

# **Students' Mastery on Phrasal Verbs**

(A descriptive Study on 5<sup>th</sup> Semester Students of English Education Study  
Program FKIP Tanjungpura University Academic Year 2013/2014)

**AN ARTICLE**

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PONTIANAK  
2014**

# Students' Mastery on Phrasal Verbs

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**Abstrak:** Tujuan dari penelitian ini adalah untuk mengetahui tingkat kemampuan mahasiswa semester 5 Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Tanjungpura pada tahun ajaran 2013/2014 mengenai phrasal verb dan untuk mengetahui di tes item manakah mahasiswa semester 5 cenderung salah dalam menjawab tes mengenai semantic dan sintaktik phrasal verb. Hasil dari penelitian ini menunjukkan bahwa tingkat kemampuan mahasiswa mengenai semantic dan sintaktik phrasal verb tergolong rendah. Dari hasil tes, presentase siswa yang menjawab benar adalah 44.42% dan diklasifikasikan sebagai “gagal atau tidak memuaskan”. Penelitian ini juga menemukan bahwa di kategori semantic presentase siswa yang menjawab benar adalah 39.01% dan presentase siswa yang menjawab benar di kategori sintaktik phrasal verb adalah 49.82% dan ini menunjukkan bahwa mahasiswa semester 5 Program Studi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris Fakultas Keguruan dan Ilmu Pendidikan Universitas Tanjungpura pada tahun ajaran 2013/2014 cenderung menjawab salah pada soal mengenai semantic kategori phrasal verb.

**Kata kunci:** Phrasal verb, Semantic, Sintaktik.

**Abstract:** This research aims to find out the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 mastery level on phrasal verbs and to know in which test items the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students fail mostly in answering question about semantic and syntactic phrasal verbs. The finding of this research showed that the students' mastery level of semantic and syntactic phrasal verbs was low. From the result of the test, the percentage of the students' correct answer was 44.42% and it is classified as “failing or unsatisfactory”. This research also found that the percentage of the students' correct answer in semantic categories is 39.01% and the percentage of the students' correct answer in semantic categories is 49.82% and it means the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 fail mostly in answering question about semantic categories of phrasal verbs.

**Key words:** Phrasal verb, Semantic, Syntactic.

English has an important role in education, in Indonesia English becomes a compulsory subject that is taught in all schools. One aspect that is taught in English subject is grammar. Huddleston and Pullum (2002:3) describe “grammar as the principles or rules governing the form and meaning of words, phrases, clauses and sentences.” Grammar is the rules in a language for changing the form of words and combining them into sentences. One part of English grammar is phrasal verb. “A phrasal verb is usually defined as a verb formed from two (or sometimes three) parts: a verb and an adverb or preposition. These adverbs and prepositions are often called particles when they are used in a phrasal verb” Wyatt (2006: 3). Phrasal verbs are compound verbs (more than one word) that result from combining a verb with an adverb or a preposition and cannot be understood from the individual words and must be understood as a whole.

It is generally admitted that phrasal verbs are thought to be one of the difficult items for learners of English as a second or foreign language. The reason is the structural degree of differences between both learners` L1 (mother tongue) and target language. The structure of a verb followed by a particle does not exist in Indonesian for examples in English phrasal verbs they use “hang on” or “hold on” which is means “wait” and “tunggu” in Indonesian. If we look at the pattern, it is different between English phrasal verbs and Indonesian, English phrasal verb is a combination from two particles (a preposition and/or an adverb) but in Indonesian there is no syntactic pattern like phrasal verbs.

The other reason is that phrasal verb sometimes has idiomatic or figurative meaning that is when the meaning of the combination as a whole (i.e. the phrasal verb) is different from the meanings of its separate parts. As Arnaud and Savignon states (1997:61) “It is generally admitted that phrasal verbs are thought to be one of the difficult items for learners of English as a second or foreign language. The learner may, for example, know the meaning of the verb *break* and the meaning of the adverb *down*, but this knowledge will not help him or her to understand the different meanings of the phrasal verb *breakdown*. That is why sometimes it is difficult to understand the meaning of a phrasal verb.

Phrasal verbs are very important for learners because phrasal verbs are common in everyday spoken or written informal English even in formal English. Understanding and being able to use these constructions correctly in spoken and written English is essential if the learners want to develop a complete command of language. As English students they have to speak fluently and naturally than the students of other program do.. This takes us to the fact that native speakers of English use phrasal verbs in their speech expressions like ‘hang on’ instead of ‘wait’ , ‘call up’ instead of ‘telephone’ , ‘break down’ instead of ‘stop working’ , ‘to put off’ instead of ‘to postpone’ , ‘to get out’ instead of ‘to exist’ , and ‘ to get together’ instead of ‘to congregate’ ....etc. It is also an indirect way to encourage students to realize the existence of English phrasal verbs.

Knowing the important of English phrasal verbs the writer was interested in conducting this research because the writer would like to know how far the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study Program Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 master about phrasal verbs especially in semantic and syntactic categories. The writer chooses the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English

Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 as the subject because they already have enough experiences about grammar (they already learn basic, intermediate and advance grammar since 1<sup>st</sup> semester).

## **METHOD**

A method of this research is Descriptive study. According to Best (cited in Cohen, et al, 2000), "Descriptive research is concerned with conditions or relationships that exist; practices that prevail; beliefs, points of views, or attitudes that are held; processes that are going on; effects that are being felt; or trends that are developing. At times, descriptive research is concerned with how *what is* or *what exists* is related to some preceding event that has influenced or affected a present condition or event."

