

THESIS

RETHINKING AVOIDANCE OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS BY ARAB  
LEARNERS

Submitted by

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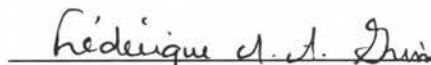
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WE HEREBY RECOMMEND THAT THE THESIS PREPARED UNDER OUR SUPERVISION BY BASEM SALEH ABU JAMIL ENTITLED RETHINKING AVOIDANCE OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS BY ARAB LEARNERS BE ACCEPTED AS FULFILLING IN PART REQUIREMENTS FOR THE DEGREE OF MASTER OF ARTS.

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## ABSTRACT OF THESIS

### RETHINKING AVOIDANCE OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS BY ARAB LEARNERS

There is a long-standing controversy about the causes of underproduction (avoidance) of structures in second language learning/acquisition. A significant field of research has focused on one lexicalized phrase, the English phrasal verb. The present study explores the cultural dimensions of the avoidance of English phrasal verbs among 160 Arab learners of English. It examines the impact of educational background (EFL, ESL), levels of proficiency (advanced, intermediate), and the inherent semantic complexity of phrasal verb (literal, semi-transparent, figurative) on the avoidance of phrasal verbs. It also explores the role the environmental background plays in comprehending phrasal verbs. Although Arab learners in the study tended to under-use English phrasal verbs, there were significant developmental differences ranging from avoidance to nonavoidance based on participants' educational background and level of proficiency and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs.

This study calls into question straightforward interpretation of the avoidance phenomenon. Although these findings support previous studies' results, they do not support previous studies that show that L1-L2 differences might motivate learners to develop a genuine avoidance; Arab learners in this study did not avoid literal phrasal

verbs. The study offers interesting clues to the success of advanced ESL students in learning and mastering phrasal verbs.

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## CHAPTER I

### INTRODUCTION

Studies of the role of the native language (henceforth L1) in the second language (L2) context gained momentum in the field of second language acquisition (henceforth SLA). This field has passed through a series of phases. These phases can be defined by the modes of inquiry researchers have utilized in their work: contrastive analysis, error analysis, performance analysis and discourse analysis.

For example, from the 1940s to the 1960s, contrastive analyses were conducted in order to identify points of similarity and difference between L1s and L2s. There was a strong belief that a more effective pedagogy would result when these were taken into consideration. Charles Fries, one of the leading applied linguists of the day, said: "The most efficient materials are those that are based upon a scientific description of the language to be learned, carefully compared with a parallel description of the native language of the learner" (Fries, 1945, p. 9). Robert Lado, Fries' colleague at the University of Michigan, also worked on this idea in his book *Linguistics across Cultures*, which marks the real beginning of modern applied linguistics. In his book, he claims that "we can predict and describe the patterns that will cause difficulty in learning, and those that will not cause difficulty, by comparing systematically the language and culture to be learned with the native language and culture of the student" (1957, p. vii).

Lado also expressed the importance of contrastive analysis in language teaching material design when he asserted that

[Learners] tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings of their native language and



culture to the foreign language and culture both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives" (p. 2).

He went on to state a more controversial position, however, when he claimed that "those elements that are similar to his native language will be simple for him, and those elements that are different will be difficult" (1957, p. 2). This conviction that linguistic differences could be used to predict learning difficulty produced the notion of the contrastive analysis hypothesis (henceforth CAH).

In the 1960s, error analysis (henceforth EA) emerged as a counter-theory to the CAH. To understand this theory we need to differentiate between errors and mistakes. Mistakes or 'performance errors' are one-off events, while (competence) errors are systematic. The former can be found as well in normal adult speech in L1, and they may be due to memory lapses, tiredness, or strong emotions, for instance. We are normally aware of them when they occur and can correct them with more or less complete assurance. The latter are interesting from the viewpoint of SLA studies since they reveal the existence of an underlying rule-governed system being developed by the learner that Corder (1967) calls "transitional competence". According to Richard (1971), these errors are believed to be divided into four sub-categories: over-generalization, ignorance of rule restrictions, incomplete application of rules, and hypothesizing based on false concepts.

In the 1970s, a number of studies showed that some errors are not due to L1 interference. For instance, Dulay and Burt (1974) analyzed data from the speech of Chinese and Spanish children learning English as an L2 to determine if their syntactic

errors are due to L1 interference or developmental stages. Results show a similar pattern of development between the two groups of children and so indicate that universal developmental errors are much more prominent than errors due to L1 interference. Bailey, Madden, and Krashen (1974) confirmed the result of this study with another study on adult L2 learners. James (1980) reported that Tran-Thi-Chau (1974) found a proportion of 51 percent of L1-induced errors among all errors, whereas Grauberg (1971) found a proportion of 36 percent and George (1972) estimated them as about one third of errors. He concluded that “only a third to a half of learner errors may be caused by the L1:L2 misfit”.

Taken together, these issues and many others, regardless of the considerable disagreement about how pervasive a role L1 plays in SLA, demonstrate that the early history of SLA views the native language as having a central role in the learning of L2. According to Postman (1971):

Learning is a cumulative process. The more knowledge and skills an individual acquires, the more likely it becomes that his new learning will be shaped by his past experiences and activities. An adult rarely, if ever, learns anything completely new; however unfamiliar the task that confronts him, the information and habits he has built up in the past will be his point of departure. Thus transfer of training from old to new situations is part and parcel of most, if not all, learning. In this sense the study of transfer is coextensive with the investigation of learning (p. 1019).

Adults learning a second or foreign language often produce errors or nonnative substitutions, including foreign accents and normative grammatical utterances (e.g., an English speaker who fails to master the Spanish trill and subjunctive verb constructions) as well as while a learner's substitutions are frequently considered to be errors from the perspective that they are not “native-like,” they are nevertheless representative of an underlying system, just as a child learning a first language has an underlying linguistic system, although one that is different from adult native speakers of that language (Major, 2001). For instance, Major points out that an adult French learner of English may substitute [z] for [ʒ] (the sound in the) but never [p], [b], [k], or [g]; the same learner may place the adjective after the noun (“I like that car green”) but not place it randomly elsewhere (\*“I green like that car” \*“I like green that car”) (p. 2).

An adult second language learner's linguistic system is called the “Interlanguage” (IL) or more simply, the language of a nonnative speaker. According to Major,

The normative characteristics of the IL of an adult learner are often due to negative transfer or interference from the first language, that is, the system of the first language (L1) is transferred to the second language (L2). When the phenomena of the L1 and L2 are different, errors result. Transfer may occur at all linguistic levels: lexicon, phonology, morphology, syntax, semantics, discourse, and culture” (p. 2).

Gass and Selinker (2001) report that “second language acquisition is concerned with the nature of the hypotheses (whether conscious or unconscious) that learners come up with regarding the rules of the second language” (p. 1). While much has been learned



in recent years concerning the cognitive processes that underlie language acquisition in the first place, much more remains unclear concerning precisely how humans go about learning new languages. In this regard, Gass and Slinkier note that questions remain concerning whether the rules involved are like those of the L1, whether they are like the rules of the language being learned, and whether there are patterns that are common to all learners regardless of the L1 and regardless of the language being learned. These questions and others are the focus of L1 transfer, which researchers believe affects SLA.

According to Doughty and Long (2003),

Research has long shown the existence of universal processes in SLA, such as L1 transfer, overgeneralization, simplification, regularization and stabilization. Surface manifestations of these processes include common errors and error types, developmental plateaus where L1 and interlingual structures are similar, and so on (p. 65-66).

Besides these findings, other studies have provided significant evidence that suggests there are various kinds of developmental sequences and stages involved in interlanguage (IL) development, including the following:

1. The four-stage sequence for ESL negation (cf. Pica, 1983; Schumann, 1979),
2. The six-stage sequence for English relative clauses (cf. Doughty, 1991; Eckman, Bell and Nelson 1988; Gass 1982); and,
3. Sequences in many other grammatical domains in a variety of L2s.

This highlights two key concepts associated with the L2 learning process: positive transfer (facilitation) and negative transfer (interference). Positive transfers occur when



one transfers an existing quality of both his/her L1 and his/her L2. No error will then result since there is no interference between the two languages. On the other hand, negative transfers occur when a learner transfers a quality of his/her L1 to L2, although this quality is not expressed in the same way in the L2. In this case, this is an error. It is viewed as an outcome of 'proactive inhibition' where previous L1 learning gets in the way or inhibits the desirable L2 responses (e.g., Lado, 1957; Lee 1968, Postman, 1971; Taylor, 1975; James, 1980; Ellis, 1985; Gass & Selinker, 2001). Accordingly, the problems of the undesirable productions (errors) in L2 are viewed mainly as problems of "negative transfer". This error can be avoided by identifying the differences between the target language and the learner's first language, which becomes the tenet of CAH.

But CAH has sparked a heated debate about its ability to predict error (Ellis, 1985; Gass & Selinker, 2001). According to Ellis, CAH lacks awareness of cultural differences due to different educational and developmental factors that influence the 'mechanism' of transfer. And the two ways of equating 'difference' with 'difficulty' and 'difficulty' with 'error' are not sound (p. 24-25). Certainly, the first part of the equation could be easily proved. But apparently, the problem is in equating 'difficulty' with 'error'. That is, theoretically, the absence of a target structure in a learner's L1 may be difficult for the learner, but at the same time it may not be necessarily leads to error. In fact, the increased number of errors in a learner's production might be due to the resemblance in forms between the learner's first language and the target language, which may cause him no difficulty at all. For instance, although Persian and Arabic relative clauses are similar to English, these speakers had a greater percentage of errors when learning English relative clause (25% and 20% respectively) compared with Chinese

(12%) and Japanese (8%) speakers, who form relative clauses by placing the modifier before the noun it modifies. Therefore, it is a mistake to over-generalize the notion that linguistic difference between L1 and L2 will lead to error as a result of learning difficulty (Ellis, 1985; Gass & Selinker, 2001).

This realization has led people who use CAH to apply a new approach to the role of L1 in SLA, language transfer in particular. Ellis indicates that the difficulty can be realized as avoidance or nonuse instead of error. Interference, hence, is more strongly considered when there are similarities between the first and second language than when there is a "total difference". Error, thus, is a multi-factored phenomenon, and interference is a single factor that interacts in complex ways with other factors (p. 33). There will be more elaboration on this issue in Chapter II.

Most previous studies on avoidance were conducted with regard to the means by which researchers establish prior knowledge in learners who supposedly practice this strategy. This situation was brought to light first by Schachter (1974), who pointed out the importance of examining not only the L2 forms that were actually produced by the learners of a foreign language, but also the L2 forms they seemed to avoid using consistently. As a matter of fact, the early studies on avoidance dealt with issues in refining and expanding the concept outlined by Schachter (e.g., Kleinmann, 1977; Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Seliger, 1991; Laufer & Eliasson 1993; Laufer, 2000; Liao, 2004). Yet, there are other studies (e.g., Eckman, 1977; Zhao, 1989) that do not accept Schachter's interpretation and try to show that avoidance is really a form of underproduction caused not by an inability to master a particular L2 construction,

but by the transfer of the frequency distribution and function patterns from the native language. More details will be provided in Chapter II.

The notion of avoidance was alluded to earlier in the 1950s and 1960s (e.g., Haas, 1951; Lado, 1961). Haas (1951), for example, provides examples of words ESL students (Creek Indian and Thai) avoid using in their own language in the presence of native English speakers because they resemble 'obscene' words in English. Though it is doubtful that a 'white' native English speaker would attach any special significance to those words, Haas indicates that "the avoidance grew as bilingualism increased among the Creeks and as they came more and more to think in terms of white man's taboos" (p. 338). She suggested that this behavior arose for those words that bear some phonetic similarity to the "four-letter" words of English.

Lado (1961) also drew attention to the fact that one limitation of using written composition as a testing instrument was that the student could avoid using the forms that he/she knew were 'troublesome'. That is, the examinee would use those forms he/she was sure of and avoid those that might reveal weakness (p. 250). Actual production, hence, in this format "would not force errors but instead would create the illusion of near error – free performance" (Seliger, 1989, p.22).

Schachter went a step further in her seminal study in 1974. She observed that the number of English relative clauses produced by native Chinese and Japanese students was much lower than the number produced by Persian and Arab students. The difference was attributed to the fact that constructed relative clauses in Chinese and Japanese differ greatly from English relative clauses. Consequently, the students avoided their use and



consequently produced fewer errors (Schachter, 1974, p. 210). Chapter II will discuss Schachter's study in more details.

Though many other studies have dealt with the notion of avoidance in the context of SL learning, in most cases, according to Kamimoto et al. (1992), this phenomenon may vary from

- 1) an awareness of a total absence of a vital bit of L2-specific knowledge in a given domain, ... 2) an awareness that the appropriate knowledge is only partially in place, to a final state 3) where the knowledge is complete, but the compositional effort required in assembling it is sometimes too great to be worthwhile, perhaps under the constraints of conventional pressure (p. 252).

This analysis implicitly highlights that L1-L2 differences, L1-L2 similarities and L2 complexity are all important in the avoidance phenomenon. However, it fails to address cultural differences due to different educational and developmental factors, for instance, and that the first language experience does not necessarily have a negative influence on second language acquisition.

Many scholars have associated the phenomenon of avoidance with problems English language learners are faced with. One problem related to avoidance is that while communicating in English, EFL and/or ESL learners were observed to avoid using phrasal verbs, preferring their equivalent one-word synonyms. This is more pronounced when the first language does not contain lexicalized phrases such as phrasal verbs, or perhaps even when the first language is genetically unrelated to English.

Though this study is not in any way a historical documentation or a thorough and absorbing survey of the development of the phrasal verb, we will briefly consider its development here. From the English verb's origin in a Germanic dialect to its place in the literary and cultural achievements of its 1,500-year history to the state of American speech and global English today, we have to admit, as Martin stated, that

time has subjected the verb in modern English to the universal law of change in fascinating ways which linguists have not fathomed (sic). And change in the verb augurs change in the language itself. For the verb is so central to the English sentence that any alterations in it radiate out and begin to alter other elements in the sentence as well (1990, 2).

Actually, the phrasal verb, which is comprised of a verb plus a particle, proves that Ferdinand de Saussure, the father of modern linguistics, was correct when he declared that "[t]ime changes all things; there is no reason why language should escape this universal law" (1959, 77).

Recently coined terms such as 'boot up' (e.g., a computer), and 'lift off' (e.g., a space shuttle) –cited in Martin (1990)- or units such as 'dig up' (e.g., information) and 'hand in' (e.g., an essay) not only attest to the productivity of this form in today's English communication, but to the difficulty of communicating naturally and effectively without them, particularly in informal registers. However, this is not always the case. Take the examples below, which represent a more formal register: ("Register and Phrasal Verbs", Para. 2)

1) Issues **brought up** by the President of the College and by the Board of Regents shall be addressed by the Faculty Senate and, if necessary, by the ...

(from a college constitution document)

2) Answering the big questions **raised** by the war. (From an online book review)

Interestingly enough, in 1 the legislator could have used 'raised' in place of 'brought up', especially in this very formal written text. But evidently the phrasal verb seems 'natural and acceptable' in this context. However, in sentence 2, which is taken from a much less formal register, the writer chose to use 'raise' rather than 'bring up'. This is probably due to the strong collocation between the lexical combinations 'raise and question', while a combination of 'bring up and question' would be rather rare for a native speaker of English. Phrasal verbs, hence, are used across all types of text, even where the writer or speaker has the option of choosing a single-word alternative. Although phrasal verbs tend to enter the language through casual speech, in most cases, they progressively become accepted across a wider range of texts until they reach even the most technical and conservative of text types.

This development is inextricably linked to the syntactic behavior of phrasal verbs and to the types of registers in which they are typically used. Thus "the process by which certain verbs would habitually collocate with certain particles—eventually to form phrasal verbs—was set in motion by this profound syntactical shift in the language" (Martin, p. 11). This makes phrasal verbs one of most enormously productive form in modern English, "ubiquitous and mutable in contemporary slang, advertising, and informal speech" (p1). Perhaps that is what makes the form an intriguing yet frustrating puzzle that is problematic for students of English.



## **1.1 Rationale of the Study**

In spite of the fact that there have been a limited number of studies dealing with the avoidance of phrasal verb (i.e., Dagut and Laufer 1985; Hulstijn and Marchena 1989; Laufer and Eliasson 1993; and Liao and Fukuya 2004; Ben Duhaish, 2008), to the best of my knowledge, the way Arab learners perform with the English phrasal verb, a lexicalized phrase with no formal equivalent in Arabic language, has not been enough studied. There is only one study reported in this regard.

It has been reported in the studies listed here that the difficulty of English learners in producing the English phrasal verb, which is manifested in the avoidance phenomenon, could be understood by means of structural differences between L1 and L2 (Dagut and Laufer, 1985; Laufer and Eliasson, 19993), semantic reasons and similarity between L1 and L2 (Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989; Laufer and Eliasson, 1991), or/and L2 complexity (Laufer and Eliasson, 1993). For instance, Hebrew learners of English tended to have “a genuine avoidance phenomenon” because they lack the form in their L1 (Dagut and Laufer, p. 78), while Dutch learners of English, who have such verbs in Dutch, according to Hulstijn and Marchena, tended to avoid only the idiomatic phrasal verbs. As for Swedish, a language with phrasal verbs, Laufer and Eliasson claim learners tended not to avoid them at all. According to these studies, therefore, it is “L1-L2 differences that can best explain and predict the phenomenon of avoidance in L2 learning” (Laufer and Eliasson, 1991, p. 46).

Though the abovementioned findings have illustrated the existence and some potential causes of avoidance of phrasal verbs in L2 learners, they do not explain all the reasons for the avoidance of phrasal verbs. In particular, this assumption ignores the

impact of many other elements such as environmental factors, level of proficiency, and elicitation format, which also need to be empirically studied.

In their study, Dagut and Laufer (1985) did not study more than one proficiency level (the advanced level). Although Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) included two different levels of proficiency in their study (intermediate and advanced), they did not investigate the effect the learner's educational background has on avoidance or nonavoidance of tests, which may shed light on learners' preference for using one word over a phrasal verb. More details will be provided in Chapter II.

Liao and Fukuya (2004) addressed the significance of proficiency level and test effect as factors in the avoidance of phrasal verbs among Chinese learners of English. The study found that there is "a developmental manifestation of interlingua from avoidance to nonavoidance" based on proficiency level (p. 212). The degree of avoidance diminished among the advanced graduate learners, a finding that calls for more validation. Regarding the test effect, the study found that "there was an interaction between test type and phrasal verb type" on the translation test. Liao explains that in this type of elicitation, Chinese students tend to avoid using figurative phrasal verbs but not literal ones. Indeed, this leads to speculation about the relationship between the semantic complexity of idiomatic phrasal verbs and learners' familiarity with phrasal verb types, phrasal or prepositional.

Ben Duhaish (2008) investigated a further factor: the role of different settings (ESL v. EFL) in the preference of phrasal verbs among Saudi learners. The reported findings indicate that the language environment has an effect on the avoidance of phrasal verbs. Ben Duhaish concludes that Arab learners tended to avoid using phrasal verbs



because of the lack of this structure in Arabic. However, the study did not look into the role of time lived in a native-speaking environment. Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) report that long-term exposure to the L2 environment has an effect on the selection of phrasal verb vs. one-word verbs.

In most cases the studies cited above did not explore whether the difference in educational background (i.e., time period of exposure to the L2 environment) can be an important factor in the developmental manifestation of interlanguage from avoidance to nonavoidance. Besides, although researchers on avoidance of phrasal verbs believe that this phenomenon presupposes some sort of prior knowledge, the method used, according to Kamimoto et al (1992), to establish this prior knowledge "seem more hopeful than sound" (p 259): "We ...know, as teachers of EFL in Israel, that the phrasal verbs tested are taught as part of the Israeli high school English curriculum ... The verbs are all included in one of the standard textbooks ... What we have then is a genuine avoidance phenomenon" (Dagut and Laufer, 1985, p. 78-79).

Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) determined that all the phrasal verbs used in their study had been previously taught, which was confirmed by the fact that none of the subjects marked them as unknown. They were able to rule out ignorance as an explanation for avoidance of the phrasal verbs in the study. To put it differently, it is not enough to assume that learners know the avoided language structure. It is necessary to make sure that learner knows what s/he is avoiding and that s/he has decided to not to use that form.

This serious lack of information about the avoidance of English phrasal verbs calls for a research agenda to learn more about this issue. Unfortunately, one apparent

reason for neglecting this matter, besides the fuzziness of the borderline that combines the verb with its particle, is the ignorance, especially in EFL settings, of the preference for this unit by native speakers of English over more erudite single but longer words of classical Latin or Greek origin, which often sound odd or too formal to native ears. Further, English language learners face problems in using and understanding English prepositions in general, and the difficulty of distinguishing between a preposition in a prepositional verb and a particle in a phrasal verb that seems identical (it is the same lexical item- for instance, “up” in raise up versus the prepositional go up (the hill)) is often difficult for them. A third intriguing reason is the effect of particle movement on the learner’s cognitive processing. According to Chen (1989) and Heliel (1994), the undetached particles are more likely to activate phrasal verb comprehension and, accordingly, persist longer in memory.

## **1.2 The Purpose of the Study**

The present study aims to explore the cultural dimensions of the avoidance of English phrasal verbs among Arab learners of English. It was undertaken to increase our knowledge of avoidance in SLA. This study explores the roles of proficiency level, educational background, the context of structural differences between L1 and L2, and the inherent semantic complexity of the target form as well as the effect of elicitation formats on the avoidance of phrasal verbs.

