A Corpus-Based Study of Semantic Treatment of Phrasal Verbs in Malaysian ESL Secondary School Textbooks

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ABSTRACT

Despite their being the most notoriously confusing aspects of English language instruction, phrasal verbs are of high relevance for ESL/EFL learners because knowledge of them is often equated with language proficiency and fluency. With textbooks containing a noticeable number of phrasal verbs, it is of pedagogical significance to see if these combinations are appropriately dealt with in semantic terms. The present corpus-based study was, thus, intended to explore the semantic treatment of these combinations in a pedagogical corpus of Malaysian ESL textbooks. Using WordSmith software and the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs as research instruments, the study revealed that despite the overwhelming number of phrasal verbs in the corpus, most of these combinations were presented with a very thin skeleton, as they were repeated in different forms with the same meaning. In addition, some items were presented with their rare and infrequent word meanings. Therefore, the selection and presentation of the word senses of different phrasal verb combinations proved to be more intuitively than empirically motivated.

Keywords: Phrasal verbs, ESL textbooks, corpus linguistics, semantics

INTRODUCTION

One of the most well-known and yet complicated structures in the English language is the phrasal verb. Phrasal verbs appear in different registers of the language and are highly frequent and prolific, adding a definite richness to the language. In addition to their grammatical variability, phrasal verbs are extremely demanding for ESL/EFL language learners in terms of their semantic complexity. As with single-word verbs, they can, depending on the context in which they appear, represent a

number of different meanings, hence they are polysemous. For instance, the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs presents about twenty-two different meanings for the phrasal verb 'come out'. The identification of word senses associated with each form is, thus, relevant as "multi-word verbs certainly originate mainly for semantic reasons" (Claridge, 2000, p. 2). It is, however, unfortunate to point out that textbook writers often fail to give enough weight to different semantic functions associated with each combination (Zarifi & Mukundan, 2014a).

LITERATURE REVIEW

Phrasal verbs are, semantically speaking, categorised with regard to the degree of their compositionality or the relationship between the constituent elements and how each element contributes to the meaning of the whole unit. Chief among the different semantic classifications of phrasal verbs is the three-way classification of literal, figurative and completive (Dagut & Laufer, 1985); literal, idiomatic and aspectual (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999); compositional, idiomatic or aspectual (Dehe, 2002b; Jackendoff, 2002); and transparent, semi-transparent and semantically opaque (Armstrong, 2004). Despite the use of different terms for the classification, there seems to be unanimity among linguists as to the number of the types and the nature of the word sense created by the elements in the unit, hence roughly similar divisions. To put this into perspective, in these classifications, the terms 'compositional, transparent and literal' are used to indicate that the literal interpretation of the particle and the verb determines the meaning of the whole unit (e.g. 'take down' in 'take down the picture'). Likewise, terms 'idiomatic, figurative and opaque' are used for phrasal verbs whose meanings cannot be determined by interpreting their components literally (e.g. 'go off' in 'A bomb went off near that village.'). Finally, terms 'completive, less transparent and aspectual' refer to those combinations whose meanings are more transparent than those of the second type but perhaps not as transparent as those of the first type. Despite the literal meaning of the verb proper, the particle contributes an unusual aspect of meaning (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) that indicates the completeness, thoroughness or continuity of the action described by the verb.

Despite these various semantic classifications, Claridge (2000) assigns a core role to the literal forms from which figurative types are derived, asserting that "Idiomaticity, after all, does not emerge out of nowhere, but is based in some way or other on the regular patterns of the language" (p. 47). In other words, an idiomatisation process brings about the semantic evolution of the combinations (Rodriguez-Puente, 2012) with the prototypical non-idiomatic meaning giving birth to various "semantic extensions, by metonymy, metaphorization, or other mechanisms" (Gonzalez, 2010, p. 53). For instance, the particle 'out' with the prototypical meaning associated with

'away from inside of a place or thing' has been extended to assume such different idiomatic meanings as 'stop something from burning' (Firefighters soon put the fire out.), 'publish' (When is her new novel coming out?), 'reduction' (The fine will be taken out of your wages.), and so on.