The subject of this research is the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014. The writer chooses the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 as the subject because they already have enough experiences about grammar (they already learn basic, intermediate and advance grammar since 1<sup>st</sup> semester).

Since one of the purposes of this research is to measure 5<sup>th</sup> semester students' mastery of phrasal verbs, the appropriate technique is measurement technique. For this, the researcher has multiple choice test type. The test consists of 30 items with 4 options. The test can be used to measure the students' mastery on phrasal verbs.

The writer focused on the semantic and syntactic categories of phrasal verbs. In order to make this research became more obvious, the steps of data analysis were needed. Due to that fact, the writer followed some the steps below:

a. *Calculate the students' mean score*

In this stage the writer calculated the students' mean score in order to classify the students' mastery level on phrasal verbs.

b. *Analyze the students' answer in semantic and syntactic categories of phrasal verbs*

The writer analyzed the students' answer in both categories of phrasal verbs to know in which test item do the students encountered difficulties.

## **FINDING AND DISCUSSION**

### **1. The students' mastery level on phrasal verbs**

In obtaining the data, the writer gave a test to 38 students in fifth semester English Education Study Program in academic year 2013/2014 and 15 students were participated in trying out the test. In order to find out the students' mastery level on phrasal verbs the writer calculated the students' correct answer percentage and the result is 44.42 %. Based on Johnson (1987:376) the level of students' mastery in phrasal verbs in general is: Outstanding or Excellent (90% or more correct items), Above Average or Good (80% - 89%), Average or

Acceptable (70% - 79%), Below Average or Poor (60% - 69%), Failing or Unsatisfactory (less than 60%).

Based on the criteria used to justify the students' mastery of phrasal verbs, it can be concluded that the students' mastery of phrasal verb in general is classified in "Failing or Unsatisfactory".

## 2. Students' wrong answer in question about semantic and syntactic phrasal verb

The difficulties students faced can be indicated by the wrong answer per item.

**Table 1. Analysis of the students' mastery in semantic phrasal verbs**

No	Part of semantic phrasal verbs	Correct	Meaning
1	Literal meaning	41.13%	Failing or Unsatisfactory
2	Idiomatic meaning	37.17%	Failing or Unsatisfactory

In literal meaning categories the students mostly fail in answering test item number 1,3,4,6 and 7. In test item number 1 for example, the students chose "telling" as the meaning of "making up" while the correct answer is "inventing".

It can be seen clearly that only 37.17% of the students can answer test items in idiomatic meaning categories. Most of the students answered the test item numbers 8,9,11,13,14 and 15 incorrectly. For example test item number 11 the students can not infer the meaning of "put your best forward", most of them chose make a start while the correct answer is "make an effort".

**Table 2. Analysis of the students' mastery in syntactic phrasal verbs**

No	Part of syntactic phrasal verbs	Correct	Meaning
1	Transitive	54.38%	Failing or Unsatisfactory
2	Intransitive	46.78%	Failing or Unsatisfactory

In syntactic categories of phrasal verbs even though the students' score under 60% but it is higher than in semantic categories of phrasal verbs. In transitive categories the percentage of correct answer is 54.38% higher than the other categories. 23 students failed in answering test item number 20 and 21. In test item number 21 most of students answer "turn the offer down" while the correct answer is "turn down the offer". They did not know the correct structure of the transitive phrasal verbs based on position of the object.

In answering test item intransitive categories, most of them failed in connecting the verb and the particle. For example in test item number 23, "all songs in that film are...with youngster" most of them chose "catching up" while the correct answer is "catching on" which is means popular.

It can be concluded that the students have difficulties in each area of syntactic and semantic categories of phrasal verbs. But the percentage of the students' correct answer in syntactic categories higher than in semantic categories of phrasal verbs. It means the 5<sup>th</sup> semester students of English Education Study

Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 fail mostly in answering question about semantic categories of phrasal verbs.

## CONCLUSION

Based on the data analysis result, only 1 student got the score “above average to good”. Other result indicated that 3 students got “average to acceptable” score, 8 students got “below average to poor”, and 26 student classify as “failing or unsatisfactory”. In other words, the researcher could say that:

(1) Based on the criteria used to justify the students’ mastery of phrasal verbs, the students’ mastery of phrasal verb in general is classified as “Failing or unsatisfactory”. (2) The percentage of the students’ correct answer in semantic categories is 39.01% and it is classify as “Failing or unsatisfactory”. (3) The percentage of the students’ correct answer in syntactic categories is 49.82% and it is classify as “Failing or unsatisfactory”.(4) In general the fifth semester students had difficulties both in semantic and syntactic categories of phrasal verbs but the percentage of the students’ correct answer in syntactic categories higher than in semantic categories of phrasal verbs.

From the findings above, the researcher comes to the conclusion that the fifth semester students of English Education Study Program of FKIP Tanjungpura University in academic year 2013/2014 have not enough knowledge about phrasal verbs and their mastery level of phrasal verbs classified as “failing or unsatisfactory”.

## SUGGESTION

Based on the results and analysis the researcher gave some suggestions: In order to learn phrasal verbs more effectively, the students need to know which ones of phrasal verbs occur most frequently in spoken or written and make a list. In learning phrasal verbs the students can use mind mapping where the students can make a list of phrasal verbs start with the same word. For instance, the word “turn” that can be followed by some preposition, “turn on”, “turn up”, “turn off”, etc. The students can combine the practice of phrasal verbs with a variety of grammatical to increase the students’ ability to use them in other situation.

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