The study plans, first and foremost, to explore whether Arab ESL/EFL learners avoid using a phrasal verb when an equivalent one-word expression is available. It was observed that advanced Hebrew (which is, of course, a closely related Semitic language)

learners do avoid using phrasal verbs when they communicate in English (Dagut and Laufer, 1985). This tendency was more pronounced in intermediate learners than in advanced learners (Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989; Liao and Fukuya 2004). Research indeed indicates that this type of avoidance, which was seen in Hebrew and Chinese ESL learners, was also seen in situations where L1 is related to English, and even in situations in which the first language has phrasal verbs, such as Dutch. None of these studies, where researchers suggest that ESL learners avoid using phrasal verbs when equivalent one-word expressions are available, accounted for the learner's educational background. For decades, many Arab English learners have been educated in different parts of the world, especially North America. This huge diversity of educational experiences raises the question whether learners studying abroad would perform differently than their counterparts studying at home and whether they would prefer using phrasal verbs over single-word verbs. Therefore, the population of this study was composed of some Arab learners who had had their English education in the USA and others who had studied English in the Arab world.

The second basic interest of this study is to examine whether Arab learners educated in the USA and learners educated in the Arab world were equally likely to produce a phrasal verb when asked to complete a sentence with a form such as 'eat up' (e.g., Mary ate up \_\_\_\_\_). We assume that those who had been educated in the US would be more likely to supply a phrase such as 'the pizza', which implies a phrasal verb interpretation, rather than a phrase such as 'the hill', which implies a verb plus prepositional interpretation.



A third issue that this study is trying to explore is the influence of the environmental background in activating lexical and syntactic information of phrasal verb forms in a reading and paraphrasing task. This study will, therefore, investigate the role of the L2 environment in activating the idiomatic, phrasal meaning first. Drawing from this assumption, one may hypothesize that retrieving a phrasal verb from reading is more natural for ESL learners than for EFL learners.

In all these cases, similarities or/and differences in how phrasal verbs are processed would have paramount importance and pedagogical implications for how to provide English learners with information and practices that will help them understand and use this form correctly for everyday spoken and written communication.

### **1.3 The Research Questions**

The questions this study seeks to answer were formulated based on the rationale outlined above. They are:

1. Do Arab learners avoid using phrasal verbs?
2. Do learners' performances reflect their preference for the one-word form over its equivalent phrasal verb?
3. Do language learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) affect learners' preference for the phrasal verb?
4. Does longer exposure to the native speaker environment enhance ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs?
5. Does learners' proficiency level (intermediate vs. advanced) affect their usage for phrasal verbs?

6. Does the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs influence students' familiarity with phrasal verbs?

7. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their productive knowledge for the selected phrasal verbs (e.g., as demonstrated in the fill-in-the-blanks task)?

8. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their comprehension for the selected phrasal verbs (e.g., in the sentence study task)?

#### **1.4 Hypotheses**

The following hypotheses are formulated to be tested in the present study. Each hypothesis is detailed, along with the rationale for its inclusion in the study, in Chapter III.

**H<sub>0</sub>** There will be no significant difference in the preference of one-word verbs over phrasal verbs among Arab learners.

**H<sub>1</sub>** EFL groups will have a significantly higher preference for one-word verbs than ESL groups.

**H<sub>2</sub>** There will be a significant difference in ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs based on their time of exposure to the L2 environment.

**H<sub>3</sub>** There will be a significant relationship between Arab learners' preference for phrasal verbs and their proficiency levels.

**H<sub>4</sub>** There will be a significantly higher preference for the literal phrasal verbs than for both semi-transparent and idiomatic verbs.

**H5** There will be a significant difference in EFL learners' usage of idiomatic phrasal verbs as compared to ESL learners.

**H6** There will be a significant relationship between learners' productive knowledge of phrasal verbs and their avoidance of phrasal verbs.

**H7** There will be a significant relationship between learners' comprehension of phrasal verbs and learners' educational background (ESL/EFL).

The first five questions will be answered by identifying three main groups: native speakers of English and two groups of learners who were classified based on their educational backgrounds and/or their proficiency level. One group consisted of Arabs who had been educated or earned their degrees in the Arab world. The other group was comprised of learners who were earning their degrees in the USA. The Arabs were given a multiple choice test and a translation task and the native speakers of English were given only the multiple choice task. This is done to make sure that native speakers of English do in fact use the avoided forms in the same context in which the non-natives avoid them.

The answer to the questions raised by H6 and H7 will be determined by having the participants completing two further tasks: a completion task and a reading comprehension one.

Chapter II will review the immense body of literature on the phrasal verb as well as avoidance as a second language acquisition phenomenon. Chapter III will detail the research context and design of the study, including the participants, instruments, and procedures used in the study. Chapter IV will present the results of the experiment, and Chapter V will discuss the findings and offer recommendations for further research.

## CHAPTER II

### Literature Review

#### Introduction

The present study was designed to add to our current state of knowledge about the avoidance of the English phrasal verb among Arab learners. It was also intended to explore possible effects different educational settings/experiences of one language have on the avoidance of phrasal verbs. Specifically, the study tries to trace possible evidence of the impact of learning experiences acquired by ESL Arab learners who have been studying in American universities, schools, or other educational institution. Further, the study examines the impact of the learner's proficiency level and the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs on this phenomenon.

This chapter presents a review of related theoretical and empirical studies that examine the main assumptions of the phenomenon of avoidance, specifically those that deal with phrasal verbs. The chapter is divided into a number of sections. The first provides background information about English phrasal verbs: a definition, classification, structure, and acquisition including answering the difficult question of the occurrence of verb-particle combinations in the Arabic language. This will probe the difficulties encountered by Arab learners in using the forms and consequently choosing to avoid them. Then, the chapter considers the specific area of SLA to which this study pertains (i.e., avoidance). This section will review research and some classical articles in the second language literature that deal with the notion of avoidance and/or have contributed to defining its characteristics. Following this, the chapter limits its scope to a review of studies that have investigated the phenomenon of avoidance of the phrasal verb for more



or less the same purposes as the present study. The last section will conclude the chapter and introduce an outline of chapter III.

## 2.1 The English Phrasal Verb

The White Rabbit *put on* his spectacles. “Where shall I begin, please your Majesty?” he asked. “Begin at the beginning,” the King said, very gravely, “and *go on* till you come to the end: then stop.”

-Lewis Carroll, *Alice’s Adventures in Wonderland*-

The purpose of this section is to shed light on the English phrasal verb and its adverbial particle to come to a lucid understanding of the problems that Arab ESL/EFL students have with comprehending/producing this lexicalized unit. This section is divided into several parts. The first two will identify briefly the form and its historical development from Old English into Modern English. The second looks at the importance of the form in today’s English. Next, there is a section on the linguistic features of the phrasal verb. This will focus on the salient characteristics of phrasal verbs from both a syntactic and a semantic prospective. The next part deals with phrasal verbs and lexicon processing. It is followed by a section dealing with phrasal verbs in the realm of SLA and vocabulary acquisition. Finally, *Phrasal Verbs and Arab Learners* will focus on the problems that Arab learners have (or are assumed to have) in comprehending and producing English phrasal verbs.

### 2.1.1 What is a Phrasal Verb?

The name ‘phrasal verb’ is the best known and preferred term in ESL/EFL learning/teaching for the linguistic unit under consideration here (e.g., Palmer, 1974;



Quirk et al, 1985; McArthur, 1989; Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999). There are numerous other terms for this, however, such as *verb-adverb combination* (Kennedy 1920), *compound verb* (Kruisinga, 1953), *separable verb* (Francis, 1958), *two-word verb* (Taha, 1960), *discontinuous verb* (Live, 1965), *verb-particle combination* (Fraser 1976), *complex predicate* (Ackerman & Webelhuth, 1997), or *multi-word verb* (Parrott, 2000), to name a few. It is simply defined as a collocation of a verb and one or two particles. It is a verb construction consisting of two or three components (lexical items): a verb-usually monosyllabic-plus- a particle (for example, ‘sit down’, ‘stand up’, ‘come on’ and ‘put off’) or a verb plus two particles (verb + particle [+particle]), where the second particle functions as a preposition such as ‘come up with’, ‘fall behind with’, ‘get in with’, and ‘put up with’ (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999; Quirk et al., 1985). The particle, according to the *Longman Dictionary of Applied Linguistics* (1985), is a word, a preposition, or an adverb of location or direction such as *in*, *on*, *up* or *back*, when it modifies a verb rather than a noun. In a phrase like ‘in the box’ or ‘on the wall’, both *in* and *on* are prepositions because they are linked to nouns. When they are linked to verbs (e.g., ‘come in’, ‘eat up’ or ‘put away’); they are known as adverb particles.

Consider the following sentences:

- (1) Sue *turned on* her computer and checked her e-mail.
- (2) Buying that new car has really *eaten into* my savings.
- (3) I do not think I can *put up with* his behavior much longer.

Apparently the invariable morphological particles (*on* and *into*) in the first two sentences function, respectively, with the verbs (*turned* and *eaten*) as a single grammatical unit. In sentence (1), the verb *turned* is followed by an adverb *on*; while in

(2) the verb *eaten* is followed by a preposition *into*. In sentence (3), however, the verb *put* is followed by both an adverb *up* and a preposition *with*, both of which are called particles in some grammar books.

Thus, the term phrasal verb, which appeared in the 1980s, is “the winning term” (McArthur, 1989, p. 38) and “more neutral” (Morales, 2000, p.11) because it does not exclude phrases of more than two words and avoid “a commitment as to how close a connection there must be to form a compound” (Bolinger, 1971, p.3).

### **2.1.2 Phrasal Verbs: An Overview - Concise Sketch of the Development of Phrasal Verbs**

The phrasal verb is a well-known construction in most Germanic languages like German, Dutch, Danish, Norwegian, Swedish, and, of course, English (Matlock and Herediag, 2002; Dehe 2002; Bolinger, 1971). It is as old as Old English (henceforth OE) although there are many English language historians and linguists who disagree about the extent of particle usage in OE (e.g., Curme 1913/14 and van Dongen 1919, cited in Brinton 1988; Kennedy 1920; Konishi 1958; de la Cruz 1975 and Hiltunen 1983, cited in Brinton 1988). In fact, OE has many compound verbs (Kennedy 1920; Konishi 1958) such as “withdraw” and “overcome”. These verbs are formed with inseparable prefixes like ‘with’ and ‘over’ (Brinton, 1988), which serve much the same purpose as phrasal verbs (Martin 1990). So a verb such as *settan* ‘set’ could in OE be prefixed into *asettan* (place or put); *besettan* (appoint); *forsettan* (obstruct), *foresettan* (place before) ; *ofsettan* (afflict); and so on (Martin 1990).

Tomoshichi Konishi (1958) indicates that the structure of the current phrasal verb has developed through three different stages (see Figure 1). In the first stage, Type (I), there were compound verbs such as ‘overcome’ or ‘outgo’, which originated in the synthetic stage of OE. The principle of combinations of this type died out later on. Then came the separable compound verbs, Type (II), like ‘over come’ and ‘out go’, which are not a continuance of Type (I), but start from a quite new principle signifying a new meaning. Nevertheless, Type (III), or the third stage of development, is a direct and continuing development of Type (II) following the same principle of signification. In this type, the particle follows the verb as in ‘come over’ and ‘go out’.

Kennedy (1920) provides evidence for the existence of the first two types in his monograph where he analyzes the first 300 lines of *Beowulf*, a well-known Old English epic composed some time between the middle of the seventh and the end of the tenth century. He finds 25 occurrences of compound verbs (verbs with inseparable prefixes) such as *ofteah* (5) and *forgeah* (17), *onsendon* (45), *forscrifen* (106), *become* (192), etc. He could only discover five separable compound verbs like *up ahafen* (128), *for gewat* (210), *ut scufon* (215), *up...stigon* (224-5), *gewitap for* (291) (for more information see Kennedy, 1920, p.11-18). Aberrantly, in these last five instances, the adverb generally precedes the verb as in the old compound verbs, but it is separate and independent like modern verb-particle combinations (Konishi, 1953).



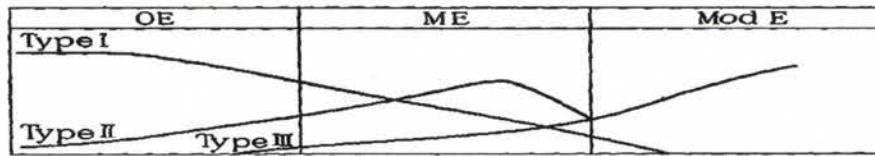


Figure 1.

The Development of the Recent Position of the Prepositional Adverb.

Adopted from Tmoshichi Konishi, *"The Growth of the Verb-Adverb Combination in English,"* p. 118.

The emergence of the separable adverbial modifier as 'over' in 'over come' arose in order to express a distinct and independent idea with a different from compound verbs like 'overcome', which were widespread during the OE period. Pamela Martin (1990) asserts that the inseparable prefixes in OE became largely "unproductive for the formation of new compounds in Modern English" (10). This raised a new tendency for these inseparable prefixes to break off from the verb and do duty also as prepositions (Brinton, 1988). These prepositions could also combine with verbs as the older prefixes had, altering them in similar ways. These verb-plus-preposition forms would eventually develop into the verb-plus-particle form of the current phrasal verbs (Martin, 1990).

As a matter of fact, the fragmentation of the prefixed verb form is due to a major syntactical shift that marks the conventional transition from OE to Middle English (henceforth ME), the language spoken and written in England from roughly the eleventh century to the end of the fifteenth. The Norman Conquest changed the whole course of the English language. It altered OE, transforming it from synthetic to analytic (e.g. Nist, 1966; Baugh & Cable, 1978; Blake, 1996) and, consequently, it lost its inflectional structure. Martin (1990) elaborates this by saying:

There is a natural tendency in English to shift stress to the first syllable, which, in prototype Germanic languages, was generally the root. Since the inflections of old English were at the ends of words, they tended to lose stress, and, over time, to drop off (p.11).

Moreover, with this inflectional leveling in ME, Pyles (1971) points out that "English had come to depend upon particles – mainly prepositions and conjunctions— and word order to express grammatical relations which had previously been expressed by inflection" (p. 169).

Bolinger (1971) states that the number of phrasal verbs grew slowly until the Norman Conquest in 1066, at which point the influx of French derivatives into the language diminished the phrasal verb's frequency. As French became the language of the governing and upper class (e.g., Pyles, 1971; Baugh & Cable, 1978), Romance derivatives often paired for meaning with native English phrasal verbs (e.g., 'appear'/'turn up'; 'enter'/'come in'; 'continue'/'go on') and were used as the official language in scholarly, legal, military, and ecclesiastical circles (Baugh & Cable, 1978). This caused "[the] native phrasal verb to be crowded out at least in the literary, formal, 'public' language" (Martin, 1990, p.12).

Ironically, the French presence has played a critical role in strengthening the 'Germanic backbone' of the English language with its monosyllabic forms like the phrasal verbs. The English language historian Nist asserts:

[T]he most profound impact of French on the English language was exerted by failure rather than by success: the failure of the



French suprasegmental system to permanently penetrate and control the natively Germanic basis of English pronunciation...so the challenge of French patterns of stress, intonation, and juncture strengthened the resolve of the English peasants to enforce their own patterns upon every new word introduced into their language (1966, p.12).

Baugh and Cable add that "[b]y making English the language mainly of uneducated people, the Norman Conquest made it easier for the grammatical changes to go forward unchecked" (1978, p.167). Though the development of the phrasal verb and its occurrence faded away for a time in literate English, especially in formal written forms where words from the Latinate lexicon such as 'postpone' and 'deceive' are considered more educated than the peasants' 'put off' and 'take in' respectively, phrasal verbs eventually started to recover from this intrusion in the fifteenth century in both oral and written formats (Konishi, 1958; Bolinger, 1971; Brinton, 1988).

Spasov (1966), cited in Smith (1986), confirms that starting in the fifteenth century, phrasal verb usage again increased. He studies the frequency of occurrence of phrasal verbs in 64 plays from early Modern English (the English Renaissance) to 1965. He finds that the occurrence of phrasal verbs to total verbs ranged from 2 percent in the fifteenth century to a high of 14 percent post World War Two. He observes that the structure reached its lowest usage in the second half of the eighteenth century, probably due to the fashions in writing when Latin was looked upon as a model. Konishi (1958) notes instances of self correction on the part of literary writers such as John Dryden

(1631-1700), who replaced phrasal verbs with Latinate form changing 'bound up' to 'limited', 'brought in' to 'introduced,' etc.

In the Modern English (henceforth ModE) phase the use of phrasal verbs has been steadily growing, particularly in the middle of the nineteenth century after the Industrial Revolution and the modern development of science made English life and thought more scientific and rapid (Baugh & Cable, 1978). In a sense, the vocabulary of the nineteenth century evolved in this direction because of the inadaptability and prolixity of foreign imported words, which could not answer the need for distinct, concise, concrete, and instinctive words in everyday speech in the age of science and speed. Expressions such as 'speed up', 'push on', 'speak out', or 'hurry up' attest to their suitability and conciseness for such a period. Under these circumstances, "phrasal verbs came to be recognized again as the fittest means of the expression for their wider activity and knowledge, and since then they have been regaining the past glory" (Konishi, 1958, p.124).

Further testimonies are found in the work of many great literary writers who loved these vivid, concise expressions. Robert Browning (1812-1889), for example, applies them in *The Ring and the Book*:

The thing were not so bad to bear! Brute force

Cuts as he comes, *breaks in, breaks on, breaks out*

O'er the hard and soft of you: is that the same? (Altick & Collins, 2001, p. 658)

Another great lover of phrasal verbs is Charles Dickens (1812-1870), who marries these combinations with their corresponding Latin words:

The phantom slowly, gravely, silently *approached*, when it *came near* him, Scrooge bent down upon his knee..... But she had scarcely *entered*, when another woman, similarly laden, *came in* too.... He asked me if it would suit my convenience to have the light *put out*; and on my answering 'yes,' instantly *extinguished* it (Christmas Carol, p. 160, 172).

Phrasal verbs have come to hold figurative meanings, or shades of meanings, that could not be otherwise expressed by the combined meanings of their parts. Kennedy (1920), Spasov (1966, cited in Smith, 1986) and, lately, Martin (1990) confirm that the great productivity of phrasal verbs is due largely to the flowering of the more figurative uses of the form such as the use 'pick up' in the sense of "my spirits *picked up*" rather than in that of '*pick up* sticks', for instance.

Remarkably, a large number of those vivid expressions have been born or gained new meanings in American English (Konishi, 1958; McArthur, 1989). The verb 'get', for example, in Mathews's *Dictionary of Americanisms* (1951) has the following entries:

*get after* (1869), *get along* (1830), *get around* (1848), *get behind* (1903), *get by* (1904), *get into* (1788, 1876), *get off* (1834, 1849, 1877, 1890), *get out* (1884), *get outside* (1886, 1889), *get over* (1932), *get round* (1885), *get through* (1873), *get together* (1889), *get up* (1849), *get away with* (1878, 1886, 1888), *get back at* (1888), *get broke in* (1846), *get down on* (1875), *get down sick* (1852), *get in bad (or good)* (1928), *get onto* (1880), *get out from under* (1875), *get out the vote* (1938), *get over the footlights* (1915).



From observing historical emergence, it seems that the nineteenth century saw a remarkable appearance of phrasal verbs, especially after the American Civil War (1861-65). In fact, to capture the rhythm of the infinite productivity and creativity of phrasal verbs in America one may be amused to know that Mark Twain is a great creator of this combination. For example, in the case of *get-combinations* mentioned above, four are his own innovations such as:

A little fort... . If we were ever to *get after* it with one of our turreted monitors they would have to move it out in the country.—*Innocents Abroad* (1869) / All through supper his spirits were so high that his aunt wondered ' what had *got into* the child.'—*Tom Sawyer* (1876) / It ain't right and it ain't moral, and I wouldn't like it to *get out*.—*Huckleberry Finn* (1884) / The Senator . . . favored the appropriation and he gave the Colonel . . . to understand that he would endeavor to *get it through*.—*Gilded Age* (Mathews, 1951, p.693-694).

In today's American English, the number of phrasal verbs has far outdistanced their number in present-day British English. According to Konishi "every condition now favours the development of the combination in the United States more than in the British Kingdom" (1958, p.127). To clarify, a phrase such as 'tie up', which has been used in a figurative meaning as in ' Death *ties up* my tongue' (Konishi, 1958), in today's British English usually has only a primary meaning of "secure or fasten (a shoe, bonnet or a thing) by tightening and knotting its strings or with cord or band tied around it, without any figurative uses" (Simpson and Weiner, p.71). But in the United States, it is

used not only in the original meaning but also in figurative ones that are used in more advanced ways than in the 'Elizabethan Age', as in (Konishi, 1958):

- The traffic was *tied up* (delayed) by the blizzard.
- Jack was *tied up* (detained, engaged) at the office until seven o'clock and was late for dinner.
- He can make business for that yard by *tying up* (join forces, associate oneself closely) with the other navy yard representatives on the committee.

Another example is 'show up', which is also has been used by both British and American English speakers with the meaning of 'expose (a fraud, imposter, etc.)' (Simpson and Weiner, p. 358), but 'put in appearance' is the meaning only used in the United States as in 'He has not *shown up* (appeared) yet'. A final illustration is 'turn down', which originally meant only 'fold down (a paper),' or 'reduce flame of (gas, lamp)'. Americans invented the new meaning 'reject (proposal, etc.)' and exported it to England, where it was established in colloquial speech (Konishi, 1958).

Moreover, American English has developed a large number of compound nouns from phrasal verbs as compared with old compound nouns such as *castaway*, *downfall*, *outcry*, *passover*, *runaway*, etc. Edwin Hunter (1947) lists more than 200 compound nouns of this kind, such as *shakeup* (to shake up), *showdown* (to show down), *showoff* (to show off), *tie-up* (to tie up), *tryout* (to try out), *turndown* (to turn down), *walkout* (to walk out), *washout* (to wash out), etc. (p.118-119). The adjective formed from the verb-adverb combination like *bang-up*, *drive-in*, *fallable for* (to fall for) is also more widely used in America than in England.



Indeed, the literature is replete with references regarding the historical development and growth of this remarkable phenomenon, which attests not only to its extraordinary profusion but also to the productive and frequent use, of those that had been compounded before. In addition, there are a large number of combinations not found in the dictionary but used in colloquial speech and slang.