While the semantic classification of the phrasal verbs might be of high research interest to the linguists, it would be of little or no relevance in pedagogy. This is because teachers as well as learners are hardly ever required to account for the compositionality level of the items, especially at school level of education. Despite this, investigation of the semantic treatment of phrasal verbs could be of paramount significance to the curriculum designers, material developers, language teachers as well as language learners. It would result in the selection, presentation and practice of the most frequent meanings of the combinations for instructional purposes. From among the available empirical studies on the semantic aspects of the phrasal verbs, one can refer to the research carried out by Gardner and Darwin (2007), Trebits (2009) and Akbari (2009).

In a corpus based study, Gardner and Darwin (2007), using WordNet, provided the word-sense frequencies for the top 100 Phrasal Verbs in the BNC. They reported that these top frequent combinations, which accounted for almost half of all the phrasal verbs in the corpus, had a total number of 559 different meanings. In other words, each unit conveyed 5.6 meanings on the average. It is perhaps interesting to

point out that the reported low average of meaning multiplicity of the items in the BNC was largely due to the instrument used in the study. This issue will be precisely elaborated on in the methodology section.

In another recent corpus-based study, Trebits (2009) provided the word-senses associated with the 25 most frequently used phrasal verbs in the Corpus of European Union English (CEUE). Results showed that these items represented 34 different meanings altogether, that is, 1.36 per item on the average. Each of these top frequent units in the CEUE was reported to have an average of four different meanings in the BNC. She also added that about one third of these combinations expressed more than one meaning in the CEUE. For example, the phrasal verb 'set up' conveyed two different meanings in the CEUE (1 start a business or organisation, 2 make the arrangements for something to happen) and more than 10 in general English. This discrepancy is, however, not surprising as the CEUE is a purely written and specialised corpus.

In addition, in a large scale corpus-based study, Akbari (2009) investigated the treatment of phrasal verb combinations in an ESL learner corpus. The corpus of the study was composed of a number of Malaysian secondary school level students' narrative compositions sampled from the EMAS. In addition to exploring the grammatical and semantic misuse of the combinations, he went on to account for their compositionality degree, categorising them according to their literal, aspectual or idiomatic nature. It is interesting, however,

to point out that the criteria underlying this compositional classification of the different types of phrasal verbs are open to question. For instance, it is unclear why 'break out' was classified as an aspectual unit but 'break off' was considered to be an idiomatic form.

Finally, in a very recent study, Zarifi and Mukundan (2014b) explored the grammatical treatment of phrasal verb items in Malaysian ESL secondary level textbooks. They provided a full account of the grammatical configurations that the combinations assumed in the textbooks. Findings of the study revealed that there appeared to be "no guiding principle underlying the selection, presentation and sequencing of different patterns associated with them, bringing further home the observation that the development of ELT textbooks is more intuitively than empirically motivated" (p. 649).

RESEARCH QUESTION

In light of the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs, corpus-based studies often suggest that any successful study of these combinations should necessarily focus on their various word senses (Gardner & Davies, 2007; Trebits, 2009) since it is often argued that knowledge of a given word is multi-faceted (Nation, 2001). Besides the knowledge of its various syntactic forms and their definitions, it involves the knowledge of its different associated word senses and shades of meaning as well (Kieffer & Lesaux, 2012; Nation, 2001; Stahl & Nagy, 2006). What is more, not all

the various meanings of any given phrasal verb are of the same frequency of use, and nor are these meanings common to all the possible language registers. In other words, some meanings are highly frequent and enjoy a wide range of occurrence while others are of infrequent use in natural use. As a result, the selection and prioritisation of the different meanings of these combinations should be a major concern in pedagogy in general and in the development of ELT materials in particular. In line with the above argument, the current study was intended to address the following research question:

> *How were phrasal verb combinations semantically dealt with in the pedagogic corpus of the Malaysian ESL textbooks prescribed for use in the secondary level?*

