assistance, a stranger or a neighbor who is also lost in the very same backyard?

Dealing with learners in our schools or university, we should always account for the systems of languages that they already acquired. These systems would eventually hamper our attempt at finding the best formulae, if such exists, to succeed second language acquisition. Bearing in mind that an acquisition depends on the cognitive processes undergone by the students, the side to be taken should be the students'. We should therefore consider how the mental lexicon is organized in multilingual minds. One of the earliest models of the possibilities of storage in the multilingual brain is Weinreich (1953 in de Bot, Lowie and Verspoor, 2005). De Bot, Lowie and Verspoor (2005:39) report that according to Weinreich's approach the brain would keep concepts and words in different areas. In this line of thought, there are three ways of the organization of multilingual lexicon: as a compound, as a co-ordinate organization and as a subordinate. They summarize Weinrich model as the following.

In a compound organisation, it is assumed that there is one common concept with a different word in each language. In a co-ordinate organisation, there is a complete separation between the different languages: each word in each language has its own concept. In a subordinate organisation, there is just one set of concepts, but the items in the second language can only be reached via the items in the first language: there are no direct connections between the concepts and the words in the second language. (emphasis original)

It indicates the necessity to further concern with the L1 system as inseparable motive or underlying process for L2 production or, generally, communication. It is in this scope that NSTs are clearly disadvantaged.

Reverting to the readily available reference for vocabulary learning Cambridge University Press as one authority in the publication highly regarded by most NNSTs envisions learners competence to be as closely as possible to NS's competence by providing reasoning a fatalistic aim of learning phrasal verb that is to make the English "sounds natural" (Redman, 1997). However, the inquisition of the term natural would betray the reality that English is simply used within the contexts of communication between NNSs and the trend is escalating (Graddol, Leith and Swann, 1996; Graddol, 2000, 2007; Crystal, 2003). It, therefore, impinges how it is taught (Llurda, 2004),

should be taught (McKay, 2003), ownership (Norton, 1997), identity (Norton, 1997). The aims of TEFL should therefore be aimed at seeing the language as a means of cross-cultural communication (Seidlhofer, 2002:8; McKay, 2003:2). If English has to be natural in this regard and costs learners' proficiency as they become more and more "focus on form" and disregard "the context in which the forms occur" (Gass and Selinker, 2009:81) then the function of English as means of communication may be paradoxical.

Conclusion

The modern realm of communication envisaged by the more and more use of English between NNSs and more prominent role of the internet invite us to open a whole new perspective in emphasizing more on the message rather than the form; intelligibility over grammaticality. Consequently, any party involved in the teaching of English as a foreign language in Indonesia should be aware of issues related to intelligibility and the needs for more emphasize on the context of English as a means of local and, the more rationalized, global communication must be borne in the minds of new generation of English learners, thus, of NNSTs.

Respectfully, the education system that produces these mediators should systematically equip the curriculum design of English with the provision of sufficient materials that tolerate the distinct characteristics of multilinguals' mind. Exonormative principle in teaching English should be challenged by allowing more "learners'-friendly" vocabularies to ensure successful acquisition. Phrasal verbs may have to wait until the learners are ready with reasonable mastery of vocabularies. Also, the practice of speaking should foster extensive use of non-idiomatic phrasal verbs in the light of better communication in which the exploration should not be aimed at producing native-like expressions, rather on the more successful message-sending.

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