In this limited space, I have tried to demonstrate how this structure of the English language has a life of its own. It evolves over time. And its history is related to that of the people who speak it, who of course have an impact upon it as well, introducing new terms, new turns of phrase, new constructions, and so on. If we try to visualize the historical development of phrasal verbs, I assume we will see something similar to Figure2.

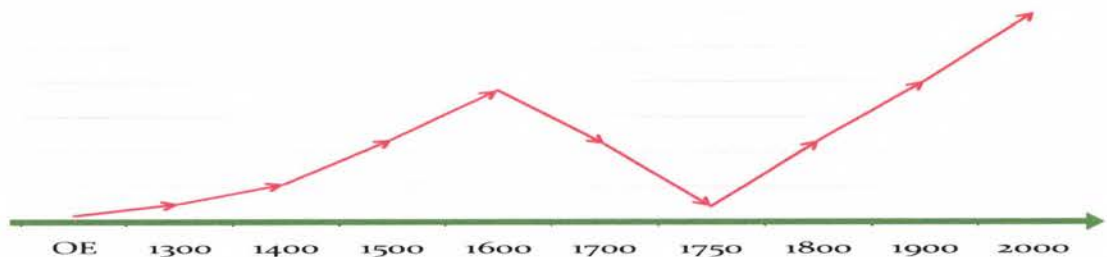


Figure 2.  
Summary of the Development of Phrasal Verbs from Old English into Modern English. It is based on a number of studies (Kennedy, 1920; Spasova 1966; Smith, 1986 and Martin, 1990).

### 2.1.3 The Importance of Phrasal Verbs

“Supposing is good, but *finding out* is better.”  
-Mark Twain-

The importance of phrasal verbs is clearly reflected in their presence in modern dictionaries, which most of the time list them as separate entities (e.g., *put up* is a

separate entry not listed under 'put') (Cornell, 1985). They constitute 12,000 entries in *Courtney's Dictionary* (1983). Alexander (1988) adds, "the use of phrasal verbs is extremely common and a standard feature of good idiomatic English" (p.153). One of the reasons why they are so popular among native speakers is that "the system underlying them is economical" and they have "potential for creativity" (Armstrong, 2004, p.33). Three thousand to 4,000 of such verbs that exist in today's English are established ones (Hook, 1981). Bolinger (1971) calls this phenomenon "an outpouring of lexical creativeness that surpasses anything else in our language" (xi). McArthur (1989) lists several neologisms observed in newspapers and literature, e.g., 'cheer down' as the opposite of 'cheer up', or 'dolly in' (to move in on a dolly or wheeled stand) (p. 43-44).

Phrasal verbs are very common and essential for English conversation, add Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), and help in speaking and writing "naturally" (Hook, 1981). They are used in everyday speech to express vivid, emotional and frequently "slangy points", to "conjure up special metaphoric relationships and jokes and to label actions in such everyday areas" (McArthur & Atkins, 1974, p. iii) as cooking (e.g., 'chop up' and 'dish up'), gardening (e.g., 'cut back' and 'lop off'), maintaining the car (e.g., 'fill up', 'pump up'), shopping (e.g., 'pay for', 'sell out', 'try on'), and so on.

Phrasal verbs are pervasive and frequent not only in conversation, fiction and news but in academic prose and technical or specialized writing as well (Biber et al., 1999) e.g. in computer science (e.g., 'back up', 'boot up', 'shut down'), mass media (e.g., 'tune up', 'write up', 'hook up'), sociology (e.g., 'brush up', 'talk up', 'clean up'), politics (e.g., 'break off', 'runoff', 'write in'), economics (e.g., 'set up', 'open up', 'trade in'), nautical and military English (e.g., 'dugout', 'dim out', 'blackout'), and so on. They

are a leading dynamic source of “new stereotypes” and a “floodgate of metaphor” (Bolinger 1971). Bolinger defines his term “stereotype” as “a lexical unit in the strict sense of non-additive compound or derivative, one that has a set meaning which is not the sum of its parts” (p. xii).

As the changing attitudes of users of English toward levels of usage become more flexible, combinations which were once labeled “slang”, “informal”, or “colloquial” are now considered “neutral” and thus have risen in social importance, for instance, ‘sit-in’ and ‘teach-in’ (Martin, 1990).

Another significant point is that phrasal verbs have the role of a highly productive category in English lexicography. They are the most prolific source of new nouns, verbal nouns, and adjectives (Heaton 1965; McArthur 1970; Greenbaum, 1996; Morales, 2000). Greenbaum states: “Phrasal verbs (...) have become a fertile field for new coinages in the twentieth century” (280). The fact that phrasal verbs usually consist of high-frequency monosyllabic verbs and particles adds to their popularity; to the native speaker both elements are familiar and easy to manage (cf. Bolinger 1971: xii).

Its surprise, then, that a native speaker of English prefers phrasal verbs over the more erudite single but longer words of classical Latin or Greek origin, which may sound odd or too formal. For example, in a friendly conversation one may say ‘*put out* the cigarette’ instead of ‘*extinguish* the cigarette’, which sounds more like a something flight attendant might say.

Sometimes phrasal verbs cannot be replaced by lengthy or awkward substitutes. Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman indicate that “Certain phrasal verbs are associated with a particular field and *situational suitability* for which there are no concise



alternatives” (1999, p. 454, emphasis added). They demonstrate this appropriateness in the case of a person who wants to check out from a hotel. Obviously the phrase ‘check out’ denotes a context that indicates “upon leaving a hotel, I have to go to the front desk, give the clerk my key, and pay my bill”. There is no other verb that conveys this precise meaning.

Therefore, the omnipresence of phrasal verbs makes them significant for foreign language learners. As Bywater (1969) puts it:

The plain fact is that what distinguishes the writing and, above all, the speech of a good foreign student from those of an Englishman is that what an Englishman writes or says is full of these expressions, whereas most foreigners are frightened of them, carefully avoid them, and sound stilted in consequence. Foreign students who enjoy being flattered on their English can best achieve this by correctly using masses of these compound verbs (quoted in Cornell 1985, p. 270).

Überlingen (2007) elaborates that the word “masses” of phrasal verbs for ESL/EFL learners does not necessarily imply that their use makes students of English more native-like. Rather, “Understanding and being able to use these constructions correctly in spoken and written English is essential if the learner is to develop a complete command of the language” (Cullen & Sargeant 1996 cited in Überlingen, 2007, p.34). The term “correctly” entails not only grammatical and semantic appropriateness, but also situational appropriateness.

It should be concluded, then, that it is important that all (ESL/EFL) learners develop a receptive awareness (passive knowledge) that will help them decode phrasal



verbs they encounter in spoken and written texts, as well as a productive awareness (active knowledge) to produce at least the more common combinations appropriately.

#### **2.1.4 The Linguistic Features of Phrasal Verbs**

As mentioned earlier, phrasal verbs consist of a head verb and one or more obligatory particles. They have been used as lexical units in informal as well as formal speech and written situations. Their integration into a unit allows them to function like individual words that often have a specialized multiple context-sensitive meanings. Moreover, phrasal verbs are used as verbal units across types in writing without any consideration for the previously presumed colloquial or lower-register effect (Smith, 1986). Thus, their linguistic features can be roughly determined by their syntactic and semantic characteristics.

##### **2.1.4.1 Syntactic Features of Phrasal Verbs**

Many studies have contributed to the understanding of the syntactic patterns and the role of verb and particle ordering in phrasal verbs (e.g., Kennedy, 1920; Spasov, 1966; Live, 1965; Palmer, 1968; Bolinger, 1971; Lipka, 1972; Fraser, 1976; Hall, 1982; Courtney, 1983; Quirk et al., 1985; Brinton, 1988; Azar, 1989; Cowie, 1993; Cowie and Mackin, 1993; Lindstromberg, 1998; Cameron and Low, 1999; Celce-Murcia and Larsen Freeman, 1999; Hart, 1999; Lohse, Hawkins, and Wasow, 2004). Some approach the issue synchronically and others diachronically. For the purpose of this study, I will briefly touch upon two issues, transitivity and separability.

#### 2.1.4.1.1 Transitivity of Phrasal Verbs

Like single-word verbs, phrasal verbs can be either transitive as in (4) and (5) or intransitive as in (6) and (7). And some phrasal verbs can be both transitive and intransitive, as in (8) and (9).

(4) Jo *tore up* the contract.

(5) Jo *came across* the letter.

(6) The plane *took off*.

(7) Jo *sat down*.

(8) Please *shut her up*.

(9) He told her to *shut up*

It is obvious from (4), (5), and (8), that the phrasal verbs ('tore up', 'came across' and 'shut up') function as single transitive verbs that require a direct object. On the other hand, phrasal verbs as in (6) 'took off', (7) 'sat down' and (9) 'shut up' do not require objects at all, which make them intransitive. In fact, transitivity of phrasal verbs is not only influenced by the need for a special kind of adjunct 'object' (Kruisinga and Erades, 1960) but also by phrasal verbs' degree of fixedness (Lindstromberg, 1998) and their need for an explicit/implicit landmark (cf. Dixon, 1982). Some phrasal verbs may be 'immutably fused' with a particular noun phrase (NP) as in '*lay down* the law' or they may collocate with a very narrow range of NPs as in '*put on* the dog'. Others collocate with a wide range of NPs such as *come across* an old friend/ an interesting book/ a new justification. Moreover, phrasal verbs like 'tore up' and 'came across' always require an explicit landmark e.g., 'the contract' and 'the letter'. On the other hand, some phrasal verbs are expressions that do not require a landmark, as in 'the plane *took off*' and 'Jo *sat*

*down*'. It would be "pedantic to stipulate" a detail that anyone can assume, as in 'The plane *took off* from the airport runway' versus 'The plane *took off*'.

#### 2.1.4.1.2 Separability of Phrasal Verbs

While the intransitive phrasal verbs are inseparable because the particle is always attached to its head verb as in (6) and (7), transitive phrasal verbs have two forms when occurring with a non pronominal direct object. The particle may be next to the verb as in '*look up* the information', or it may be separated from the verb by the direct object as in '*look* the information *up*'. To illustrate, let us divide the transitive phrasal verbs into two groups:

1) those whose particle is 'separable' from the verb by the direct object. For example, in (4) 'Jo *tore up* the contract', the direct object 'the contract' can be situated between the verb and the particle, as in:

(10) Jo *tore* the contract *up*.

Another example of separable phrasal verb is '*call off*' as in:

(11) They *called off* the deal.

(12) They *called* the deal *off*.

2) those whose particle is 'inseparable' from the verb, where the direct object cannot be placed between the verb and its particle. In (5) 'Jo *came across* the letter', the direct object 'the letter' never interrupts the bond between the verb and its particle to form something like (11), which is grammatically incorrect:

(11) \* Jo *came* the letter *across*.

Another example of an inseparable phrasal verb is '*look after*', as in:

(13) John is *looking after* the children.

(14) \*John is *looking* the children *after*.

Though there are no certain rules or principles that help us determine which phrasal verbs are separable and which are not (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999), grammarians and linguists can provide some insights about the factors that influence the separability of the phrasal verbs and how to know whether a verb is separable or inseparable.

Most of these factors (cf., Diessel & Tomasello, 2005) fall into one of three groups: syntactic factors, like the length of the object NP (cf., Chen, 1986; Hawkins, 1994; Lohas et al, 2004), semantic factors like the degree of idiomaticity (cf. Fraser 1976; Chen 1986), and pragmatic or discourse factors like givenness (cf. Chen 1986) or focus (cf. Dehe 2002). Gries (2003) demonstrates the need for a multifactorial approach to study particle placement in phrasal verbs. One of the studies that integrates several factors is Lohas et al. (2004). This study, particularly, investigates the roles syntactic factors and semantic factors play in the placement of the particle.

Researchers argue that the placement of the particle before or after an object is influenced by the length of the object NP and the semantic dependencies among the verb, particle, and the object involved in the construction. They observe that with the increasing length of object NP, there will be an increasing preference for adjacency of the verb and particle both in spoken and written format (see Figure 3 and 4). However, since long NPs tend to be syntactically more complex than short ones, some linguists suggest that the complexity of the direct object, rather than its length, is the primary factor that influences particle placement (cf. Chomsky, 1961).



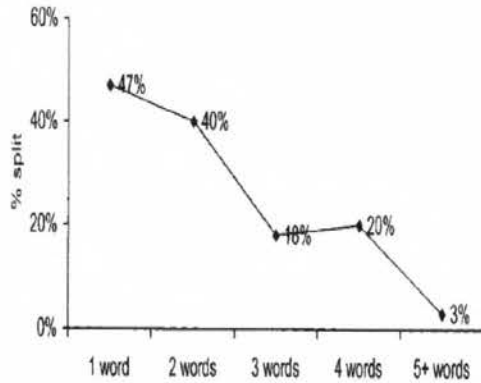


Figure 3.  
Split vs. Joined by NP Length  
(Lohas et al, 2004, p. 243).

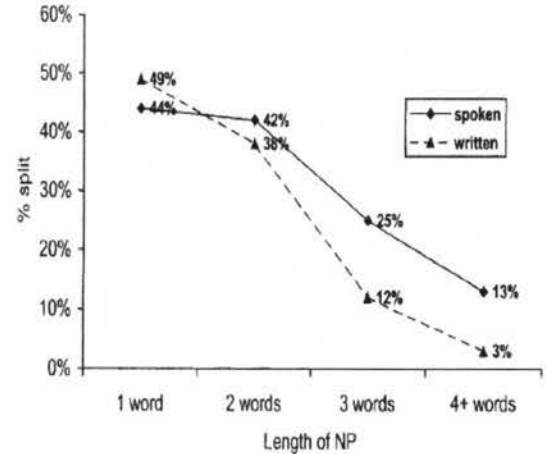


Figure 4.  
Split vs. Joined by NP Length and Register  
(Lohas et al, 2004, p. 258).

Figures (3 & 4) show that the first steep decline of the split ratio is observed when the length of the NP reaches three words, with a second one for five-plus words, where the preference for the joined ordering reaches 97 percent. This may be because “a three-word NP is more likely to contain a modifier in addition to a determiner or qualifier, as in (15); a five-or-more-word NP is more likely to contain post-nominal modifiers such as prepositional phrases or relative clauses, as in (16) and (17).

(15) a. He *put* [the red ball] *down*.

b. He *put down* [the red ball]

(16) a. He *put* [the ball with the blue stripes] *down*.

b. He *put down* [the ball with the blue stripes].

(17) a. He *put* [the ball that his sister had given him] *down*.

b. He *put down* [the ball that his sister had given him].

Moreover, particle placement is affected by semantic considerations. The dependency between the verb and its particle has a significant effect on the adjacency of the verb particle. Phrasal verbs contain dependent particles (Pd) indicating the completion

of an activity as in (18), or particles indicating abstract meaning as in (19), or when the contiguity between the verb and its particle is more likely to show a stronger adjacency preference (see Figure 2-5) (cf. Wasow, 2002; Gries, 2003; Lohas et al, 2004) than those independent particles (Pi) that indicate the direction or goal of a motion verb as in (20) (Diessel and Tomasello, 2005).

(18) He *ate up* his lunch.

(19) He *turned on* the TV.

(20) He *pushed* the chair *away*.

Regarding the relation of the adjacency preference for both dependent particles (Pd) and independent (Pi) to NP-length in spoken and written format gives profound evidence that with the increasing length of the NP, the adjacency preference between verb and particle increases (See Figure 5 and 6).

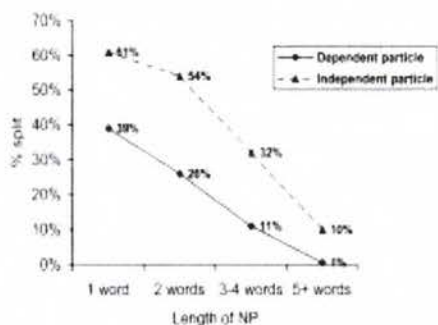


Figure 5.  
Split vs. Joined by NP Length and Particle Type (Lohas et. al., 2004, p. 248).

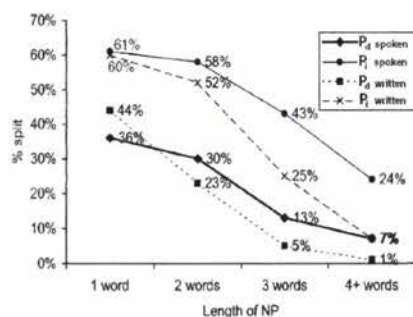


Figure 6.  
Split vs. Joined by NP Length, Particle Type, and Register (Lohas et. al., p. 248).

Thus, in sentences (4) and (11) we notice that the direct objects ‘the contract’ and ‘the deal’ come immediately after the phrasal verb. They can also come between the verb and the particle, as in (10) and (12). This is because the length of the NPs in both sentences is very short (two words) and the dependency between the verb and the particle

is weak. Although, in (5) and (13) the length of the object NPs is still short (two words), as in ‘the letter’ and ‘the child’, they cannot be situated between the verb and the particles due to the strong dependency between the verb and its particle. However, sometimes even when the NP is lengthy, the phrasal verb is still separable, as in (16) and (17).

In summary, there are a number of rules that can help learners to determine the separability of the phrasal verbs; i.e., how to know whether the verb is separable or inseparable.

- 1) If the direct object is a pronoun, and the dependency between the verb and particle is weak then the particle *must* be separated from the verb as in :

- (21) a. *Bill threw away* the ball. (Optional)
- b. Bill *threw* the ball *away*. (Optional)
- c. \*Bill *threw away* it.
- d. Bill *threw* it *away*. (Obligatory)

- 2) If the direct object is a pronoun, and the dependency between the verb and particle is strong then the particle *must* be attached to the verb as in :

- (22) a.. Jo came *across* the letter. (Obligatory)
- b. \*Jo came the letter *across*.
- c. Jo *came across* it. (Obligatory)
- d. \*Jo *came* it *across*.

- 3) If the non-separation makes the sentence ambiguous, the separation is obligatory, as in:

(23) How can I *get* the message *through* to him?

(24)\**How* can I *get through* the message to him?

- 4) When the object is a long phrase (four words or more), it usually comes after the particle (example 25).

(25) She *tore up* all the letters that she had ever sent him.

- 5) There is no separation if the phrasal verb is a verb that requires a preposition (prepositional phrasal verb), as in (26), (27) and (28), except if an adverb (or adverbial clause) interrupts the prepositional phrasal, as in (29).

(26) Gordon *gets away with* murder all the time.

(27)\*Gordon *gets murder away with* all the time.

(28)\*Gordon *gets away murder with* all the time.

(29) I have not *kept up* fully *with* the work.

- 6) The phrasal verb is inseparable if it is intransitive, as in:

(30) We will *eat out* tonight.

#### 2.1.4.2 Semantic Features of Phrasal Verbs

In addition to these syntactic complexities, the semantics of phrasal verbs is even more complex. According to the literature, there are many ways of categorizing phrasal verbs semantically. They can be classified according to the number of elements used metaphorically, kind of metaphor (Lindstromberg 1998), and idomaticity (cf. Cornell, 1985; McPartland-Fairman, 1989),

According to Lindstromberg (1998), when no words in a phrasal verb (the verb and its particle(s)) would be used metaphorically, as in the imperative sentence ‘*Put down* your hands’, it is a zero element. However, when only one component in the phrasal verb is non-literal as in the case of the particle ‘up’ in ‘*cut up* the onions’, it is considered as a



one-element phrasal verb. If the whole phrasal verb is used metaphorically, it is called a two-element phrasal verb, as in ‘His remark really *cut her up*’, where both ‘cut’ and ‘up’ are non-literal.

Moreover, Lindstromberg indicates that phrasal verbs can be categorized into two types according to their kind of metaphor: those that were derived from a stereotypical image of a vivid “one-off event”, activity, or sequence of events (e.g., ‘*bump someone off*’, and ‘*kiss someone off*’) and phrasal verbs whose prepositions express an abstract conventional metaphor (e.g., ‘cut up’). In the first group, the phrasal verbs are metaphorical as a whole rather than just in part, in contrast to the second group. To illustrate, the image in ‘*bump someone off*’ for most native speakers would “conjure” up a basically “kinetic image” of bumping someone over the edge of something like a cliff. Moreover, ‘*kiss someone off*’, which means “to dismiss someone from one’s circle of relationships” is related to kiss someone goodbye; and ‘off’, as always, conveys the notion of “separation”. Thus, “knowledge of the world may help us develop explanations for this class of ‘vivid image idioms’ that are, to varying degrees, plausible” (Lindstromberg, p. 245). In ‘cut up’, however, one needs to “examine semantic patterning in contemporary usage” (p. 246). That is, if one finds that the use of ‘up’, for instance, in a particular idiomatic phrase ‘cut up’ seems to fall into a semantic pattern for which there is already good evidence (i.e., that ‘up’ is equated with “completion”), one may successfully make certain inferences about the contribution of that word ‘up’ to the meaning of the phrase we are considering, (‘cut up’).

The semantic categorization of phrasal verbs is further complicated by the notion of idiomaticity. This indicates that phrasal verbs can be classified into: non-idiomatic

(e.g. ‘*put up* your hand’), semi-idiomatic (‘*knock* someone *out*’), and idiomatic (‘*put up with* someone’ = tolerate). It is obvious, then, that the idiomatic phrasal verb always has an ‘opaque’ meaning, a meaning that cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its parts, which is sometimes referred to as figurative or non-literal (cf. Überlingen, 2007). The concept of non-literal meaning has always been difficult to identify, and it is not easier with respect to phrasal verbs, especially if one considers that many phrasal verbs exhibit a number of different meanings that can range from completely transparent to completely opaque.

The terms ‘literal’, ‘figurative’, ‘transparent’, ‘opaque’, and ‘idiomatic’ have been used in an undifferentiated way in the literature. ‘Literal’ is usually equated with ‘transparent’, and ‘figurative’ with ‘idiomatic’. Moreover, ‘literal’ and ‘transparent’ are used in opposition to ‘figurative’ and ‘idiomatic’ (e.g., Dagut & Laufer 1985; McPartland-Fairman, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993, Liao & Fukuya 2004, Überlingen 2007).