METHODOLOGY AND MATERIALS

Design of the Study

In corpus-based studies the choice between the quantitative and qualitative approach is usually a methodological issue (Mair, 1991). Although the quantitative approach provides useful information as to the frequency counts of different linguistic features (Conrad, 2005), it is only the qualitative approach that can account for the occurrence of these features. Hardy, Harley and Philips (2004), assuming a pluralist stance, argue that performing any quantitative study without clear conceptual definitions derived from qualitative approach, or generalising qualitative findings without providing quantitative

evidence on the prevalence and patterns of the linguistic phenomena under study is deemed imprudent. Though these methods of analysis address a linguistic phenomenon differently, Neuendorf (2004) holds that their ultimate findings can nicely fit together to lend a good instance of research method triangulation. With the above arguments in mind, the current corpus-based study, thus, used a mixed-methods approach to investigate the semantic presentation of phrasal verbs in a pedagogic corpus of ESL textbooks.

Corpus of the Study

The corpus in the study consisted of Malaysian textbooks from Form One to Form Five that have been prescribed for use by secondary level learners. It appeared to be a balanced pedagogic corpus as it involved both conversational and formal registers and dealt with a variety of topics (Trebits, 2009). It comprised a total number of 302,642 tokens and an overwhelming number of phrasal verb combinations. The corpus was widely-searched in a number of corpus-based studies (Menon, 2009; Mukundan & Anealka, 2007; Zarifi & Mukundan, 2012; Zarifi, 2013; etc.), throwing light on different aspects of the instructional language variety that Malaysian ESL learners are exposed to in the classroom setting.

Instrumentation

The first stage in data analysis involved the use of some reliable instrument for data collection. To this end, the Concordance tool of the WordSmith package version 4.0 was run to cull all the potential phrasal verbs from the corpus. The next stage involved using a valid reference source for the identification of the different potential meanings associated with each combination. Although a number of previous studies made use of WordNet (Miller, 2003), an electronic system of a large lexical database in which different word categories are presented into synonym sets (synsets) with each set showing a distinct semantic concept (Fellbaum, 1998), this study opted for the use of the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs. This decision was made since WordNet appeared to be rather restricted in its presentation of both the number of phrasal verbs and their potential meanings. For instance, the software failed to provide any entry for a number of combinations like 'START OFF, REEL IN, INVITE ALONG, and so on'. Likewise, the software presented only 11 out of the 21 various definitions that the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs presents for the string 'GET OFF'. As a result, the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs turned out to serve as a more reliable source for the word meaning of the phrasal verbs.

With a comprehensive list of over 6,000 common British and American phrasal verbs, the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs is one of the most well-known leading dictionaries used worldwide as a source of definition of phrasal verbs, hence a valid instrument. Second, a number of empirically-based

semantic studies on phrasal verbs have, albeit marginally, used dictionaries as one of their reference sources (Trebits, 2009). Third, most of the World Englishes are British-based (Schneider, 2004), and the acrolectal English variety of current use in Malaysia is similar to British English (Menon, 2009). In addition, Ooi (2001, p. 169) observes "Standard British is still currently the official frame of reference" in Singapore and Malaysia.

Procedure of Analysis

In order to throw light on the semantic treatment of phrasal verbs, all the instances of these combinations in the corpus were extracted. Then, the combinations of one frequency count of occurrence in the corpus like 'BREAK OFF, CHOP DOWN, DRESS UP, HAND OUT, etc.' and those of one-word sense in the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs like 'READ UP, LOG ON, GOBBLE UP, PRINT OUT, etc.' were ruled out from the analysis. Likewise, cliché forms like 'FILL IN, ZOOM IN, SOUND OUT, etc.' were omitted for further exploration. These three sets of combinations were excluded from the study simply because they were invariably associated with one meaning in the corpus.

Each of the remaining units was first looked up for all its different meanings in the dictionary. These meanings were listed under the target phrasal verb. Then all the concordance lines of the combination in the corpus were extracted through the concordance function of WordSmith. The analysis went on with the researchers reading through the concordance shots for each combination line by line to determine the meaning it carried in each specific context. Then, all the meanings of the combination were mapped for further qualitative analysis.

In order to make sure that the coding did not fall victim to the researchers' idiosyncratic judgment, an independent rater (with a record of teaching English as a second language for the past five years) was asked to read the concordance lines and identify the meaning(s) of each unit based on the definitions in the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs. Finally, Cohen's Kappa measure was used to check for the consistency level of coding between the researchers and the coder. It is interesting to indicate that Cohen's Kappa value calculated for the inter-rater reliability was .94, which is an excellent index.

RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Findings revealed that of the total number of 464 lemmas of phrasal verbs in the corpus, a sum of 89 lemmas proved to be qualified candidates for semantic analysis. Concordance query revealed that they occurred more than once in the corpus and dictionary search proved that they enjoyed more than one word sense.

TABLE 1
Number of Meanings of PVs in ODPV and the Corpus

PV	ODPV	Corpus
Pick up	25	8
Come up	23	5
Get off	21	2
Go on	20	2
Take off	16	3
Put up	14	4
Get out	14	3
Give up	13	7
Take up	13	6
Keep up	13	4
Take out, go out	13	3
Get up, take in	13	2
Go back, go over, turn over	12	2
Come on	11	3
Set up	10	4
Make up	10	3
Put on, take away	10	2
Come in	10	1
Cut off, take over	9	3
Open up, bring up	9	2
Tie up	9	1
Break down, sort out	8	3
Cut out	8	2
Take back	8	1
Cut down	7	3
Stand up, pick out	7	2
Get down, blow up, come back, turn on	7	1
Take on, turn off, bring in	6	2
Put off, take down, call up	6	1
Bring back	5	3
Break out, get back, run out, give out, come along	5	2
Get over, put away, give away, line up, look out	5	1
Draw up, look up	4	3
Run away, set out, start off, call out	4	2
Put forward, leave out, shut up, clean up, sum up	4	1
Fill up, wake up, turn down, sign up, light up, grow up, go away	3	2
Get along, see through, sit down, eat up	3	1
Point out, slow down, speak up, wash away	2	2
Throw away, carry out, catch on, give back, pass away, try out, write out	2	1
Total = 89	640 X= 7.12	186 X= 2.09

Results of the semantic analysis of the target phrasal verbs are summarised in Table 1. As shown, all the 89 phrasal verbs had a total number of 640 word meanings in the dictionary, that is, an average of 7.12 senses each unit, hence they were heavily polysemous. On the other hand, each of these combinations expressed an average of 2.09 word senses in the corpus, hence they were rather skeletal.

It is interesting to point out that Gardner and Davies (2007) found an average of five senses for each of the top 25 phrasal verbs in general English. The discrepancy involved could be partly explained by the fact that, although they marginally referred to the Cambridge Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs when needed, their main reference source was WordNet. As has been mentioned, WordNet fails to present a comprehensive reservoir of word meanings for phrasal verbs. In addition, not all the top frequent combinations in the BNC got a chance to surface in this pedagogic corpus and vice versa. For instance, units like 'wake up, write out, etc.' that were among the top frequent forms in the corpus were not so in the BNC.

As the table reveals, there occurred different patterns of phrasal verbs in terms of word senses and frequency of meanings in the corpus. While some units like 'PUT OFF, TURN ON and GIVE AWAY' were used with only one word sense, others like 'PICK UP, GIVE UP and TAKE UP' were used with 8, 7 and 6 meanings, respectively. On the other hand, while some combinations were used with all their different potential dictionary meanings in

the corpus, others were used with quite a limited number of their possible word meanings. For instance, 'WASH AWAY, SPEAK UP, SLOW DOWN, etc.' were used in their full meaning varieties, but such other combinations as 'TAKE IN, GET OFF, GET UP, etc.' were used, at most, with two of their large number of dictionary meanings.

Corpus findings in the current study showed that phrasal verbs were not 'fleshed out' appropriately. While many items like 'CUT DOWN, WASH AWAY, BRING BACK, etc.' were used with more than one sense, many more items such as 'PASS AWAY, GIVE AWAY, TAKE DOWN, PUT OFF, etc.' were repeated in different Forms with the same meaning, hence they were purely skeletal. Instead of fleshing out the knowledge of the different word associations and shades of meaning of the phrasal verbs offered in the lower levels, the textbooks tended to insist on the same word senses already presented and went on to introduce new combinations, playing down the polysemy feature of high frequency items at later stages. Instances of semantically inaccurate use of highly frequent and common phrasal verbs like 'TAKE OUT shoes, PICK UP the flowers, HELP him UP, etc.' by Malaysian Form Four learners (Akbari, 2009) back up the notion that the textbook writers had a great tendency towards introducing new forms at each stage and overlooking their importance at following stages because they were perhaps erroneously considered mastered or acquired (Lennon, 1996).