Thus, phrasal verbs can be classified, according to the degree of dependency between the verb and its particle (e.g., Fraser, 1976; Lohas et al 2004), into literal, idiomatic, and aspectual (Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman, 1999). In literal phrasal verbs the dependency between the verb and its particle is weak. Therefore, the constituents appear to retain much of their meaning. For example, in ‘He *picked up* the paper’, the meaning of both the verb ‘picked’ and its particle ‘up’ is a “straightforward product of their semantic components” (Dagut & Laufer, 1985, p 74). In idiomatic phrasal verbs such as ‘came across’ as in (5) (find by accident), however, the usual meanings of ‘came’ and ‘across’ seem to be lost. And a new meaning has resulted from

the metaphorical shift of meaning and the semantic fusion of ‘*came*’ and ‘*across*’.

However, the meanings of aspectual phrasal verbs are more transparent than those of idiomatic ones but perhaps not as transparent as those of literal phrasal verbs. “The verbal element of these phrasal verbs in general keeps its original meaning, while the particle specifies the verb” (Überlingen, 2007, p. 19). So in aspectual phrasal verbs such as ‘eat up’, and ‘burn down’, the verb proper can be understood literally; the particle contributes a very specific dimension to the overall meaning, not commonly understood, of the verb's aspect. For example, ‘up’ in (31) signals that the actions are complete:

(31) They *ate up* all the chips and *drank up* all the soda.

Similarly, ‘down’ in ‘burn down’ implies “‘completely, entirely’ rather than the directional ‘from higher to lower’” (Überlingen, 2007, p. 19).

In fact, some researchers do use alternative classifications such as semantically transparent instead of literal (e.g., Laufer and Eliasson, 1993) (the meaning of the phrasal verb can be derived from the meaning of its parts), semitransparent (e.g., Laufer and Eliasson, 1993) (those that are transparent when put into context), completive instead of aspectual (e.g., Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Liao & Fukuya, 2004) (in which the particle describes the result of the action), and figurative instead of idiomatic (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Liao & Fukuya, 2004) (semantically opaque).

This entailment of the verb and its particle provides a classification that not only captures the different dependency relations between individual verbs and particles, but it involves a look at lexical-semantic dependencies of a third category in the verb-particle phrase (the object NP). Keenan (1978) points out that the interpretation of a transitive verb varies with its object NP. For example, if we examine carefully the precise meaning



of *cut*, we will find that its precise meaning differs based on the different objects it is combined with (e.g. ‘*cut* a finger’, ‘*cut* a cake’, ‘*cut* the lawn’, ‘*cut* alcohol’, ‘*cut* prices’, ‘*cut* a class’, ‘*cut* a film’) where *cut* is interpreted respectively as (‘to make an incision in the surface of’, ‘to divide into portions for purpose of serving’, ‘trim’, ‘diminish the potency of by admixing a physically comparable substance’, ‘to decrease the value of along a numerically continuous dimension’, ‘to not attend when supposed to’, and ‘to eliminate parts of’) (Keenan, 1978, p168–69). Interestingly this kind of ‘semantic reduction’ can also be observed with intransitive verbs in relation to their subjects, as in: ‘the deer is *running*’ vs. ‘the watch is *running*’ vs. ‘the faucet is *running*’ vs. ‘the play is *running*’; and with adjectives in relation to the noun they modify: ‘a *flat* road’ vs. ‘a *flat* tire’ (1978, p.168-170). Due to the polysemy of many simple as well as particle verbs, a full noun is usually required to determine the entailment relations. It is impossible, for instance, to decide in (32) whether ‘wrapped up’ entails a transparent or literal (to cover in paper or cloth) or figurative (to finish) meaning without knowing the reference of *it*.

(32) They *wrapped it up*.

When a full noun is used, the entailment is clear: for (33) the entailment of ‘wrapped up’ is a literal; for (33) it is not. Consequently it entails a figurative meaning.

(33) They *wrapped up* the parcel.

(34) They *wrapped up* the meeting.

This dependency between verb and object NP, according to Lohas et al (2004), “holds regardless of the classification of the verb as dependent (on the particle) or independent and regardless of the classification of the particle” (p.248). There is also experimental evidence that further supports the central role of the NP. Lohas et al. refer



to findings from studies on split particle verbs in Dutch (Zwitserslood et al. 1996) and German (Drews et al. 1999) that specify that “the exact semantic relationship between particle verbs and their simplex counterparts does not start to affect the processing of the verb until certain semantic cues within the object NP are encountered” (p.248 ).

Once again, the details of these semantic characteristics are beyond the scope of this study. However, since the idiomaticity of the phrasal verbs is crucial to their comprehension/production, some information on the processing of phrasal verbs metaphorical nature is important here.

### **2.1.5 Phrasal Verbs and Lexicon Processing**

Traditionally, syntax and phonology have been the focus of language learning theory (Gass, 1988; Ritchie & Bhatia, 1996), and the lexicon was relegated to the periphery of language research and methodology (e.g., Marton, 1977; Schmitt, 2002). However, since the 1980s, the focus of language learning theory has shifted to the lexicon as the basis of language acquisition. Many theories have emerged under the influence of this idea such Lexical–Functional Grammar (LFG) (e.g., Bresnan, 1978; Bresnan and Kaplan, 1982; Hubbard, 1994; Levin, 1988; Pinker, 1966). Pinker defines LFG as “a theory of generative grammar with no transformational component, an extensive use of grammatical relations or grammatical functions ..., and a powerful lexical component” (p.14). In other words, the lexicon and language functions play the main role in the language description of LFG. Hubbard (1994) states “lexical rules ... take a lexical item as input and return a related lexical item with a new categorization” (P.59). He indicates that a lexical entry is more than just a phonological form with different meanings. The

learning of vocabulary, especially verbs, should include aspects like their position in a sentence relative to other lexical categories. This theory is supported by Schmitt (2000), who argues that the focus on vocabulary knowledge can effectively facilitate grammar acquisition because being acquainted with words in a text allows the learners to understand the text and helps the grammatical patterning become more obvious to them.

Even though there is a general agreement that phrasal verbs are lexicalized (e.g., Katz & Postal, 1964; Weinreich, 1969; Malkai, 1973; Fraser, 1976; Darwin & Gray, 1999), and that understanding them involves connecting grammatical information and semantic information, there is little consensus on exactly how these multi-word phrases (lexemes) are stored, accessed, and retrieved. Jackendoff (1990), for instance, indicates that phrasal verbs are lexicalized or stored in the lexicon similarly to the way that words or idioms are stored. Thus, when hearing a phrasal verb such as *turn on*, the listener retrieves information about argument structure, including whether the phrase is transitive or intransitive, separable or inseparable. Three hypotheses of phrasal verb processing have been empirically examined in a number of studies: the Idiom List Hypothesis (ILH), the Lexical Representation Hypothesis (LRH), and the Direct Access Hypothesis (DAH).

Following the views of Katz and Postal (1963), Weinreich (1969), Bobrow & Bell (1973), MacPartland-Fairman (1989), Searle (1993) and Glucksberg, (2001) have produced studies on the ILH which “ holds that idioms are stored and accessed from a special idiom list which is not part of the regular lexicon” (MacPartland- Fairman, p.47). According to this hypothesis, during idiom comprehension, the listener first attempts to

- 1) Derive the literal meaning of an utterance, 2) Test the derived literal meaning against the context of the utterance, and 3) If the literal meaning makes sense,

accept that meaning as utterance meaning, that it is the speakers' intended meaning. If it does not make sense, then seek an alternative, nonliteral meaning that does make sense in the context (Glucksberg, p.10).

That is, most of the time, a construction of literal interpretation is initiated. If this process fails, an idiom mode is instantiated and the idiom's meaning is recovered from the idiomatic list.

For example, '*kick the bucket*', has both a literal and figurative interpretation. When presented in a sentence with its metaphoric meaning as in (32), according to the ILH, a learner will construct first a literal interpretation of the string of words. If this process fails, an idiom mode is instantiated and the idiom's meaning is recovered from the idiomatic list (i.e., 'to die').

(32) The old sick horse finally *kicked the bucket*.

Similarly, it is quite likely that if a learner is confronted with a phrasal verb such as 'put up with', meaning "to tolerate" as in (33), S/he must decide if someone is literally putting something somewhere or if the whole phrase has an alternative metaphorical meaning (Gallagher, 2006).

(33) I cannot *put up with* my neighbor's noise any longer.

According to the Lexical Representation Hypothesis (Swinney & Cutler, 1979), idioms/phrasal verbs are stored as individual items and are retrieved in the same way as words. In this view, the retrieval of an idiom is initiated when the first word of an idiomatic expression is encountered. The access of the literal phrase and the idiomatic phrase run in parallel for a given expression. That is, the idiomatic expression in sentence (32) and the figurative meaning of the phrasal verb in (33) can be understood in terms of their idiomatic



interpretation “to die” and “to tolerate”. In other words, the meanings of the idiomatic expression become active simultaneously (Matlock & Herediag, 2002).

A third alternative view, the Direct Access Hypothesis, is offered by Gibbs (1980, 1986). In this view, idiom comprehension does not occur in parallel with literal comprehension. Instead, the idiomatic interpretation precedes the literal interpretation. A literal interpretation results only if the idiomatic interpretation fails because of incongruent contextual cues. Thus, when hearing ‘kick’, in ‘*kick* the bucket’, the idiomatic interpretation is accessed first. If it turns out that it is inappropriate (e.g., the context refers to a painter knocking over a pail), then the idiomatic meaning is abandoned and the literal one is activated.

Regardless of the different assumptions underlying these hypotheses, both the LRH and the DAH reject the idea that processing literal language is faster than processing figurative language, and that processing idiomatic meaning takes less time than accessing a non-idiomatic meaning. Therefore, native speakers of English have unconscious “extensive knowledge” of how to comprehend and accordingly produce figurative phrasal verbs more easily than literal ones.

But this raises a question regarding nonnative speakers of English. Do EFL/ESL students of English who encounter phrasal verbs in context through spoken language as well as through reading actually process the meaning entailed by such structures the same way that native speakers do?



### 2.1.6 Nonnative English Speakers and Figurative Language Processing

Unfortunately, nonnative English speakers are not always able to process phrasal verbs in the same way that native speakers do. An EFL/ESL learner who encounters a phrasal verb like ‘brought up’ in sentences like (34), (35), and (36) may retain the “original” meaning of the words in (34) but he/she could find it difficult to retain the figurative meanings in (35) and (36).

(34) She *brought up* the dishes.

(35) She *brought up* the child.

(36) She *brought up* the issue.

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) acknowledged this fact with the following statement:

the meaning of idiomatic phrasal verbs is not only obscure, it is often deceptive because while one expects to be able to figure out the meaning because the words look so familiar, knowing the meaning of the parts does not necessarily aid comprehension (p. 436).

Furthermore, “knowing” a word actually involves much more than being aware of its simple definition. This includes knowing its spelling, phonetic representation, morphological irregularities, syntactic features and restrictions, deviations and collocations, semantic features and restrictions, and pragmatic features and restrictions.

Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman (1999) state:

The information that nonnative speakers of English must master regarding the lexicon is extensive. It is not sufficient simply to know many lexical items and their general meanings. For each item, nonnative speakers must master a

network of related information about its form, meaning, and use if they wish to use the item accurately, meaningfully, and appropriately (p. 46).

It is quite possible that many EFL learners acquire, with little trouble, phrasal verbs that are very commonly used in the classroom that become part of its discourse or others for which there are no single-word alternatives or which are the only equivalent to their L1 verb (e.g. 'stand up', 'sit down', 'pick up', 'turn on/off', and 'check in/out'). However, learning structures such as figurative phrasal verbs that might be different from those in their native tongue requires not only that nonnative language learners learn large numbers of words and meanings that are incorporated into L2 but also that they "make appropriate and effective use of the collocations and lexical phrases that are routinely employed by native speakers in large quantities [as well as] make use of the grammar to adopt the patterns as necessary and to achieve contextual fit [especially at the informal level]" (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999, p. 46). Thompson and Hopper (1997, cited in Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999) believe that the argument structure of a predicate is not fixed in the mental lexicon. It flows and adapts according to the goals of the conversation. Therefore, it becomes very difficult for EFL students to make this adaptation, especially if they do not encounter the different meanings in a meaningful context.

In fact, there are a number of studies that look into how second language learners comprehend figurative language. Interestingly, they suggest significant relationships between fluency in the second language and the comprehension of figurative language. In one study, Johnson and Rosano (1993) gave second language learners metaphors such as 'My shirt is a mirror' and asked them to understand what the metaphor means and to provide as

many interpretations of the metaphorical expression as possible. Results show that metaphor fluency (the number of interpretations provided) is positively correlated with measures of second language communicative proficiency and general language proficiency. Therefore, processing capacity and relevant knowledge are the major factors determining complexity level in the second language learners' interpretations. Other studies, which examined experienced versus inexperienced second language learners (bilinguals learning a second language) and metaphor interpretation, show experienced (L2) learners performing at monolingual levels (Johnson, 1989; Nelson, 1992). Moreover, studies investigating the comprehension of idiomatic expression by advanced L2 learners have found that idioms that are identical or literal translations between English and Spanish (e.g., *to be all ears* vs. *ser todo oido*) provide the least difficulty. Idioms that are similar across the two languages are the second most difficult and idioms that are different across the two languages are the most difficult to comprehend.

Overall, these studies suggest that language knowledge (language proficiency) and/or social context are related to the comprehension of non-literal language. The more experienced the learner is in L2, the easier it becomes to use and comprehend non-literal language. (c.f. Heredia, 1997; Heredia & Altarriba, 2001).

This fact highlights the role of the social context, language proficiency, and L1-L2 differences at play in the acquisition/learning of phrasal verbs.

### **2.1.7 The Social Contexts of L2 Learning**

We human beings acquire the language of our speech community as a process of identification or maturation or as an innate capacity for language (cf., Chomsky, 1965;



Lenneberg, 1967; Lee, 1968; Bloom and Lahey 1978). Studies of factors influencing language acquisition lead to the conclusion that, along with the learner's inherent abilities, language complexities, and psychological factors, the social context of L2 learning is of primary importance. Carroll Reed (1971) says the "quality of the language exposure" (p.146) determines the rate of acquisition which, consequently, has a major impact on L2 proficiency (Ellis, 1997).

Second language acquisition, hence, is a socializing as well as an acculturating process (Ervin-Tripp 1974) in which the environment is one of the controlling factors whether the language to which the learner is exposed is passively absorbed (Bellugi and Brown 1964; Smith and Miller 1976) or whether it is a result of a process of active interaction between the learner and the environment (Bloom 1973). In both cases, learners make choices by "weighing up the personal benefits and costs of learning the language" (Ellis, 1994, p. 214).

Ellis (1994) distinguishes between two types of L2 learning settings: the 'natural' and the 'educational'. The former refers to the interacting of L2 learners with other speakers of L2 in different settings (e.g. workplace, home, media, street, market, etc.). Learners in these settings are experiencing the target language (L2) in 'natural settings'. Both Judd (1978) and Ellis (1994) identify three types of context in natural L2 learning settings. The first is found when the target language serves as the native language of the country (e.g., L2 learners of English in the United States). The second is found in the countries where L2 functions as an official language, such as English in Nigeria and Russian in Kurdistan. The final type occurs when L2 is used for interpersonal communications in countries where it is neither learned as a mother tongue nor used as an



official language such as the case of English learned as a tool for business communication in Saudi Arabia.

The second type of setting, educational, refers to the formal learning that takes place through conscious attention to rules and principles in order to master the ‘subject matter’. Skuttnab-Kangas (1986; 1988) and Ellis (1994) distinguish five broad types of educational contexts: (1) *segregation*, which takes place when the L2 learners are educated separately from the majority or “a politically powerful minority”, who speak the target language as their mother tongue. A good example of this type is the immigrants or refugee workers who are educated in special schools, centers, or institutions designed to “cater for their language needs” (Skuttnab-Kangas, ); (2) *mother tongue maintenance* (language shelter), which, according to Skuttnab-Kangas, occurs in two forms: a weaker form where a learner is given lessons in her/his mother tongue focusing on developing formal language skills and full literacy and a stronger form where learners are entirely educated through their mother tongue. Examples of the former are the programs for Punjabi established in Bradford, U.K. (Fitzpatrick, 1987) and for Italian in Bedford (Tosi, 1984) for ethnic minority children living in those cities. Examples of the latter are the programs for the seven main language groups in Uzbekistan, and the Finnish-medium classes for Finnish migrant workers in Sweden (Skuttnab-Kangas, 1988).

Mother tongue maintenance programs are based on enrichment theory, according to which high levels of bilingualism are seen as a cognitive and social advantage. This contrasts with deficit theory, which views bilingualism as a burden and as likely to result in cognitive disadvantage. The results of research strongly suggest that additive bilingualism

(the goal of mother tongue maintenance) confers linguistic, perceptual, and intellectual advantages (see Swain and Cummins 1979 for a review).

The third category, *submersion*, is a program

“where linguistic minority children with a low-status mother tongue are forced to accept instruction through the medium of a foreign majority language with high status, in classes where some children are native speakers of the language of the instruction, where the teacher does not understand the mother tongue of the minority children, and where the majority language constitutes a threat to their mother tongue—a subtractive language learning situation” (Skuttnab-Kangas, 1988, p. 40).

According to Ellis (1994), this type of educational setting is very common in the U.K. and the U. S. where ethnic minority children are educated in mainstream classrooms.

The fourth category, *immersion*, refers to a variety of programs for minority students. Cummins (1988) distinguishes a number of variants of these programs such as “L2 monolingual immersion programs for minority students” which provide English-only instruction classes consisting entirely of L2 learners; “L1 bilingual immersion programs for minority students”, which begin with L1-medium instruction, introducing L2-medium instruction some time later; “L2 bilingual immersion programs for minority students”, which emphasize instruction in and on L2 but which also promote L1 skills. He also notes that, misleadingly, even submersion programs have been referred to as 'immersion'.

The final category is the *foreign language classroom* setting, which is defined as “a setting where the target language is taught as a subject only and is not commonly

used as a medium of communication outside the classroom” (Ellis, 1994, p. 227 ) as in Arabic classes in the United States or English classes in Saudi Arabia.

It is important to notice that the first four types are found in multilingual situations of one kind or another. The last type, however, is found in monolingual situations. We must not look at those settings (natural and educational) as mutually exclusive for an L2 learner. That is, L2 learners could be exposed to L2 in both natural and education settings. Each type of setting represents an acquisition or learning context that has effects and implications for successful L2 development (L2 knowledge) or, broadly, L2 proficiency, the second factor and the focus of the following discussion.

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### **2.1.8 Phrasal Verbs and Second Language Proficiency**

Theoretically, mastery of phrasal verbs has little to do with the common norm of language proficiency that is measured by the TOEFL test. High proficiency levels in English as measured by the TOEFL test can be reached in a foreign language environment without a great mastery of phrasal verbs. Pamela Martin (1990) substantiates her dissertation findings by surveying some international graduate



students who reached high proficiency levels in English (all had achieved TOEFL scores of at least 600 prior to commencing their studies) without the benefit of an English-speaking environment; they had depended primarily on formal instruction. Though they had been introduced to the form in the context of a native-speaking, non-English environment with native English speaking teachers, films, songs, etc., surprisingly, almost all of them indicated that phrasal verbs were problematic. According to Martin “their greatest problem was not syntax...The real problem was one of semantics” (p.190). And because their receptive abilities were greater than their productive ones, “no one liked to innovate with the form” (p.189).

This finding highlights two important realities. The first is that reaching a high proficiency level in an FL environment (classroom) does not necessarily indicate mastery of phrasal verbs, for these proficient learners remained at a social distance from the target language community. Accordingly they tend to pidginize; that is, to develop only a very basic competence in L2 required for academic work. Cummins (1983) calls this type of proficiency *cognitive/academic language proficiency (CALP)*. The second reality implies that formal study in an FL classroom either does not focus on phrasal verbs, especially when the teachers are not native speakers of English (e.g., the case in Saudi Arabia), or emphasizes just the syntactic aspect of the form; i.e., separable versus inseparable.

Cummins proposes an alternative model of L2 proficiency that develops naturally as a result of exposure to a language through communication called basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). Under this model, social factors become primary. Schumann asserts that:



language acquisition is just one aspect of acculturation and the degree to which a learner acculturates to the target language group will control the degree to which he acquires the second language (1978, p. 34).

The degree to which learners acculturate also depends on their level of social distance and psychological distance (Schumann, 1978). Those distances are determined by social factors (see Schumann 1978 for factors affecting social and psychological distance) including *enclosure*, where the L2 learners may share the same social facilities (lower enclosure) or may have different social facilities (high enclosure); and *cultural congruence*, in which the culture of L2 may be similar or different from that of L1. This will guide us to the final discussion in this section, which is first language and second language differences and phrasal verb acquisition.

### **2.1.9 L1-L2 Distance and English Phrasal Verb Acquisition / Learning**

For several reasons, it is important to consider the distance between the native language (Arabic) and the target language (English) in this type of investigation. First, as I demonstrated earlier, the English phrasal verb has a unique place in the English language. Dr. Johnson, referring to the phrasal verb in the preface to his famous dictionary of 1755, said, “there is another kind of composition, more frequent in our language than perhaps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty.” Indeed, this study might reach a conclusion similar to that of Dr. Johnson’s. Second, Arabic as a Semitic language is like the closely related Hebrew, assumed not to contain lexicalized phrases such as

phrasal verbs. Finally, language distance might affect L2 learning/acquisition either through positive transfer or through negative transfer, a central argument in the phenomenon of avoidance under investigation. The first reason cited above has been treated in depth earlier (see Part I, 2.1.1 through 2.1.6). The second will be treated below. The final reason will be the focus of Part II.

Phrasal verbs are not unique to English; they are found in almost all languages that are closely related to English; that is, ‘Germanic languages’ like English, Dutch, and Swedish. Few non-Germanic languages, however, have phrasal verbs. But English phrasal verbs, according to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999), are “different from other verbs in many languages of the world, and common enough in English, to pose a significant learning challenge. Perhaps the most challenging dimension is in the meaning, for while there is some semantic systematicity, there is still enough idiomaticity to cause difficulty for ESL/EFL students” (p.436). This will be more obvious when the first language does not have the phrasal verb structure or shares few properties with English (cf. Yorio, 1981; Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Yorio, 1989; Laufer and Eliasson, 1993, Sjöholm, 1995; Liao and Fukuya, 2004; Siyanova and Schmitt, 2007; Ben Duhaish, 2008).

Thus, it is important to examine closely whether Arabic has a structure comparable to the English phrasal verb and if so, how it might relate to English. Mohamed Helmy Heliel (1994), who carefully deconstructs the verb-particle combination and examines its merits and existence in Arabic-English lexicography and translation, notes that Arabic verbs, like English, can be intransitive and transitive. The transitive verb in Arabic may be constructed with a verb that governs

the accusative of a noun known as *iaffaal mutaiaddiya binafsihaa*, (i.e., verbs which pass on to their objects through themselves), which is a typical English transitive verb. It also might be constructed by governing a preposition with a noun in the genitive case rather than the accusative known as *iaffaal mutaiaddiya biharf jarr* (i.e., verbs that pass on to their objects through a preposition) such as “*iadhhaba-llaahu/nuurahum dhahaba-llaahu bi/nuurihim* ('take away the light from')” (p. 144). However, the dilemma is that some verbs could be formulated in both ways with different meanings, as in (37) and (38):

(37) daiaa hu ('called him')

(38) daiaa lahu ("prayed for him')

The question becomes, then, whether a verb-plus-preposition combination constitutes a 'phrasal verb' or whether it belongs in a different category.

Two opposing proposals emerge from this question. The first is syntactic, which looks into the combinations of verb-plus-preposition like *iistaghnaa San* (dispense with) in (39) as in English; “to be prepositional verbs, or alternatively to be transitive verbs followed by an 'oblique' object related to the verb via a preposition” (Heliel, p.145).

(39)	{	[istaghnaa]	[San al-halwaa]	}	{	[baida al-ghadaai]	}
	{	dispensed-he	with the-sweets	}	{	after the-lunch	}
		VP	PP			PP	

He went without dessert after lunch.

The second is semantic, and looks at the preposition as “essential to the meaning of the verb and is invariable; a different preposition would alter the



meaning of the entire combination, e.g., *kashafa San al-jariima* (expose the crime) vs. *kashafa Sala al-haqaaBb* (inspect the bags) (145). According to Wright (1964), all Arabic prepositions originally designated relations of place but got transferred first to “temporal relations and next to various sorts of ideal relations, conceived under the figure of the local relations to which they correspond” (129).

This indicates that in the Arabic verb-plus-preposition construction, “the verb often keeps most of its meaning”, and the function of the preposition and the noun following it is to extend its meaning, as in (40) and (41):

(40) *nazara fi l-miraaat* (He looked into the mirror.)

(41) *nazara fi l-qadiyya* (He looked into the case.)

Further, al-Labadii (1986), (cited in Heliel, 1994) adds that Arabic prepositions that could be used with different verbs generally retain a degree of their physical meaning, as in *irtabata bi*, *baaada aan\**, *haraba min*, etc. Thus, dependency between the preposition and the noun it governs that complete the meaning of the verb.

All in all, in both propositions, Arabic verb-plus-preposition combinations could be considered verbs followed by specific prepositions and be classed as prepositional verbs, not phrasal verbs (Heliel, 1994).

### **2.1.10 Arab Learners and the Problems of English Phrasal Verbs**

So far, our discussion regarding phrasal verbs may give some idea of the difficulties EFL and ESL learners encounter in identifying, comprehending, and producing phrasal verbs compared to other English structures. What makes phrasal verbs more problematic and why Arab learners find them difficult to identify is



detailed below based on the syntactic and semantic analysis of the phrasal verb as well as the differences between the Arabic and English languages reviewed above:

i) One apparent problem with the English phrasal verb, besides being a phrase of two or three words that functions as a single constituent, is that most adverbial particles resemble the same form of their corresponding prepositions. To illustrate, consider the following two pairs of sentences and their analysis (adopted from O'Dowd (1998) and Matlock (2002)):

(42a) Peter *ran up* the hill.

(42b) Peter *ran up* the bill.

(43a) Jack *ate up* the hill.

(43b) Jack *ate up* the candy.

In (42a), *up* functions as a preposition in the adverbial preposition phrase (PrepP) of direction *up the hill*, while in (42b) with the verb *ran* it constitutes a new and complete unit that behaves syntactically and semantically differently from (42a). It is attached to the verb *ran* to form a 'unitary meaning', which means 'accumulate' (O'Dowd, 1998). The second set of sentences, (43a and 43b) is another example that shows how the phrasal verbs and verb-prepositions look alike at the surface level and yet have different syntactic and semantic behaviors. In (42a) and (43a), *the hill* is a noun phrase functioning as an indirect object to the preposition *up* that expresses a directional relationship between its object *the hill* and the subjects of the sentences (42a) *Peter*, who ran upward, and (43a) *Jack*, who ate at the top of the hill. Although *up* in (42b) and (43b) is followed by noun phrases, 'the bill' and 'the candy', the NPs do not have the same relationship that *up* has with *the hill* in

(42a) and (43a). In (43b), for example, *the candy* is not a landmark for *up* as a signifier for space or direction. In fact, the particle *up* signifies a completion for the eating the candy. Thus, together with the verb *eat*, *up* highlights the end of eating. Similarly, *the bill* in (42b) has nothing to do with *up* as a preposition. It functions as a direct object for the construction of *ran up*, 'accumulate'.

With respect to the meaning of *up* in the four sentences, each word in a verb-plus- preposition combination has its own meaning. *Up* in (42a) and (43a) refers to vertical position and its meaning is transparent. It specifies where Peter ran and where Jack ate. To some extent, its meaning is independent of the verb's meaning. The meaning of *up* in sentences (42b) and (43b) is less transparent. It does not refer to vertical orientation or ascension, and it does not have a meaning that is independent of the verb. However, this is not to say that *up* in this case has no meaning on its own. As a matter of fact, Lindner (1983) convincingly argues that in cases such as *eat up* (43b), the particle *up* means completion. But the meaning of *up* in (42b) is an obscure one, since neither *ran* nor *up* makes sense independently of the construction (here *ran up* means 'accumulate').

ii) A number of Arabic verbs may be used either with just one preposition having more than one meaning or with more than one preposition having different meanings. In most cases, the verb tends to be a fair guide to the meaning of the combination.

iii) Some English verbs form a combination with almost every particle, (see for example 'get' on p. 29). Others are more selective. Only a limited number of particles can be included in the combinations. Some of the more obvious particles are

*down, in, off, on, out,* and *up*, and although there may be no obvious limit to the verbs, some, such as *put, take, get,* and *make* combine most freely. For example, the range of meaning and the variety of uses to be found in a combination such as ‘make up’, which according to *Webster’s Dictionary* has at least 16 different meanings, attests not only to the remarkable proliferation of this combination but to the complexity and confusion it adds to the minds of ESL/EFL learners.

iv) The Arabic verb in the prepositional combination is rarely used idiomatically. Therefore, moving from Arabic to English, the learner might find it difficult to predict the effect the particle has on the meaning of the verb in an idiomatic combination.

v) Many English phrasal verbs are used idiomatically with specific particles. Because these particles, such as *up, out,* and *down* are used with so many different verbs, their meanings are unstable and fuzzy (see the findings of Bolinger, 1971; Dixon, 1982; and Ryan, 1984, along with the suggestions of Sinclair et al., 1989 for new strategies for treating English phrasal verbs semantically and lexicographically).

vi) Collocational restriction is another problem facing Arab learners. English phrasal verbs are not all freely formed. For although one can *look after* someone, but can not similarly *look before* him. We can *put up with* something, but cannot *put down with* it (or *put up without* or *put down without*) it. *Give out* and *carry off* are similar combinations, but with meanings that are not the opposites of *give in* and *carry on*. Both have literal meanings deducible from the meanings of the verb and particle, and also have (respectively) the meanings “run short” and “win” (e.g., a prize).

vii) The Arabic equivalents of English phrasal verbs vary according to their collocations. That is the 'collocatability' of the verb-particle combination that determines the meaning of English phrasal verb does not do the same for its Arabic equivalent in bilingual dictionaries (cf. Sinclair 1991, p. 68), e.g.

- |                                  |                  |
|----------------------------------|------------------|
| (44) a. break off (negotiations) | <i>qataia</i>    |
| b. break off (an engagement)     | <i>fasakha</i>   |
| (45) a. bring about (a change)   | <i>iahdataha</i> |
| b. bring about (an opportunity)  | <i>khalaaqa</i>  |

viii) Many English phrasal verbs are replaceable, with little change of meaning, by single-word verbs (e.g. *Give in = yield, carry on = continue, put up with = tolerate*). In all cases, the single word is less colloquial.

ix) Many combinations are productive, with new ones being invented or new meanings being given to old ones (Allsop 1983, p. 211) (e.g., 'the conference *took off*' versus 'the plane *took off*').

x) Many idiomatic phrasal verb usages are peculiar to a single language, where they may sound natural to native speakers but strange to nonnative speakers (e.g., 'tied up', 'show up', 'turn down').

xi) Combinations in which a normally intransitive verb takes a direct object could puzzle the Arab learner who finds nothing similar in Arabic, e.g., 'the students laughed' versus 'the students laughed off their failing grades'.

xii) Many phrasal verbs can be used both intransitively and transitively in the same meaning (cf. Sinclair et al. 1990, p. 167), where a possible object could be



inferred, e.g. 'they helped out at the church sale' vs. 'they helped us out for three months'.

xiii) Other combinations still can be used both intransitively and transitively but in different meanings, e.g., 'the engine cut out' vs. 'I cut out some photographs from magazines' (cf. Sinclair et al. 1990, p. 166).

xiv) According to Cowie (1989) and Summers (1987), the meaning of some transitive phrasal verbs may differ according to whether the object is a person or a thing, as in 'take someone in' vs. 'take something in'.

xv) In three-word combinations of prepositional phrasal verbs, the verb + particle may be much harder to render than the preposition, e.g. 'look up to (someone)', 'put (someone) on to (a good idea)', or 'come up against (a problem)' (cf. Sinclair et al. 1990, p 170).

xvi) EFL students may not be taught many phrasal verbs in their classes, so may be confused when they encounter this language variation. Teachers whose native language is not English do not seem to use phrasal verbs very much, nor do they emphasize them in class.

xvii) These combinations (verb-particle) are a highly productive category in English. They are the most prolific source of new nouns, verbal nouns, and adjectives.

## **2.2 Avoidance and SLA**

The term 'avoidance' has become common currency in a variety of disciplines including psychology, psycholinguistics, linguistics, language learning and language

acquisition, and many other fields. It often employed to signal a certain theoretical sophistication in ways which are vague and sometimes obfuscator.

### 2.2.1 What Does Avoidance Mean?

The term ‘avoidance’ has been widely used to such an extent that it is frequently left undefined, as if its usage was simply common knowledge. It is interesting to trace the ways in which we try to make sense of the term. The most obvious way to track down its range of meanings is through consulting a dictionary. However, here I will present the term in its more general meaning, then moving toward its more specific and theoretical usages.

**Avoidance:** the practice or an instance of keeping away from particular situations, activities, environments, individuals, things, or subjects of thought or conversation because of either (a) the anticipated negative consequences of such an encounter or (b) anxious or painful feelings associated with those things or events (VandenBos, 2007, p. 95).

**Avoidance Behavior:** any act that enables an individual to avoid or anticipate unpleasant or painful situations, stimuli, or events, including conditioned aversive stimuli (VandenBos, p. 95).

**Avoidance:** a genuine phenomenon resulting from the organism’s realization that specific form of input data are avoided (on the levels of concrete representation and/or abstract mentalization) simply because such forms are difficult to restructure or reorganize in the

output, and thus an alternative strategy should be employed to fill in the consequential gap (El-Marzouk, 1998, p. 1).

**Avoidance learning** takes place when an organism acquires the ability to use a given cue or signal to avoid contact with a noxious stimulus (Bruno, 1986, p. 23).

**Avoidance:** Strategy learners may resort to it in order to overcome a communicative difficulty. Specifically, when expressing themselves, in spoken or written language, learners may decide to use one form rather than another with which they feel safer (grammatical or lexical), in order to express the intended meaning (Laufer, 2000, p. 186).

**Avoidance:** True avoidance... will result when contrastive analysis predicts structural similarity but the target structure is avoided in L2 not because of the complexity of the form but because of the meaning of that form attached in L1. Restrictions in L1 cause the form to be avoided in L2 for contexts in which it is not normally used in L1 ... Distribution rules ... appear to be among the last and most difficult to be acquired (Seliger, 1989, p.32.).

**Avoidance:** It is really a form of underproduction not caused by an inability to master a particular L2 construction, but by the transfer of the frequency distribution and function patterns from the native language (Kamimoto, et al., 1992, p. 253)

As a matter of fact, by tracing the history of the development of the use of the term we, see that it has been shifted from the highlighting of one aspect of usage to another. In the following section, I will provide a critical survey of a number of ‘classic avoidance’ studies that contributed to identifying and reifying the phenomenon under investigation.

### **2.2.2 Avoidance, Ignorance, and Language Difference**

In her 1974 study, Schachter examined the production of restrictive relative clauses (henceforth RCs) in four sets of 50 nonnative English texts produced by Arabic, Chinese, Japanese, and Persian English learners. She compared their writings with similar writings produced by native speakers of English. The purpose of her study was an attempt to settle the controversy over the viability (adequacy/inadequacy) of both the Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis (CAH) and Error Analysis (EA) frameworks.

She found that both the Arab and Persian learners made more errors than the other learners despite the fact that RC structures existed in their L1s and did not exist in Chinese and Japanese. However, she observed that the number of English RCs produced by the Chinese and Japanese students was much lower than that of the Persian and Arab students (76 and 63 compared with 174 and 154, respectively). She attributed the Persian and Arab errors to the similarities in branching directions in RCs while the difference in branching direction favored in RCs led to Japanese and Chinese learner’s nonuse of the target structure. Schachter termed such underproduction caused by differences ‘avoidance’. She claimed “if a student finds a particular construction in the target language difficult to comprehend, it is very likely that he will try to *avoid* producing it” (p. 213, emphasis added). This observation highlights that a *prior contrastive analysis* should not be



abandoned in favor of *error analysis*. If Schachter only had taken into account the raw number of errors made by the different groups of learners rather than of the total production frequencies for RCs , or if she had studied Chinese and Japanese learners in isolation, she might have concluded that RCs did not pose a problem. Kamimoto et al. (1992) write:

Herein lies the major contribution of Schachter's paper- the hallowed *linguistic difference = learning difficulty = error* equation associated with the [CAH] would have to be rewritten, since the cognitive twist that Schachter gives the [CAH] means that while linguistic difference could still lead to difficulty (whatever that meant), that difficulty might resolve itself in avoidance rather than in knee-jerk error-making (p. 256).

As a matter of fact Schachter's study raised many criticisms regarding prior knowledge in learners who supposedly avoid a construction. Though she pointed out the importance of examining not only the L2 forms that were actually produced by the learners of a foreign language, but also the L2 forms they seemed to avoid using consistently, she failed to distinguish avoidance from other phenomena such as incomplete learning or ignorance. There is no proof that the Chinese and Japanese learners exhibited 'true avoidance' and not a state of nonuse as a result of ignorance of the form.

Kleinmann (1977), focused directly on the relation between knowledge and avoidance. Avoidance, according to Kleinmann, cannot stem from ignorance of the object of avoidance:

[The] individual cannot be said to be avoiding a given syntactic structure, morpheme, or lexical item which he does not have in his

linguistic repertoire, any more than he can be said to be avoiding doing anything which he is unable to do. To be able to avoid ... presupposes being able to choose not to avoid... (Kleinmann, 1977, p. 96).

Kleinmann (1977) investigates the phenomenon of avoidance in four English grammatical structures produced by two groups of intermediate-level ESL learners. The four grammatical structures were chosen on the basis of a CA such that two of them (i.e. the passive and present progressive) would prove harder for one Arabic-speaking group than for the other group of Spanish and Portuguese speaking. The reverse situation would obtain for the other two structures (infinitives complement and direct object pronoun). Prior to the study, he administered a multiple-choice comprehension task to establish the presence of prior knowledge of the forms. The results indicate significance differences in the frequencies with which his two groups produced the target structures. He attributes these differences to a 'true avoidance' phenomenon, since required knowledge had already been established via comprehension tasks. He observed also that the frequency of the avoided patterns also correlated with various measurements of affective variables (e.g., degree of confidence in one's correctness, degree and type of anxiety of learning English, desire to achieve success or avoid failure).

He concludes that since the avoided forms were in accordance with difficulty predictions made by contrastive analysis, "CA is a fairly good predictor of avoidance, there is an interaction of linguistic and psychological variables in determining learner behavior in a second language in that structures which otherwise would be avoided are likely to be produced

depending on the affective state of the learner" (Kleinmann, 1977, p. 93). Thus, the study does support Schachter's (1974) theory that language differences lead to avoidance.

However, Seliger (1989) argues that 'true avoidance' can only be demonstrated under the following conditions: (1) when L1 and L2 share similar features; (2) opportunity for positive transfer is present; and (3) one can show that native speakers of the L2 would actually have used the relevant structure under the same circumstances. Without those conditions it is impossible to say whether the underproduction of some structure in L2 is due to avoidance or simply ignorance. Seliger compared the use of English passive voice by native speakers of English with those of Hebrew-English bilinguals in the description of four different processes: *making an omelet*, *changing a baby's diaper*, *harvesting oranges*, and *delivering the mail*. After that, Seliger gave his bilingual learners an active-passive transformation task in order to test their formal knowledge of the tested structure before looking at any possible avoidance behavior. Based on CAH, it is predicted that the passive is more likely to be used in contexts where the listener will be personally involved in the activity described while the performance of the nonnative speakers will "conform with distribution of the same form in L 1" (p. 30).

The collected data show that English native speakers tend to use far fewer passive constructions in the *omelet* and *nappy* tasks than in the other two. Hebrew-speaking learners, on the other hand, used very few passives in any of the four tasks (see Table 1). Seliger concludes that the relative underproduction of the passive in the chosen contexts by Hebrew speakers is due to avoidance.



Table 1.  
*Mean Group Percentage of Passive/Total Finite Verb Forms by Context*

	omelet	Baby	oranges	mail
English Speakers	5.5%	11.5%	62.6%	62.6%
Hebrew-English speaker	0	1.5%	3.6 %	7.6 %

Source: Adopted from Seliger, 1989, p. 31.

Kamimoto et al. (1992) challenge this conclusion saying “unjustified according to the evidence that Seliger himself presents” (p. 261). According to Kamimoto et al., Hebrew possesses a formal equivalent of the passive which appears to be relatively uncommon. Seliger himself cites a study by Rubenstein and Seliger (1975) where he found that Hebrew-speaking teachers of English translate between 40 and 70 percent of the passives in an English text into Hebrew actives. But when Seliger's subjects report on the oddness of using the structure, he asserts that “...Hebrew speakers avoid the passive in English because they do not use it in their own language and they apparently transfer this preference for the active over to English” (1989, p. 32).

Based on the contradiction in Seliger’s analysis, Kamimoto et al. (1992) concluded that his findings do not look like avoidance at all. Hebrew learners of English are “simply transferring the distribution of the passive from Hebrew to English. There is quite demonstrably a lack of crucial knowledge about English” (p. 261). They argue that Seliger seems constrained by his own definition of *avoidance* when he writes:

True avoidance, as illustrated in this study, will result when contrastive analysis predicts structural similarity but the target structure is avoided in L2 not because of the complexity of the form but because of the meaning of that form attached in L1. Restrictions in



LI cause the form to be avoided in L2 for contexts in which it is not normally used in LI . . . *Distribution rules . . . appear to be among the last and most difficult to be acquired* (1989, p. 32. emphasis added).

The Hebrew-speaking learners know what a passive is grammatically, but they lack awareness regarding using the structure in English. Kamimoto et al. (1992) proposed that, in order to be able to establish whether avoidance is a possible explanation for relative nonuse of certain structures by a group of learners, it is necessary to look at the L1 form, distribution, and function of the entity supposedly being avoided in L2 as well as the means being used to establish whether and to what extent the entity is already part of the L2 knowledge of members of that group.

This, indeed, highlights Lado's (1957) idea of the relationship between transferring a construction and knowing its distributions:

[I]ndividuals tend to transfer the forms and meanings, and the distribution of forms and meanings, of their native language and culture to the foreign language and culture both productively when attempting to speak the language and to act in the culture, and receptively when attempting to grasp and understand the language and the culture as practiced by natives (p. 2).

Even more alarming, on the other end of the spectrum of those who have taken the existence of avoidance for granted, there are others (e.g., Eckman, 1977; Zhao, 1989) who do not accept Schachter's interpretation and have tried to give an alternative explanation for the phenomenon under investigation. Eckman (1977) reviews the data of Schachter (1974) and discusses them in terms of his Markedness Differential Hypothesis (MDH): “[a]

proposal based on the markedness values of different forms” (Gass & Silnker, 2001, p. 456). The general assumption that Eckman enforces in this theory is that the unmarked forms are learned before the marked forms. Unlike Schachter, Eckman focuses on the error frequencies produced by Schachter’s participants and the errors caused by pronominal pronoun (PP) insertion in L2 English (see Table 2).

Table 2.

*Total Number of Errors and Number of Errors due to PP Insertion in English*

L1	Total RC errors	Total errors due to PP insertion
Persian	43	35
Arabic	31	12
Chinese	9	?
Japanese	5	?
American	0	0

Source: Eckman, 1977, p. 324-325.

In light of Eckman’s MDH, both Chinese and Japanese students will make fewer errors of this type than Arabic and Persian learners. This is because RPs are more frequent in Persian and Arabic RC. But since there is no control on Schachter’s composition tasks, the potential validity of avoidance should be reified by other means than comparison of production data. Eckman asserts:

While Schachter's hypothesis is intuitively plausible, it seems that it should be testable by some means other than avoidance. For example, under Schachter's hypothesis, it would be reasonable to expect that, if forced to use relative clauses, (Chinese and Japanese speakers) would

in fact make more errors than the Persian and Arabic speakers. This, however, is an open question (Eckman, 1977, p. 325).