In addition, there seemed to be no consistent principle at work in the selection of certain meanings of the phrasal verb combinations in the corpus. For instance, while many of the phrasal verbs such as 'PASS AWAY (1st sense), GET DOWN (1st sense), RUN OUT (1st and 2nd senses), and BRING UP (1st and 2nd senses)' were used with their first or second meanings, many others like 'TAKE BACK (4th sense), TAKE DOWN (6th sense), TAKE IN (4th and 13th senses), etc.' were presented with senses that rank lower both in the dictionary and in WordNet. Despite the justification that one can think of i.e. it was done for the priority of meaning selection for some combinations such as 'TAKE DOWN (to write something down) and PUT FORWARD (to suggest an idea or a plan so that it can be discussed)' as they seem to suit the pedagogic register of the corpus, one wonders why the high frequent meanings of some units like TAKE AWAY (to take one number from another; to buy a cooked dish at a restaurant and carry it away to eat at home) were overlooked. These meanings are among the first definitions in different dictionaries and are recorded with high frequency in WordNet. Moreover, learners are highly likely to come across these senses in everyday use of the language.

Tables 2 through 5 reveal the results of detailed analysis of four phrasal verbs, namely 'COME ALONG, WASH AWAY, PICK UP and TAKE DOWN'. As shown in Table 2, from the five different meanings of 'COME ALONG', only the first and third senses, that is, 'to arrive or appear somewhere; to go somewhere with somebody' were used across the corpus. This combination had a frequency count of only three times, with the first meaning occurring once and the second meaning twice. According to Table 3, the two different meanings of the unit 'WASH AWAY' were used in the corpus, though with different frequencies. The first meaning was repeated five times and the second sense occurred twice.

TABLE 2
Semantic Analysis of COME ALONG

Meanings in dictionary	Corpus meanings and examples
1. to arrive or appear somewhere; to start to exist, happen or be available; 2. to go somewhere with sb; 3. used to encourage sb to do sth, for example, to hurry; 4. to make progress or to improve or develop in the way that you want; 5. to move forward or from one end of sth to the other, towards the speaker	1. The whole family, including Granny, came along. (F 1) 3. My mum always comes along with me. (F 3)

TABLE 3
Semantic Analysis of WASH AWAY

Dictionary meanings	Corpus meanings and examples
1. remove or carry away to another place; 2. to use water to remove a mark, dirt.etc. from sth	1. Houses were washed away (F3) 2. ... ink is washed away using a detergent (F2)

On the other hand, as Table 4 reveals, 'PICK UP' was used with the most number of different instances of meanings in the corpus. It was used in different contexts to present eight word meanings although the first few more frequent meanings were neglected. Finally, Table 5 shows that of the six possible meanings of the combination 'TAKE DOWN', only the least frequent one, that is 'to write something down', was used. It needs to be mentioned, however, that use of this sense is justified as it suited the register of the corpus.

A point of main pedagogical concern here is that frequency of phrasal verbs forms in the corpus should not be misinterpreted as equivalent to frequency of their meanings. We have shown the various meanings of the four selected combinations in the corpus (Tables 2 through 5 above); this, however, does not mean that all these meanings were of equal frequency. For instance, while the

TABLE 4
Semantic Analysis of PICK UP

Meanings in dictionary	Corpus meanings and examples
1. to become better, to improve; 2. to start to blow more strongly; 3. to start again, to continue; 4. to start to go faster; 5. to stop somewhere to allow passengers to get on; 6. to collect things that have been dropped or left on the ground and put them away; 7. to take hold of and lift sb/sth; 8. to go to sb's home or a place you have arranged and take them somewhere in your car; 9. to rescue sb, for example from the sea; 10. to arrest sb or to take sb somewhere in order to question them; 11. to start talking to sb you do not know, because you want to have a sexual relationship with them; 12. if sth picks you up, it makes you feel better; 13. to obtain or collect sth; 14. to learn a language, a skill, etc, without making an effort; 15. to come down with sth or to obtain sth (virus, accent, etc.); 16. to identify or recognize sth; 17. if a machine picks sth up, it receives a sound or a signal; 18. to buy sth, especially cheap by or by good luck; 19. to win a prize or an award; 20. to find and follow a route, etc; 21. to discuss something further or to return to a topic or theme and continue it; 22. to manage to see or hear sth that is not very clear; 23. to tidy a room, etc, and put things away; 24. if you pick up a bill for sth you pay it for sb else; 25. to get to your feet, especially after a fall	5. stops along the way to pick up passengers (F2) 6. Pick up all sharp objects like knives and scissors from the floor (F1) 7. Mother Teresa picked up (6) the baby, wrapped it in her white sari (F3) 8. pick me up after the show (F3) 9. The rescue boat picked up the crew of sailors from the sinking (F2) 13. she had to hastily scramble to pick up certificates and … (F5) 15. Rahman had also picked up the habit from the older children (F5) 16. for parents to pick up signs of depression in their children (F4)

TABLE 5
Semantic Analysis of TAKE DOWN

Dictionary meanings	Corpus meanings and examples
1. to go with sb/sth to a lower level, to a more southern part of a country etc., or to a different part of a building, town, country etc.; 2. to remove sth from a high level; 3. to remove sth that is hanging on a wall; 4. to move a structure by separating it into pieces; 5. to pull down a piece of clothing worn below the waist, without actually removing it; 6. to write sth down	6. Take down the message for your brother (F3)

dictionary meaning 'stops working because of a fault' of the combination 'BREAK DOWN' occurred four times, each of the other two meanings of the combination in the corpus, that is 'to lose control of your feelings and start crying; and to make something fall down or open by hitting it hard' was used only once throughout the corpus. This is also true of 'TAKE DOWN' for which of all the six different meanings associated with it only the last one, that is 'to write something down' was repeated eight times in Forms Three, Four and Five, revealing the pedagogic type of the register of the corpus. Therefore, any discussion of frequency count of phrasal verbs should take into account the frequency of different meanings of a given combination as it is likely that one single sense gets overused at the expense of others. To top it off, just because a form gets repeated frequently enough in a pedagogic corpus, it cannot be concluded that it is optimally appropriate for learning since it is possible that each occurrence presents a specific meaning of the combination.

Findings also showed that the textbooks contained a noticeably large number of phrasal verbs with some being quite infrequent in general English. Despite the textbooks writers' tendency towards quantitatively extending the breadth of use of phrasal verb items to lower frequency items like 'POKE ABOUT (Form One), RALLY AROUND (Form Two), RACE OFF (Form Three), PELT DOWN (Form Four), FLING OUT (Form Five), etc.', it should be emphasised that not only the quantitative but also qualitative treatment of high frequent forms should be the focus of ELT pedagogy. Students should be provided ample opportunity to extend their depth of knowledge of the different layers of meanings of the forms that are of frequent use in general English. In Lennon's terms, textbooks need to "flesh out the incomplete or skeleton entries" (1996, p. 23), presenting as many different word senses of each unit as possible. This stance receives support from Reda (2003), arguing that phrasal verbs should not only be different from level to level but should also be dealt with differently as the language proficiency of the learners increases. What is implied is that not only should enough care be given to increase the breadth of phrasal verbs at each higher level, but the previously introduced items should also be presented with their other associated meanings of a more idiomatic nature.

The semantic analysis of phrasal verbs is very important as the meaning or meanings of a phrasal verb in a given register can often serve as a defining characteristic of that very register (Trebits, 2009). For instance, the high frequency counts of units like 'TAKE DOWN, FILL IN, FIND OUT, WRITE OUT, LOOK UP, etc.' in the Malaysian ESL Textbooks reveal the pedagogic register of the corpus. The semantic analysis of phrasal verbs could also be a great help to material designers and developers in both the selection and presentation of the meaning or meanings of a specific combination in accord with the course level and objectives.