Gass (1980) showed in a sentence-combining task that despite explicit instructions to subjects about how to carry out the task, the further down the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy (Keenan and Comrie, 1977) the intended target lay, the more likely learners were to resort to 'escape routes' that reflected RC positions higher up the hierarchy or to structures that were not RCs at all. Such results, Gass claims, give a better idea of the notion of avoidance than Schachter's inference from comparative production data and also show how it is possible to reconcile the positions of Schachter and Eckman -avoidance as a probabilistic notion is predictable from the MDH as applied to the Noun Phrase Accessibility Hierarchy. From Gass's study it is not possible to say whether Chinese and Japanese learners were more likely to make errors than Persian and Arabic students, but Gass notes that there is a no significant correlation between frequency of use of RC types in written compositions and accuracy in the combining task. This suggests that error-free performance and confidence do not necessarily go hand in hand, a finding also reported by Seljger (1989).

Zhao (1989) also provides a different view of Schachter's avoidance, claiming that what Schachter gives as examples of RC-avoiding paraphrases produced by Chinese learners represent typical Chinese LI structures. Zhao's approach was a corpus-based research study. She gathered her data from the bilingual collection of English-language impressions of China written by Chinese Canadians and Americans, accompanied by their Chinese translations. She added translations in order to examine comparative frequencies of RCs across languages. Zhao hypothesized that the low production of RCs produced by



Chinese students in Schachter's study is a result of the fact the Chinese may make less use of RCs than English speakers do.

Zhao corpus analysis (see Table 3) indicates that Chinese speakers make less use of the RC construction than English speakers. She attributes this to the fact that Chinese employs other syntactic structures to perform the focused information function associated with restrictive relativization in English, and because Chinese does not have nonrestrictive RCs. Zhao concludes that the lower rate of RC production by Chinese learners in English compared to Persian and Arabic learners in Schachter's sample may at least be partly due to the more limited range of functions performed by RCs in Chinese.

Table 3.  
*RCs in English Text and its Chinese Translation*

RCs in English	RCs in Chinese	RC in English = RC in Chinese	In English only	In Chinese only
124	91	59(48%)	65	32

Source: Zhao, 1989, p.107

To sum up, knowledge of underproduction or avoidance in the context of SL learning has been developed through three different stages. First, avoidance was looked at as a result of a total absence of L2 knowledge (i.e., ignorance in a given domain). Second, it became a ramification of a learner's partial knowledge of the avoided structure; that is when the learner lacks the mastery of a given structure due to differences in languages. In final stage underproduction is not viewed as an inability to master a particular L2 construction; in fact, the knowledge of the construction is complete, but the avoidance result from transfer of the frequency distribution and function patterns from the learner's native language.



We are now going to investigate the underproduction of English phrasal verbs by reviewing and discussing studies that focused more on the avoidance of phrasal verbs.

### 2.3 Avoidance of English Phrasal Verbs

Table 4 indicates, there are a number of studies on the avoidance of phrasal verbs in the literature.

Table 4.

*Summary of Previous Studies Dealing with Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs (PVs) in English*

<i>Author(s)</i>	<i>Participants</i>	<i>Instrument</i>	<i>Key Finding(s)</i>
Dagut & Laufer (1985)	Three groups of 180 EFL Hebrew-speaking students of English major and non-majors (60 participants in each group).	Fifteen identified PVs (literal, completive, and figurative) were tested in a multiple choice test, a translation, and a memorization test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Most of the Hebrew-speakers preferred single-word verbs over equivalent phrasal verbs.</li> <li>• Figurative phrasal verbs were the most avoided category.</li> </ul>
Hulstijn & Marchena (1989)	A total of 245 Dutch-speaking learners of English majors (Advanced = 100) and non-major (intermediate= 125).	Fifteen identified PVs were tested in three elicitation tests: a multiple choice, a translation, and memorization.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Dutch ESL learners avoided using figurative phrasal verbs that are similar to their L1.</li> <li>• Their avoidance could be attributed to learners' fear of making an error.</li> </ul>
Laufer & Eliasson (1993)	Eighty-seven advanced Swedish learners of English	Two elicitation-test formats were used: a multiple-choice test and a translation test.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Swedish learners did not avoid PVs.</li> <li>• L2 inherent complexity cannot predict avoidance (the number of figurative responses was significantly higher than the number of</li> </ul>

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			<p>nonfigurative ones.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Unlike Hulstijn &amp; Marchena (1989), Idiomatic-meaning similarity between the L1 and L2 did not induce learner avoidance.</li> <li>• L1-L2 difference is the best predictor for the phenomenon of avoidance.</li> </ul>
Sjöholm (1995)	A total of 999 participants, 496 were Swedish and 503 were Finns.	A multiple-choice test within each item there are two correct alternatives; a phrasal verb preferred by native speakers and an equivalent one-word verb	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Both language groups tend to avoid PVs.</li> <li>• Swedish speakers have stronger preference for phrasal verbs compared to Finns.</li> <li>• Finns prefer one-word verbs to their equivalent phrasal verbs</li> <li>• Only advanced Finns use phrasal verbs.</li> <li>• Learners who had received considerable natural language input tend to show the most native-like performance.</li> </ul>
Liao & Fukuya (2004)	Seventy intermediate and advanced Chinese learners of English.	Three tests were used in the study (multiple-choice, translation, and recall) to examine two types of PVs: literal and figurative.	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Proficiency level, PVs type, and test type) do affected Chinese learners' avoidance behavior.</li> <li>• Intermediate students produced fewer PVs than advanced learners</li> <li>• Advanced learners used nearly as many PVs as native speakers.</li> <li>• Chinese learners</li> </ul>

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			<p>produced literal PVs more frequently than figurative ones regardless of their proficiency levels and test types.</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• L1-L2 differences and semantic complexity of PVs contribute in learners' avoidance.</li> </ul>
<p>Siyanova &amp; Schmitt (2007)</p>	<p>One hundred and thirty participants, including 65 native and 65 advanced nonnative speakers of unrelated Germanic languages (e.g. Arabic, Chinese, Italian, Russian) .</p>	<p>A questionnaire of 26 pairs of phrasal verbs and their one-word counterparts.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Native speakers have a strong preference for using PVs over one-word verbs compared with the advanced learners who use single verbs more than PVs.</li> <li>• Exposure to L2 environment for less than 12 month has no effect on the using PVs.</li> <li>• L2 learners who spent over 12 months in an English environment had lower one-word verb scores than the other groups.</li> <li>• Upon speculation, long-term stay in an English-speaking environment of "more than 12 months" could increase ESL learners' preference for PVs.</li> </ul>
<p>Ben Duhaish (2008)</p>	<p>A total of 129 Arab learners of English, including 73 EFL learners and 56 ESL learners.</p>	<p>Two tests were used (multiple-choice, and translation) to examine three types of PVs: literal, semi-transparent, and figurative.</p>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Arab learners tend to prefer one-word verbs and avoid their equivalent PVs.</li> <li>• Language environment has an effect on learners' familiarity with PVs; ESL</li> </ul>

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learners perform better than EFL.

- Advanced learners have better command of the PVs; that is, proficiency level also has an effect learners' underproduction of.
  - The semantic nature of PVs affects learners' usage. The figurative PVs avoided more than the literal ones.
- 

The first study of the phenomenon of avoidance of English phrasal verbs was conducted by Dagut and Laufer (1985). They studied the acquisition of phrasal verbs of Hebrew-speaking English majors and non-majors on three phrasal verb types (literal, completive, and figurative). Based on Schachter's (1974) statement that error analysis should focus not only on what is used, but also on what is not used by L2 learners, and on Kleinmann's (1977) observation that only those items that are actually known to learners can be avoided because if a learner does not know an L2 feature and consequently does not use it, this is an indication of ignorance, not of avoidance. Dagut and Laufer hypothesized that Hebrew-speaking English learners will avoid the active use of phrasal verbs while at the same time being passively familiar with them. They identified 15 phrasal verbs preferred by English native speakers over their semantically equivalent one-word verbs. These phrasal verbs were incorporated in three tests to look into learners' preference of these verbs over their single-word equivalents.

Three groups of Hebrew-speaking English learners (60 participants in each group) were given three tasks: a multiple choice cloze task, a verb translation task, and a verb memorization task. In the multiple choice test the participants had to fill in a missing blank



with a phrasal verb, a one-word verb, or one of two distractors. For the second task, the participants were asked to translate into English the missing word from their own language. The final task was the memorization task, in which participants first memorized 15 sentences, 10 with phrasal verb and five with one-word verbs. Ten minutes later, the learners were asked to fill in the blanks with either form.

The results showed that on the multiple choice test, non-English majors avoided selected phrasal verbs and preferred their semantic equivalent one-word verbs to fill in over half of the 15 experimental sentences. The investigators found that the phrasal verbs that were used were generally literal, followed by completive, and then figurative.

On the translation test (from Hebrew to English), a strong preference for one-word verbs over phrasal verbs was found- 56% compared with 24%. Of the phrasal verbs that were supplied, again the categories were in orders literal, completive, and figurative. Although English majors translated twice as many verbs into phrasal verbs (rather than single-word verbs) compared with non-English majors, both groups fell short of native speakers. On the memorizing test, again there was a strong preference for the one-word English verb. Of the phrasal verbs that were supplied, the order once again was: literal, completive, and figurative. All three tests indicate that most of the Hebrew-speakers learning English preferred single-word verbs over equivalent phrasal verbs and avoided using phrasal verbs, particularly figurative combinations.

This study reveals that phrasal verbs are avoided in L2. Dagut and Laufer attribute this avoidance to the absence of phrasal verbs in L1, i.e. as an indirect influence from L1. According to Dagut and Laufer, Hebrew has no structure comparable to the phrasal verb:

thus, “[they] avoid using what they do not properly understand” (p. 78). That is, when given the choice, they resort to the more familiar one-word verbs.

Though, this conclusion supports the notion of transfer (cf. Lado, 1957; Wardhaugh, 1970) and corroborates the role of L1 in SLA (i.e., since phrasal verbs don't exist in Hebrew, they don't get acquired easily in English), it is important to remember that this study does not account for either learners' proficiency level or learners' language learning settings (Dagut and Laufer focus on EFL setting), another issue that might interfere with the acquisition process.

Another drawback is the method used to establish the participants' prior knowledge of the selected phrasal verbs. The choice of the phrasal verbs depended primarily on the researchers' impressions or intuitions drawn from their teaching experiences. In other words, phrasal verbs used in the study were chosen because they were listed in one of the standard textbooks and were supposed to be covered in the curriculum. Thus, as pointed out by Kamimoto et al. (1992), their conclusion that they had "a genuine avoidance phenomenon" was not well grounded (p. 78). The underproduction may have resulted from pure ignorance of phrasal verbs. Finally, it is important to note that Dagut and Laufer failed to address the fact that the avoidance was much more frequent in the category of figurative phrasal verbs than in the case of literal or completive ones, which imply an intralingual element in the avoidance behavior.

Hulstijn's and Marchena's study (1989) is a follow-up study to Dagut and Laufer (1985). The study investigates phrasal verb usage by Dutch learners of English. The authors assumed as a corollary from Dagut and Laufer study that Dutch learners of English would tend not to avoid phrasal verbs because they had phrasal verbs in their L1.

They hypothesized that “Dutch learners of English as a second language (ESL) would still avoid phrasal verbs, not for structural reasons as Hebrew learners did, but for semantic reasons” (241).

The study followed the same design carried out by Dagut and Laufer (1985). Yet, this study was different in some respects; in the division of subjects, which was based on learners’ proficiency level (intermediate and advanced); type of phrasal verbs; and the use of different sentences. Six groups of intermediate-level participants (N=125) and advanced-level learners (N=100) were enrolled in this study in order to examine whether the tendency to avoid phrasal verbs would decrease with increasing proficiency. The study employed chi-square tests to investigate whether advanced and intermediate learners differ in their responses from the native speakers of English on the three different tasks. The Pearson chi-square results for the multiple choice test indicated that intermediate ESL learners responded significantly differently from the advanced ESL learners in regard to the preference of phrasal verbs ( $\chi^2=42.4$ ,  $df=1$ ,  $p<.01$  compared with  $\chi^2=.49$ ,  $df=1$ ). In the memorization test, the intermediate learners used phrasal verbs less frequently than advanced learners (M=4.9, SD=3.0 vs. M=6.8, SD=3.0).

It was interesting that the researchers found similar result to those of Dagut and Laufer even when the first language is genetically related to English. This was more evident in intermediate learners. Hulstijn and Marchena reasoned that Dutch speakers avoid English phrasal verbs because these forms are perceived as having more specialized, idiomatic meaning than single-word phrases. Thus, advanced learners “did not avoid phrasal verbs as a form class and that the intermediate learners, although showing a tendency to avoid phrasal verbs to some extent, did not avoid phrasal verbs



categorically either” (p. 250). Moreover, drawing from Kellerman (1977), Hulstijn and Marchena argued that Dutch ESL learners avoided using phrasal verbs because they feared making an error: "a tendency to adopt a play-it-safe strategy, preferring one-word verbs with general, multi-purpose meanings to phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic meanings" (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989, p. 241). Another reason attributed to this behavior could be because learners perceived the second language form as being too “Dutch-like”. This implies that avoidance is not necessary a result of structural differences between L1 and L2 alone; similarities between L1 and L2 might be a possible reason for avoidance. In sum, regardless of L1, research suggests that ESL learners avoid using a phrasal verb when an equivalent one-word expression is available.

However, the degree of ambiguity of a phrasal verb was not taken seriously into account in both studies reviewed above. Dagut and Laufer did not pursue this argument at all, although their data appear to support this implication. Hebrew-speaking learners used figurative phrasal verbs least often, followed by completive phrasal verbs; literal phrasal verbs were used most frequently. Similarly, Dutch intermediate English language learners preferred simple verbs with a more general meaning over phrasal verbs with a more specialized or idiomatic meaning.

This observation motivated Laufer and Eliasson (1993) to take up both Dagut and Laufer’s (1985) and Hulstijn and Marchena’s (1989) lines of argument and examine whether avoidance is due to L2-inherent semantic difficulties “without the L1 playing any major role in the process”, L1-L2 similarities, or the structural differences between L1 and L2. Two groups of 87 Swedish advanced learners of English participated in a multiple choice and a translation test. The research questions were basically the same as those in the previous



studies – are phrasal verbs categorically avoided by Swedish students? Are there significant differences between Swedish and Hebrew learners? Do Swedish learners avoid English phrasal verbs that are similar to Swedish phrasal verbs? Do Swedish learners avoid opaque phrasal verbs more than transparent ones? And do Swedish students use opaque phrasal verbs more frequently than Hebrew learners? The results revealed that Swedish learners (Swedish has a phrasal-verb equivalent) used significantly more phrasal verbs than Dagut and Laufer’s Hebrew learners. Furthermore, Swedish learners not only used literal and figurative phrasal verbs in a balanced way, they used significantly more figurative phrasal verbs than the Hebrew and Dutch students did. Thus, “[i]diomatic meaning similarity between L1 and L2 does not necessarily induce learner disbelief and subsequent avoidance” (Laufer & Eliasson 1993, p. 44).

Another entailed aspect is that since Swedish learners do not avoid English phrasal verbs categorically, and the semantic complexity of L2 is not crucial for the avoidance of phrasal verbs, the major factor triggering avoidance, then, is L1-L2 differences. This finding, indirectly, corroborates Dagut and Laufer’s (1985) conclusion and disproves Hulstijn and Marchena’s (1989) hypothesis.

Sjöholm (1995), though not dealing exclusively with avoidance of phrasal verbs, found similar results in a study comparing Swedish ESL learners and Finnish ESL learners in their understanding of English phrasal verbs. He had participants do a multiple-choice task. In this task each participant was given English sentences without verb phrases (e.g., The dentist had to \_\_\_\_\_ one of this front teeth), and were asked to fill in the blanks. In making their decision, participants must choose from one of four items: a phrasal verb (e.g., take out), a synonymous one-word verb (remove), or two incorrect distractor verbs. Many

of the included phrasal verbs were intended to bear a resemblance to Swedish phrasal verbs. The result showed that both the Finnish and Swedish participants performed well overall. However, Finns made significantly more errors than the Swedes. In addition, the author found that overall Swedes preferred phrasal verbs over their one-word synonyms more often than the Finns did. This indicates that Swedes had a strong preference for phrasal verbs due to their familiarity with phrasal verbs in their L1. Apparently, Finns did not choose phrasal verbs as often because Finnish shares fewer properties with English than does the closely related Swedish. The only Finns who preferred to use phrasal verbs were the most advanced ESL learners. To avoid making errors by using this form, learners simply avoided using it. Interestingly, this observation highlights the influence of the L1 gets diluted over a long period of time.

Another study that lends further support to Dagut and Laufer's (1985) statement that an L1-L2 difference triggers avoidance is Liao and Fukuya (2004). They investigate the avoidance of English phrasal verbs among Chinese learners of English. The study addresses the significance of proficiency level (intermediate and advanced), test type effect (multiple choice, translation, and recall task) and phrasal verb type (literal vs. figurative) as factors in the avoidance of phrasal verbs. It examines the context of structural differences between L1 and L2: can avoidance of phrasal verbs be explained in terms of the differences between the first language (Chinese) and second language (English)? The authors incorporated the results of three of the previous reviewed studies (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993). Following Dagut's and Laufer's (1985) and Hulstijn and Marchena's (1989) methodology, they examined the performance of Chinese

intermediate and advanced learners of English in three test types (multiple choice, translation, and recall). Like Hebrew, Chinese does not have the structure of phrasal verbs.

Though the authors felt that the instrument used in the previous studies was sound (they designed their study along the lines of those studies), unlike previous studies, this study used phrasal verbs that were preferred by American native English speakers rather than the British phrasal verbs used in Hulstijn and Marchena's study (1989). Moreover, Liao and Fukuya use colloquial phrasal verbs that belong to an informal register. Instead of using long sentences, which was the case in the previous studies, they used shorter and more 'casual dialogues', as in the following example:

Cathy: "I heard the company is sending you to Germany again."

Tony: "Yes. It's been a long time since I was there, so I guess it's time to *brush up on* my German".

The study was a mixed factorial design. It was clearly presented and a sample of the instrument is provided which make the study replicable. However, the reliability of the instrument used (15 items) is not sound for measuring the dependant variable, which accordingly questions the reliability of the result.

Liao and Fukuya (2004) employed two different analyses of variance: a two-way ANOVA (3x2) with repeated measures on one independent variable (Analysis I) and a three-way (2x3x2) ANOVA with repeated measures on one independent variable (Analysis II). The first analysis was used to examine the performance of 40 learners in the multiple choice tests (native speakers n=15, Advanced Chinese learners n=10, and intermediate Chinese learners n= 5). The results showed that both group and phrasal-verb type were significant,  $F(2,34) = 31.25, p < .01$ , and  $F(1,34) = 7.68, p < .01$ , respectively. Further, the authors employed



post hoc analysis (Tukey) to determine the difference between groups. Analysis II, on the other hand, was conducted to measure the performance of advanced Chinese learners (n=30) and intermediate Chinese learners (n=40) on all three tests. The results (see Table 2, in Liao and Fukuya, p.208) were statistically significant,  $F(1,58) = 28.05, p < .01$ . The findings also reveal that idiomatic phrasal verbs were most avoided category. This was more pronounced in the translation task; the matter that highlights the role of L2 semantic complexity in the avoidance of phrasal verbs.

All in all, Liao and Fukuya's (2004) results provide proof that proficiency levels, phrasal verbs types, and elicitation formats do affect Chinese learners' avoidance behavior. Intermediate students produced significantly fewer phrasal verbs than advanced learners while advanced group used nearly as many phrasal verbs as native speakers. Liao and Fukuya attribute the avoidance manifested among intermediate learners to the structural differences between English and Chinese (Chinese has no equivalent to English phrasal verbs). As expected, Chinese learners also used literal phrasal verbs more frequently than figurative ones regardless of their proficiency levels and test types.

This study also revealed that there is "a developmental manifestation of interlingua from avoidance to nonavoidance" based on proficiency level (p. 212). The degree of avoidance diminished among the advanced graduate learners, a finding that calls for more validation. Regarding the test effect, the study found that "there was an interaction between test type and phrasal verb type" on the translation test. Chinese students tend to avoid using figurative phrasal verbs more in this type of elicitation. Liao and Fukuya (2004) speculate that the avoidance or nonavoidance of phrasal verbs in this case could be a manifestation of learners' interlanguage development rather than L1-L2 structural differences or similarities.



Indeed, this leads to speculation about the relationship between the semantic complexity of idiomatic phrasal verbs and learners' familiarity with phrasal verb types; that is, phrasal or prepositional.

The authors write:

The advanced learners in this study were all English as second language (ESL) learners, who had been in the native English environment for from nine months to more than three years. They have had plenty of interactions in English with native speakers. On the other hand, the majority (30 out of 40) of the intermediate learners were English as a foreign language (EFL) learners, who had not been exposed to any native English environment. Phrasal verbs are a structure that occurs more often in spoken rather than written English. The different exposure to and interaction with English in the case of the Chinese learners might have been an important reason why the advanced learners in this study incorporated Phrasal verbs in their language use significantly more than the intermediate learners (p.92).

In most cases, the previous studies did not explore whether the difference in educational background (i.e., time period of exposure to the L2 environment) can be an important factor in the developmental manifestation of interlanguage from avoidance to nonavoidance.

Crucially, Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) unfold the impact of exposure to the L2 environment on the underproduction of phrasal verbs. In their study, they explore the likelihood of using multiword (phrasal) verbs versus one-word verbs by both native speakers

of English and advanced non-native speakers of multinationalties whose L1 is outside the Germanic group of languages (e.g., Arabic, Chinese, Italian, and Russian). They incorporate both corpus and questionnaire data and investigate whether longer exposure to native speaker environments enhances the use of phrasal verbs. Through a questionnaire, 130 native and nonnative speakers were asked to judge on a six scale point how likely they were to use 26 phrasal verbs and their one-word counterparts in a colloquial contextualized situation, ranging from "very unlikely" to "very likely". Prior to this, the authors looked into the relative frequencies of the selected 26 verb pairs in written and spoken English as L1 by consulting the CANCODE (native spoken) and BNC (native written) corpora.