Table 6 presents the frequency count of the meanings of the top 20 polysemous phrasal verbs in the corpus. As shown, these combinations turned out to be highly polysemous in general English, with each unit enjoying 11.9 meanings on average. They are also of relatively high frequency count in the corpus with 77 meanings and an average of 3.85 meanings per unit. To put it into perspective, presentation of these forms in the corpus, we would conservatively argue, was more or less consistent with their use in natural language as far as the feature of polysemy is concerned.

One interesting point to mention about these combinations is that all the top seven highly polysemous phrasal verbs had 'UP' as their particle element. Not only was 'UP' the most proliferate particle in terms of the number of lexical verbs with which it combined to form a phrasal verb, but it also formed the largest number of word senses with the verbs with which it combined. This is in line with other recent empirical evidence showing the proliferative and polysemous nature of this particle (Armstrong, 2004). Moreover, the phrasal verb combinations with the particle 'UP' accounted for more than

TABLE 6
Top 20 Most Polysemous PVs in the Corpus

PV	Meaning Freq. in corpus	Meaning Freq. in ODPV
Pick up	8	25
Give up	7	13
Take up	6	13
Come up	5	23
Put up	4	14
Keep up	4	13
Set up	4	10
Make up	3	10
Take off	3	16
Get out	3	14
Take out	3	13
Got out	3	13
Come on	3	11
Cut off	3	9
Take over	3	9
Sort out	3	8
Break down	3	8
Cut down	3	7
Bring back	3	5
Look up	3	4
Total = 20	77 X = 3.85	238 X = 11.9

57% of all the meanings presented by these top 20 polysemous forms in the corpus. So care should be taken to present this particle in meaningful categories to alleviate as much as possible the difficulties that ESL/EFL learners experience in learning phrasal verbs.

'UP' has been reported as one of the most complex English particles; it is, on the other hand, one of the most commonly used (Side, 1990), and there appear to be semantic patterns associated with the lexical verbs that combine with it. For instance, words designating the idea of 'being together' like 'MATCH, JOIN, TEAM, LINE, MEET, PAIR, PILE, and so on' tend to be used with 'UP'. Likewise, words related to the idea of 'fastening' such as 'ZIP, TIE, CHAIN, LOCK, PARCEL, LACE, BANDAGE' show more tendency to combine with 'UP'. Similarly, words indicating the idea of 'division' like 'CUT, DIVIDE, SPLIT, BREAK, CHOP, SLICE, etc.' usually prefer to join with 'UP'. Although these verb clusters are not appropriate to be presented in the same level as they are not of the same level of difficulty, usefulness and coverage, it is recommended that whenever a new item of these combination clusters is introduced in ESL materials, the other related items in the previous lessons should be repeated with them so that learners may unconsciously figure out the semantic relationship that exists among them. This can help the ESL learner come up with the idea that the new unfamiliar lexical verbs having the same semantic features are very likely to combine with 'UP'.

CONCLUSION

Findings of the study showed that despite the quantitative treatment of phrasal verbs, these combinations were not qualitatively dealt with appropriately. Some items were not presented with their common and frequent word meanings. Many others were presented with a very thin skeleton, being repeated in different Forms with the same meaning. There appeared to be a strong tendency on the side of the writers to introduce new combinations, playing down the importance of multiple, context-sensitive meanings of the frequent, common forms. With a view to research findings, the researchers concur with Littlejohn (1992) that ELT materials seem not to be availing themselves of research findings in applied linguistics. Phrasal verb combinations are extremely polysemous, and textbooks would be better off recycling and "fleshing] out the incomplete or skeleton entries" (Lennon, 1996, p. 23), presenting them in as many different contexts and with as many different meanings as possible. The selection and presentation of phrasal verbs should be graded in a way that, at the lower levels, more transparent meanings of the forms are presented moving towards aspectual and idiomatic senses as the levels go up and learners' language proficiency picks up. All in all, while it would be neither possible nor logical for any series of ELT materials to include all the phrasal verbs with all their range of potential meanings, care should be exercised to include the most common units with meanings that are both frequent and useful to the learners.

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