The analysis indicates that half of the multi-word verbs (13) are more frequent in the CANCODE while 11 of the others occurred rarely, and two (tell off, call off) did not occur at all. On the other hand, in term of BNC, only eight multi-word verbs occurred more frequently while the remaining (except tell off) appear at low frequencies. Though the results confirm that multi-word verbs are more frequent in spoken than written discourse, many of the multi-word verbs are relatively infrequent in either mode of discourse.

The more interesting analysis is the comparison in frequencies between multiword verbs and their one-word verb competitors. Siyanova and Schmitt found that in most cases the single-word form was more frequent than the multi-word form in both spoken and written discourse. In the BNC written corpus, 18 of the 26 verb pairs (69%) were more frequent in their one-word forms in written discourse. This was also true for 17 of the verb pairs (65%) in the CANCODE spoken corpus. The authors conclude that "although multi-word verbs are more frequent in spoken than written discourse, they may not be more frequent than their one-word verb alternatives in either mode" (p. 125).

For the relative frequencies of preference for using multiword/one-word verbs between native speakers and advanced nonnative learners, the findings indicate that native speakers have a strong preference for using phrasal verbs over one-word verbs compared with the advanced learners, who were more likely to use single verbs than phrasal verbs. Upon examining the effect of the impact of exposure to a native speaking environment, Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) found no significant correlation between the number of months spent in an English environment and one-word scores ( $r_s = -.313$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $< .05$ ). Similarly, learners' multi-word scores indicate no significant correlation with the exposure duration ( $r_s = -.042$ ,  $p$  (one-tailed)  $> .05$ ). This indicates exposure to L2 environment has no effect on the likelihood of using phrasal verbs.

However, to further explore this issue, Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) divided the learners into groups according to time spent in an English-speaking environment and conducted a Kruskal-Wallis test ( $H(2) = 13.7$ ,  $p < .01$ ) with a Mann-Whitney post hoc test. The results show that those L2 learners who spent over 12 months in an English environment had lower one-word verb scores than the other groups. This indicates that a long-term stay in an English-speaking environment of "more than 12 months" can lead to a lower preference for one-word verbs. This is due to "a threshold of input-rich experience which is necessary to begin relying less on one-word verbs" (p. 130). Despite the fact that there is a modest correlation between longer stays in an English-speaking environment and a lower preference for one-word verbs and that spending more than a year in that environment was not enough to bring the non natives to a native-like level, Siyanova and Schmitt conclude that "long term exposure to a natural L2 environment does have some effect on the selection of multiword vs. one-word verbs" (p. 130).



Moreover, Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) observe that the nonnative learners avoided phrasal verbs that tend to have a ‘colloquial tone’ that make them particularly appropriate for informal speech. Thus, avoiding them can make non natives sound “stilted and unnatural” in speech (132). Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) attribute this behavior to the idiomatic ambiguity of phrasal verbs, which makes the learners uncomfortable when using them. They indicate that “ that the complexity of multi-word ... means that learners require an extremely long period of time to become comfortable with them, and the “more than 12 month” participants were not exposed long enough to show an effect” (p. 132).

Siyanova and Schmitt speculate that learners with a non-Germanic L1 may take a long time to overcome their discomfort with "alien" phrasal verbs. However, the corpus data of this study suggest another reason why learners tend to use fewer phrasal verbs. "In both the BNC and CANCODE corpora, the one-word verbs were more frequent than their multi-word (phrasal verbs) counterparts." Learners may use relatively fewer phrasal verbs "simply because this reflects the input they are receiving, rather than because they are actively avoiding them" (Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007, p. 133).

The most recent study that focuses on the avoidance of phrasal verbs is Ben Duhaish (2008), who tested 129 Saudi intermediate and advanced learners of English. The study was based on the studies mentioned above. Again, research questions were concerned with the general avoidance of phrasal verbs, the role of semantic difficulty and the role of language proficiency level. Ben Duhaish investigated further factor: the influence of the language environment (ESL vs. EFL). Two test types were used: multiple choice and translation.

Results show that language environment, proficiency level, test type, and phrasal-verb type have an effect on learners’ underproduction of phrasal verbs. The language



environment has an effect on language learners' preference for phrasal verb. Advanced ESL learners scored higher (M= 14.54) than intermediate ones (M= 13.5). Advanced learners tended to use more phrasal verbs (M= 14.53) than intermediate learners (M= 13.71). Regarding test type, Ben Duhaish's data analysis shows that Arab learners performed better in multiple-choice tests than in translations. Moreover, intermediate learners tended to avoid more figurative and semi-transparent than literal phrasal verbs. Ben Duhaish concluded that the Arab learners tended to avoid using phrasal verbs because of the lack of a phrasal verb structure in Arabic.

In fact, this is where Ben Duhaish's study takes a peculiar turn, for such a conclusion is unjustified according to the evidence that Ben Duhaish himself presents. For one thing, although Arabic has no equivalent to English phrasal verbs, it appears Arab learners prefer literal phrasal verbs over their equivalent one word verbs. In both test Arab learner scored high in phrasal verbs preferences (68.22% in the translation and 78.3 % in the multiple choice test). This suggests that Arab learners tended to avoid the category of idiomatic phrasal verbs more than the category of literal phrasal verbs. Ben Duhaish himself cited Liao and Fukuya (2004) criticizing Dagut and Laufer (1985) writing:

[A]lthough Dagut and Laufer (1985) pointed out that interlingual differences played a determining role in the avoidance of phrasal verbs for Hebrew speakers, they failed to address the fact that the avoidance was much more frequent in the category of figurative phrasal verbs than in the case of literal or completive ones. This, indeed, points to an intralingual element in the avoidance behaviour (p. 39).

Moreover, in explaining the frequency statistics for the preference for one-word versus phrasal verbs, he concludes the section by writing “it is clear that preference changes according to verb type” (p. 70).

Besides, although researchers on avoidance of phrasal verbs believe that this phenomenon presupposes some sort of prior knowledge, the method used to establish this prior knowledge does not seem sound. Ben Duhaish (2008) chose phrasal verbs “from a variety of texts and conversations to which the present author [Ben Duhaish] was exposed during the time the study was being planned and during his time of study of the English language abroad” (p.52). That is, the selection of the phrasal verbs depended primarily on the researcher's impressions from his own experience. In other words, phrasal verbs used in the study were chosen because they were listed in previous studies or varieties of textbooks. Thus, as pointed out by Kamimoto et al. (1992), the conclusion that Arab learners avoid phrasal verbs may have resulted from pure ignorance of phrasal verbs. To put it differently, it is not enough to assume that learners know the avoided language structure. It is necessary to make sure that the learner knows what s/he is avoiding and that s/he has decided to not to use that form.

Another drawback to this study is the lack of attention to the impact of exposure to the L2 environment. Though Ben Duhaish’s study looked into the role of different settings (ESL v. EFL), he did not look into the role of time lived in a native speaking environment.

This serious lack of important aspects of the avoidance of English phrasal verbs calls for attention to learn more about this issue. In line with the inquiries made by the studies reviewed here, the present study aims to investigate the same phenomenon among Arab

learners of English. The studies discussed in this section propose that the difficulty English learners have in producing the English phrasal verb, which is manifested by avoidance behavior, can be understood as a result of structural differences between L1 and L2 (Dagut and Laufer, 1985; Laufer and Eliasson, 1993; Ben Duhaish, 2008), semantic reasons and similarity between L1 and L2 (Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989; Laufer and Eliasson, 1991), or/and L2 complexity (Laufer and Eliasson, 1993, Liao and Fukuya 2004; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007).

The present study explores the role of proficiency level, the impact of exposure to the L2 environment, the context of structural differences between L1 and the L2, and the inherent semantic complexity of the target form as well as the effect of elicitation formats on the avoidance of phrasal verbs.

## **2.4 Conclusion**

We have seen that this chapter contains three different parts. The first provides background information about English phrasal verbs including definition, development of the structure, its importance, and the linguistic feature of phrasal verb and its processing. We have discussed in detail the social context of L2 learning, the role of second language proficiency, and the impact of L1-L2 distance on phrasal verb acquisition/ learning. The section concluded with a summary of the problems Arab learners encounter regarding phrasal verbs. The aim was to probe the difficulties encountered by Arab learners in using the forms and consequently avoiding them. One apparent reason for the difficulty the nonnative learners of English encounter with phrasal verbs is the fuzziness of the borderline that combines the verb with its particle. The difficulty of distinguishing a



preposition in a prepositional verb from a particle in a phrasal verb which seems identical poses another problem. A third intriguing reason is the effect of the semantic complexity of the phrasal verbs on the learner's cognitive processing.

Then, the chapter reviewed studies and some classical articles in the second language literature that deal with the notion of avoidance and contributed to defining its characteristics. We have seen that there is insufficient detail in Schachter's seminal paper about the methods employed in the data collection procedures to establish whether it is reasonable to infer the occurrence of avoidance. If one can only avoid what one in some sense already knows, then there is a need to establish a procedure for determining what sort of knowledge is appropriate and how much of it one has to have. Eckman, Seliger, and Zhao take a broader view of avoidance; turning it into a technical term to be a synonym for underproduction. In addition, Zhao's work suggests that L1–L2 differences (where Chinese RCs perform a subset of the English RC functions) are themselves sufficient cause to predict differences in the L2 performance compared with its native speakers.

Following this, the chapter limited its scope reviewing studies that investigated the phenomenon of avoidance of the phrasal verb. The Dagut and Laufer and Hulstijn & Marchena studies attempt to introduce the necessary rigor into their experimentation, even if their method of establishing knowledge may be questioned. One could imagine that a methodology involving production should establish whether the learner can actually produce the relevant construction, whatever it is. What does it mean to state that learners who appear to recognize a construction but fail to produce it on call are therefore avoiding it?



Better news is to be found in the work of those who have attempted to control for knowledge. The Hulstijn and Marchena study is particularly interesting in this respect since they make the detection of avoidance conditional on there being structural congruence between LI and L2 and the learners demonstrating knowledge of the congruence. Liao and Fukuya and Siyanova and Schmitt pointed out the importance of examining L2 exposure.

Finally, it should be pointed out that the principles that govern the avoidance phenomenon in L2 acquisition/learning could be put as follows:

i) Avoiding an L2 structure known to be difficult to process (whether as a result of L-L2 dis/similarity or L2 complexity) at a certain stage of learning is actually to avoid the form of the **natural** response identified in L2.

ii) For lexical items, the meaning of the natural response is retained through the representation of a lexically different form to satisfy the production of the instrumental response identified in L2.

iii) For grammatical rules (as in the case of RCs), a meaning related to the meaning of the natural response is extemporaneously maneuvered for and conveyed through the representation of a syntactically different form to satisfy the production of the instrumental response identified in L2.

The following chapter provides a detailed description of the design of the present study, the participants, and the methods used. It discusses the criteria of selecting phrasal verbs and the elicitation format used to investigate phrasal verb underproduction among Arab learners of English. It also details the hypotheses to be tested in the experimental setting and justifies the reasons for their inclusion in the study.

## CHAPTER III

### Methodology

In this chapter, I describe the methodology used in the present study of avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Arab learners. I detail the research context and the design of the study, including the participants, instruments, and procedures used in the study. I also state the hypotheses to be tested in the experimental setting and justify the reasons for their inclusion in the study.

#### **3.1. The Research Context**

One of the main purposes of this study is to examine the performance of English phrasal verbs by Arab learners of English and to explore whether different educational experiences (EFL and ESL settings) are reflected in their preference for one-word verbs over phrasal verbs. In other words, the study seeks to find if a group of Arabic-speakers learning English who are being educated in the US (henceforth, ESL) perform differently from a group who received their education in the Arab world (henceforth, EFL). Thus, the study investigates whether exposure to L2 environment and its duration had any impact on the learners' preference for the phrasal verb over its semantically equivalent one-word verb.

The study also explores the similarities and differences that exist in performance between two different levels of proficiency: intermediate and advanced learners. The study employed different communities within two broad settings (EFL and ESL). The EFL community was comprised of college students who were English majors and non-majors in Madianh in Saudi Arabia who had not been exposed to an English-speaking

environment or their exposure to an L2 environment has not exceeded three months. According to Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) exposure of less than nine months is not enough to master the phrasal verb structure. The Madinah General Directorate of Education took on the responsibility of administering the assessment instruments to the target population.

Since the research needed to include the most advanced English learners possible in the largest numbers, it was a clear choice to conduct the research at the Foreign Language Department in Tibah University in Madeinah since it had the distinct advantages of having the highest number of advanced EFL students who are majoring in English. English teachers at various intermediate and high schools were also included in this study.

The other population is the ESL setting and includes students at the Intensive English Program (IEP) at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colorado. The IEP offers intensive English language courses for nonnative-speaking learners to prepare them for the academic work and rigors of university studies. Graduate and undergraduate students need to score high (525 to 575, depending on the program of study) on the TOEFL exam or pass all the English courses at the preparatory, elementary, intermediate, and advanced levels in order to be accepted into university programs. Two different levels of students enrolling in 300, and 400 level courses were assigned to be the intermediate group in the ESL group.

For this study, again, I needed to work with the most advanced ESL students possible in the largest numbers. It was a clear choice to conduct the research among the CSU college students who had been scored over 525 in the TOEFL or had graduated from the IEP and were enrolled in regular college courses at CSU.



### **3.2. The Research Participants**

The participants in the study were 160 adult Arab learners of English as an SL/FL. They presented two major groups. The first was the EFL group. It was composed of 80 male participants from Madinah in Saudi Arabia. The second group (ESL group) was 80 Arab students at Colorado State University (CSU) in Fort Collins, Colorado.

Each group consisted of two subgroups: intermediate and advanced students. The EFL group consisted of 40 students in the intermediate level and 40 in the advanced level. The intermediate level students were non-English majors studying at the sophomore and junior levels in a variety of academic fields such as business, management, education, etc. The advanced learners were English major studying at the sophomore or senior levels or teaching English to intermediate and secondary levels.

In addition, a total of 40 Arab learners from the IEP at CSU comprised the intermediate ESL group. They were enrolled either in 300-, or 400-level classes. The ESL advanced group was a 40 Arab graduate and undergraduate CSU learners who passed the TOFEL test or already had graduated from the IEP.

Each participant was given a detailed questionnaire in order to gather information on their gender, time in the US, and educational background (see Appendix I). They varied in amount of education in their home country, time studying English in their home country, and number of years living in the United States.

### **3.3 Design of the Study**

My central hypothesis is that ESL learners will score higher on phrasal verbs usage than EFL learners who receive their traditional teaching in their home country and



have never been exposed to the English-speaking environment in any significant way. Based on the works reviewed on the avoidance of phrasal verbs (see Chapter II), it became significant that the best way to measure this phenomenon is by using quantitative methods. The study, then, was of a cross-sectional quasi-experimental design. Four tests were used in this study. Each test consisted of four parts of a total of 50 sentences that were arranged to test avoidance of phrasal verbs. The design of the test was arranged in such a way that each part (except Part I) tests a specific feature related to the structure of phrasal verbs.

Part I is a demographic questionnaire (see Appendix I) prepared in order to obtain some general background information about the subjects. It aims, firstly, to gain some information about the learners' school as well as their linguistics background, but also such variables as sex and age were asked for. Secondly, an estimation of the learners' levels of English proficiency was made by asking for the number of years English had been taught as well as scores of TOFEL test. Finally, an attempt was made to estimate the amount of natural input by asking about the period of time the learners had spent in English-speaking countries.

Part II has been presented in two different versions (multiple-choice and translation task) and will be discussed in more detail in sections 3.6 and 3.7 (see Appendix II). It consists of 30 items intended to test learners' preference for phrasal or one-world verbs. The first 10 items are designed to elicit literal or transparent phrasal verbs that could be easy for the learner to come up with. The second 10 items are designed to test completive and semi-transparent phrasal verbs (see section 3.5 of this chapter). The last 10 item test is for figurative/idiomatic phrasal verbs.

The decision of using multiple-choice test and verb translation formats is based on the following reasons. Firstly, almost all of the previous discussed studies on the avoidance of phrasal verbs applied those two types of instruments as the elicitation tools in their studies (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Sjöholm, 1995; Liao & Fukuya, 2004; Siyanova & Schmitt, 2007; Ben Duhaish, 2008) with exception to Sjöholm (1995) and Siyanova & Schmitt (2007) who used only multiple-choice tests. Secondly, the multiple-choice task provides a strong evidence for avoidance if learners were to choose nonphrasal verbs and not the native speakers' preference for phrasal verbs. Finally, the translation test produces the weakest evidence for the avoidance, because there was no way to find out whether the phrasal verb had been considered (and rejected) in cases where the nonphrasal translation was given (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989).

Additionally, it was the present author hope that a small-scale (a total of 20 items) fill-in-the-blanks test (Part III) and a sentence study (paraphrasing) task (Part IV) would confirm the role of the environments in learning another language, English in particular, which consequently would disprove the null hypothesis. Especially, if we consider that one problem of the multiple-choice test and the verb translation is that they do not test only the target items, but also all the words in the context as well as the meaning of the distractors in multiple-choice formats. Therefore, they might be difficult to interpret.

Thus, in Part III (Appendix III), 10 blanks were carefully selected to examine whether a learner will produce a phrasal verb or verb-plus-preposition. Part IV (Appendix IV) is also represented by 10 statements; each statement is followed by a paraphrase sentence. Learners were asked to read each pair of sentences and indicate their degree of

agreement about the paraphrased sentence (see section 3.8 and 3.9 for more detail on Part III and IV). We hypothesize that the ESL learners are more likely to supply a phrasal verb interpretation rather than a verb-plus-prepositional interpretation.

### **3.4 Phrasal Verbs Selection Criteria**

As mentioned in the introductory chapter and Chapter II, avoidance phenomenon presupposes some sort of prior knowledge. Thus, the choice of phrasal verb items to be included in an empirical research is a complicated one. Almost all of the researchers of the previous studies based their choice of the phrasal verbs either on their impressions and intuitions drawn from their teaching experiences (e.g., Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989) or only because they are preferred by native English speakers (e.g., Liao and Fukuya, 2004).

Therefore, the present author attempts to come up with more rigorous selection criteria for phrasal verbs that are preferred by native speakers and known by the target population. So, prior to the study, 100 phrasal verbs were selected from various sources such as Saudi English curricula, dictionaries, concordances, and many others. Following Kleinmann (1977 and 1978), the selected phrasal verbs were comprehensively tested in order to establish that learners know them. In addition, by establishing the degree of confidence the test-takers have in their answers' correctness; I am attempting to establish a rigorous criterion for selecting phrasal verbs that are included in this study. It was my belief that by establishing learners' knowledge of the phrasal verbs, any avoided phrasal verbs will be avoided by choice and not by ignorance. Twenty Arab learners took this test. Each one was asked to choose the correct particle that will complete the sentence



and indicate his/her degree of confidence about the choice on a five-point scale ranging from completely unsure (1) to completely sure (5) as in the examples below:

**Choose the correct answer and indicate your degree of confidence.**

Can you get some coffee from the shops; I'm afraid we've run...

- A. in      **B. out**      C. off

Degree of Confidence

I don't care what anyone else says, I still **believe** \_\_\_\_\_ you.

- A. on      B. **in**      C. of

Degree of Confidence

Tell me the entire story from beginning to end. Don't **leave** anything \_\_\_\_\_.

- A. **out**      B. in      C. of

Degree of Confidence

**Go** \_\_\_\_\_! I'm trying to study.

- A. on      B. in      C. **away**

Degree of Confidence

Out of the 100 phrasal verbs only 46 phrasal verbs were correctly chosen; their mean confidence was  $\geq 4$ . Upon administrating a preference test for those phrasal verbs on 10 native speakers of English, one phrasal verb was excluded (cross out).

Interestingly, upon inquiry about the low preference for this particular phrasal verb, many native participants attributed this to the heavy accent it causes in speech which raises an issue regarding phrasal verb and fluency that is beyond the scope of this study.

### **3.5 Classification of Phrasal Verbs**

As reported in the literature, the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs plays a role in learners' avoidance behavior even for advanced ESL learners. The abstractness, metaphoricity and polysemous nature of some phrasal verbs will certainly impede comprehension. In fact, Bolinger (1971), Brinton (1988), Fraser (1976), and most



recently Lohse, Hawkins, and Wasow (2004) describe the semantics of phrasal verbs as indeed being dependent, at least in part, on the idiomaticity of the particle. Although there is no agreement on the cognitive processes involved in comprehending the metaphoricity of phrasal verbs (see Sections 2.1.4.2, 2.1.5 and 2.1.6), still there is a consensus that if phrasal verbs can indeed be seen as metaphoric, it is quite likely that the learner has been confronted with a phrase such as (put up with) meaning “to tolerate”. Briefly, then, the current study may, indirectly, examine how conceptual metaphors, as expressed in phrasal verbs, are learned by SL learners.

It was a must, then, to include metaphoric phrasal verbs in this study. Following Dagut & Laufer (1985) and Laufer & Eliasson (1993), 30 phrasal verbs have been divided into three types (see Appendix V for the list of phrasal verbs included in this study and their classification):

- 1- Literal phrasal verbs: the meaning of the whole verb- particle combination is straightforward and can be derived from the meaning of its parts.
- 2- Semi-transparent: this includes those that are transparent when put into context and those for which the particle describes the result of the action, such as (cut off) and (eat up).
- 3- Figurative (idiomatic) phrasal verbs: The meaning of those phrasal verbs is semantically new and results from a metaphorical shift of meaning and the semantic fusion of the individual components, such as (let down) and (turn up).

### **3.6 The Multiple-Choice Tests**

For the experiment, I designed two versions of a multiple-choice test (MC). The difference between them is that one version includes the target word translated into Arabic (MCA). My aim was to examine whether the presence of the target word in L1 will affect a learner's preference. Each version consisted of 30 identical short dialogues from the test of 15 native speakers of English (see Appendix II). In each dialogue, the verb in question was left blank. The participants were asked to fill in the blank with one of four alternative verbs: the correct phrasal verb, an equivalent single-word verb, and two distracters (one of which was also a phrasal verb).

The 30 items were divided into the following order: the first 10 items are designed to elicit literal phrasal verbs. The second 10 were those that have been categorized as semi-transparent. The last 10 dialogues were designed to examine figurative phrasal verbs. The participants had 20 minutes to complete this task. In order to prevent multiple answers, because each item actually contained two correct answers, the participants received special instructions to choose the one that they considered most suitable to complete the dialogue.

### **3.7 Translation Tests**

Two versions of the translation test were designed. Each used the same 30 dialogues as the MC tests, but with the verbs left out. In the first version, the Arabic equivalent of the missing verb in that dialogue was given at the end of each dialogue (see Appendix II). The participants were asked to translate the missing verb into English within 20 minutes. The second version was the same, but this time the dialogues were

completed and the target phrasal verbs were highlighted (see Appendix II). The participants were required to translate the English highlighted phrasal verbs into Arabic within 20 minutes.

### **3.8 Fill-in-the-Blanks Task**

This test consisted of 10 partially completed sentences adopted from (Matlock, 2002). Each contained a subject noun phrase that referred to a person, an ambiguous phrasal verb/ verb-plus-prepositional form, and a blank for a direct or indirect object. Participants were required to complete each sentence with a word or two within three minutes as in the following example:

Mary ate up \_\_\_\_\_

Again this task is included in order to examine whether ESL Arab learners and learners educated in EFL Arab learners were equally likely to produce a phrasal verb when asked to complete a sentence with a form such as ‘eat up’. See Appendix III.

### **3.9 Sentence Study Test**

This task includes 10 pairs of English sentences adopted from (Matlock, 2002). The first sentence of each pair was the target sentence. Each target sentence contained an ambiguous two-word verb that could be interpreted as a phrasal verb or a verb-plus-preposition. The second sentence in each pair was either a true or false paraphrase of the target one. The purpose of the paraphrase was to make sure that participants would pay attention to the target sentence. For example, a sentence like *Hussam went over the exam with his students* was paired with a (false) sentence paraphrase such as *Hussam had to*

*take the exam*. In addition, for every sentence pair with a phrasal verb target sentence there was a sentence pair with a verb-plus-preposition target sentence. For instance, for the sentence *Paul went over the exam with his students* there is also *Paul went over the bridge with his bicycle*. The task is trying to explore the influence of the learning environment in activating lexical and syntactic information of phrasal verb forms in a reading and paraphrasing task. See Appendix IV.

### **3.10 Procedures Used**

My first task in designing the tests used in this study was to select the best examples of phrasal verbs. I surveyed numerous reference works, scholarly articles and student textbooks, including the Saudi curricula. A list of 100 phrasal verbs was created. This list has been reduced to 46 after administering a comprehension test coupled with eliciting for degree of confidence in one's correctness for 20 Arab learners (see section 3.4).

I then classified the reduced list of phrasal verbs into three major groups: literal, semi-transparent, and figurative phrasal verbs (see Section 3.5). Each group consisted of 11 pairs of phrasal verbs and their equivalent one-word verbs. See Appendix V for the list of phrasal verbs and their semantic equivalent one-word verbs.

The next step was to perform a pilot test on native speakers of English. I piloted the test on 10 CSU students to find a baseline of native-speaker judgment and verify that the list was preferred by the native speakers of English.



The pilot test showed that the entire list was preferable for the native speakers of English with the exception of the following phrasal verbs, which scored least in their preference:

A: Have you read the newspapers recently?

B: Yes, but I don't care what anyone else says, I still \_\_\_\_you.

- a. believe in      b. trust

A: How did you get this picture? It is me when I was 2 years old.

B: I was going through some stuff in the attic, and I \_\_\_\_\_ some interesting old pictures, including yours.

- a. came across      b. found

Next, for the experiment, I designed the tests (see sections 3.6 through 3.8) and administered them on the ESL groups and the EFL groups. Participants in each group had been given detailed oral and written instructions. They were given 30 minutes to complete the test and two minutes to complete the demographic survey. Twenty minutes were granted to complete the MC and translation tests. Three minutes were given to complete Part III (fill-in-the-blanks) and five minutes to complete the paraphrase task.

The final step was to analyze the results of the tests, which were categorized as follows: On all tests, the number of selected phrasal verbs used within each verb type is counted. The number of selected one-word verbs is also counted. Moreover, the analysis considered the number of wrong or no-answer responses. These findings were analyzed by means of a variety of statistical and descriptive methods discussed in greater depth in Chapter IV.

### 3.11 Research Questions

As explained earlier, the rationale for this study was summed up in the following research questions:

1. Do Arab learners avoid using phrasal verbs?
2. Do learners' performances reflect their preference for one-word over its equivalent phrasal verb?
3. Do language learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) affect learners' preference for phrasal verb?
4. Does longer exposure to native speaker environment enhance ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs?
5. Does learners' proficiency level (intermediate vs. advanced) affect learners' usage for phrasal verb?
6. Does the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs influence students' familiarity of phrasal verbs?
7. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their productive knowledge (i.e., Part III fill in the blanks) for the selected phrasal verbs?
8. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their comprehending (i.e., Part IV sentence study) for the selected phrasal verbs?

As explained in Chapter 1, the major goal of the study was to determine if Arab learners of English avoid English phrasal verbs. The present study research questions formulate the following hypotheses. These hypotheses are explained in detail below. Each of the hypotheses includes with the rationale for its inclusion in the study.

### 3.12 Hypotheses

**H<sub>0</sub>** There will be no significant difference in the preference of one –words verbs over phrasal verbs among Arab learners.

The null hypothesis is presented as a benchmark against which the significance level (.05) of the experimental results will be judged. It is possible that there will be no significance difference on certain test scores between the ESL and EFL groups.

**H<sub>1</sub>** EFL groups will have a significant higher preference for one-word verbs compared to ESL groups.

In their studies Liao & Fukuya (2004) and Siyanova & Schmitt (2007) pointed out the importance of examining L2 exposure. Siyanova and Schmitt concluded that “long term exposure to a natural L2 environment does have some effect on the selection of multi-word vs. one-word verbs” (p. 130). Only Ben Duhaish (2008) reports that ESL learners had scored higher (M=14.54) than EFL learners (M=13.5). Thus, there is no sufficient evidence that ESL learners perform better than EFL learners. But following their suggestion, it is predicted that the scores of EFL learners will be higher than the scores of ESL learners in terms of a preference for one–word verbs. This will be due to a lack of familiarity with the phrasal verbs on the part of EFL learners and to “a threshold of input-rich experience which is necessary to begin relying less on one-word verbs” (Siyanova and Schmitt, 2004, p. 130) on the part of ESL learners.

**H<sub>2</sub>** There will be a significant difference in ESL learners’ usage of phrasal verbs based on their time of exposure to L2 environment.

Following Hypothesis 1, a long-term stay in an English-speaking environment can lead to a lower preference for one-word verbs. Despite the fact that spending more than a

year abroad was not enough to bring the non-natives to a native-like level, I follow Siyanova and Schmitt (2004) in their conclusion and I agree that “long term exposure to a natural L2 environment does have some effect on the selection of multi-word vs. one-word verbs” (p. 130).

**H3** There will be a significant relationship between Arab learners’ preference for phrasal verbs and their proficiency levels.

Again, the hypothesis is presented in light of the insufficient reported evidence in the studies examined in Chapter II on the significance of the proficiency level on the performance of the learners.

**H4** There will be a significantly higher preference for the literal phrasal verbs than both semi-transparent and idiomatic ones.

Based on the reviewed studies, it is predicted that literal phrasal verbs will be much easier to dismantle than the idiomatic ones.

**H5** There will be a significant difference in EFL learners’ usage of idiomatic phrasal verbs compared to ESL learners’.

Since the EFL learners will have had little or insufficient training in understanding phrasal verbs, their previous language learning experience or personal backgrounds should not be predictive of their performance on the tests in this study. Even if their previous background knowledge may help them understand the phrasal verbs in this experiment, their performance on idiomatic phrasal verbs will be lower than the ESL group.

**H6** There will be a significant relationship between learners’ productive knowledge of phrasal verbs and their avoidance of phrasal verbs.



Since avoiding a certain L2 structure implies the difficulty with what is processed at a certain stage of learning, it is predicted that producing phrasal verbs indicates nonavoidance.

**H7** There will be a significant relationship between learners' comprehension of phrasal verbs and learners' educational background (ESL/EFL).

Since ESL participants' previous knowledge of phrasal verbs, coupled with their advantage of exposure to the natural L2 environment, may aid them in understanding the phrasal verbs in the experiment, it is predicted that their performance in part IV (the sentence study) will be significantly much better than EFL learners.

The results of the experiment and the analyses of all hypotheses will be discussed in the following chapter.

## CHAPTER IV

### Results of the Study

This chapter is focused on the main findings that resulted from the analysis of the statistical tests used in this study. The analyses include the data gathered from the questionnaire (Part I), measure of central tendency for the general performance of the two main groups (EFL vs. ESL), descriptive and statistical analysis for learners' preference or avoidance of phrasal verbs, and learners' ability to produce and/or comprehend phrasal verbs. Factors such as semantic proprieties of phrasal and single verbs, type and amount of prior second language experience, and type of errors will be considered as additional information about learners' developing L2 knowledge. A computer program, SPSS (Statistical Package for the Social Sciences), was used for all the statistical analyses in this study. These included descriptive statistics, bivariate statistics (e.g., means, t-test, ANOVA, etc.), and predictions for identifying groups such as factor analysis. A complete review of the hypotheses will also be provided. A discussion of the conclusions and implications of the study will be dealt with in Chapter V.

#### **4.1 Data from the Questionnaire**

Before the participants engaged in the experimental tests, they completed a demographic and language learning history questionnaire. A copy of this questionnaire is included as Appendix I. Table 5 provides the participants' average years of education in the home country, the average time spent studying English in the home country, time in the USA, and time spent studying English in the USA.

Table 5.  
*Average Years of Education and Time in the USA for Both EFL and ESL Groups*

	Years of Education in Home Country	Years of Studying English in Home Country	Years in USA	Years of Studying English in the USA
EFL	15.03	7.4	1.33	0
ESL	13	6.5	2.9	0.71

As presented in Table 5 and Figure 7, the two groups demonstrate some differences in their educational history. This is because participants were randomly assigned to groups from an intact population: two years' more education in the home country for EFL than for ESL learners. Accordingly, the EFL group had a higher average time spent studying English in their home countries. The ESL group averaged approximately seven months more studying of English in the United States and almost three more years spent living in the United State than the EFL group. These differences may play a role in learners' usage of phrasal verbs.

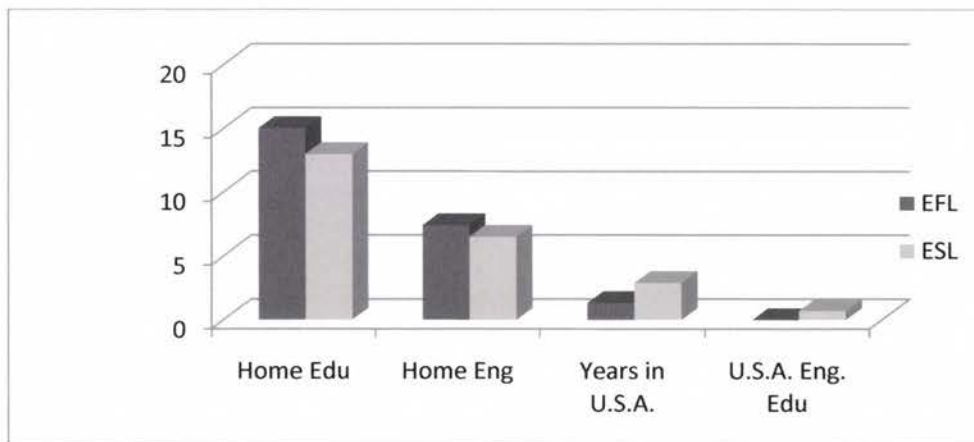


Figure 7.  
Differences in Educational History for the Two Experimental Groups (EFL & ESL).

## 4.2 Reliability of the Tests

As mentioned in Chapter III, four tests were used in this study; each is made up of 50 items. These tests are as follows:

Test 1 includes 30 short dialogues with the verbs omitted. The Arabic equivalent of the missing verb in each dialogue was given at the end of the dialogue. The participants were asked to translate the missing verb into English. The test is followed by 10 items of fill-in-the-blank items and 10 items of a paraphrasing task.

Test 2 includes the same 30 short dialogues. This time, the dialogues were completed and the target phrasal verbs were highlighted (see Appendix II). The participants were required to translate the English highlighted phrasal verbs into Arabic. This test is also followed by 20 items (10 fill in the blanks and 10 items of sentence studying).

Test 3 is comprised of 30 dialogues. In each dialogue, the verb in question was left blank. The participants were asked to fill in the blank with one of four alternative verbs: the correct phrasal verb, an equivalent single-word verb, and two distracters (one of which was also a phrasal verb). The 30 items were designed to elicit literal phrasal verbs (10 items), semi-transparent verbs (10 items), and figurative verbs (the last 10 items)

Test 4 resembles Test 3; the difference between them is that Test 4 includes the target word translated into Arabic.

To test the reliability of these tests, an SPSS reliability test was conducted. The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the overall items was (.914). The Cronbach's alpha reliability of the tests was in the following order: Test 1 was (.905), Test 2 (.905), Test 3



(.824), and Test 4 (.914). These results indicate that the reliability of both tests is statistically acceptable.

### **4.3 Descriptive Statistics**

Three different basic descriptive statistic results are presented here. The first communicates the general performance of the two experimental groups (EFL vs. ESL). The second deals with one of the main focuses of the study-- learners' preference for and/or avoidance of phrasal verbs. In this area, both frequency and type of errors will be considered. The final descriptive analysis looks into learners' ability to produce a phrasal verb in the fill-in-the-blank tasks and the influence of the environmental background in activating lexical and syntactic information of phrasal verb forms in a reading and paraphrasing task. (See Chapter III, sections 3.8 and 3.9, for more detail about these tasks).

#### **4.3.1 General Performance of the Two Experimental Groups (EFL vs. ESL)**

A total of 160 participants took the four tests. Each test contains 50 items. Those tests were given to 80 EFL students. Forty of them were first-year university students from various departments other than English Language and Literature who had had about seven years of English in their formal education and were taking an EFL course for non-majors. The other 40 were English major students and English teachers who were expected to be more professional and knowledgeable regarding the English language. There were also 80 participants who had been taking ESL courses for about seven months and living in the United States from one month to seven years. This group was divided

into two subgroups. The first group contained 40 students who enrolled in the 300- and 400- level courses at the IEP at CSU. The second group was comprised of 40 students who had either passed the TOEFL test or completed their IEP program and were enrolled in CSU courses.

Tables 6, 7, and 8 show the basic descriptive statistical results of the tasks involved in this study. Table 6 and Figure 8 communicate the means of scores and the standard deviation for the four test types for both proficiency levels and in both settings.

Table 6.  
*EFL vs. ESL General Performance in the Four Tests*

Setting	N	Mean	St. D
EFL	80	22.63	10.39
ESL	80	30.04	11.43
Total	160	26.33	11.5

The result of the instruments used showed that out of 4000 correct responses ( $80 \times 50 = 4000$ ), 1810 (45.25%) were produced by the EFL participants and 2403 (60.08%) were produced by the ESL participants. The mean of the ESL group performance was 30.04, while that of the EFL group was 22.63, a difference of 7.41 points. Despite the significant of this difference, which will be determined by analysis presented later in this chapter, it appears that the ESL group had some educational advantage.

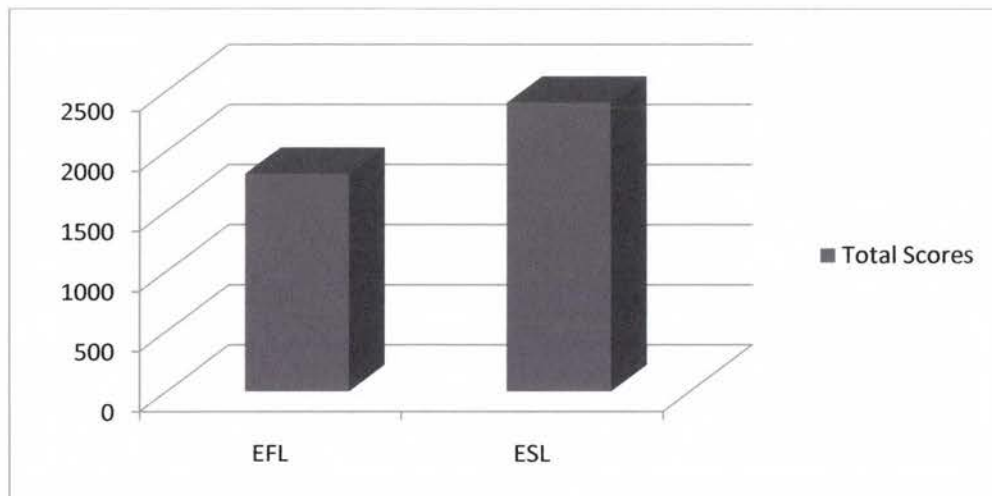


Figure 8:  
EFL vs. ESL General Performance.

By looking at the participants' performance in each test (see Table 7 and Figure 9), we see that each test was given to 20 participants from each experimental groups. For Test 1, out of 1000 expected correct answers ( $20 \times 50 = 1000$ ), 356 (35.6%) were produced by the EFL participants, with a mean of 17.8 and a standard deviation of 9.82; and 533 (53.3%) were produced by the ESL participants, with a mean of 26.66 and a standard deviation of 12.1. For Test 2, 593 (59.3 %) were produced by the EFL participants, with a mean of 29.65; and 747 (74.7%) were produced by the ESL participants, with a mean of 37.35 and standard deviation of 10. For Test 3, 449 (44.9%) were produced by the EFL participants, with a mean of 22.45 and standard deviation of 8.77; and 527 (52.7%) were produced by the ESL participants, with a mean of 26.35 and a standard deviation of 9.45. Finally, for Test 4, 412 (41.2%) were produced by the EFL participants, with a mean of 20.60; and 596 (59.6%) were produced by the ESL participants, with a mean of 29.8.

Table 7.

*The Means and Standard Deviations of the Scores for Each Test Involved in This Study for the Two Experimental Groups*

Setting	Test Type	N	Mean	Std. Deviation
EFL	Test 1	20	17.80	9.82
	Test 2	20	29.65	10.2
	Test 3	20	22.45	8.77
	Test 4	20	20.60	9.52
	Total	80	22.625	10.39
ESL	Test 1	20	26.65	12.1
	Test 2	20	37.35	10
	Test 3	20	26.35	9.45
	Test 4	20	29.8	11.15
	Total	80	30.04	11.43
Total	Test 1	40	22.23	11.95
	Test 2	40	33.5	10.23
	Test 3	40	24.4	7.98
	Test 4	40	25.2	11.11
	Total	160	26.33	11.22

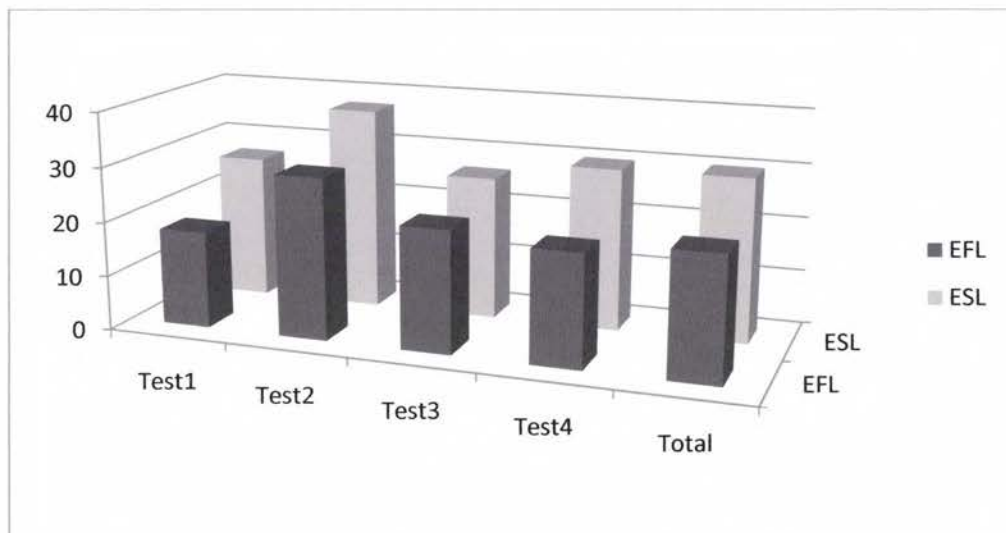


Figure 9.

EFL vs. ESL General Performance Means.



The two experimental groups did not perform equally on the four tests. The ESL group outperformed the EFL group in all tests. The mean of the ESL group performance was 30.04 while that of the EFL group was 22.63, a difference of 7.41 points. Despite the significance of this difference, which will be determined by further analysis presented later in this chapter, it appears that the ESL group had some educational advantage. And since the study was also concerned with the impact of both proficiency level and the exposure to native speaker environment on the performance of the target population, a comparison of means of scores between the subgroups was conducted. Table 8 and Figure 10 communicate the discrepancies in the performance between the subgroups (advanced and intermediate) in each test.

Table 8.  
*EFL vs. ESL Subgroups' Overall Performance*

Setting	Level	Test	N	Mean	St. D
EFL	Advanced	Test 1	10	25.7	6.86
		Test 2	10	38.4	2.459
		Test 3	10	28.2	5.31
		Test 4	10	28.7	5.853
		Total	40	30.25	7.12
	Intermediate	Test 1	10	9.9	4.23
		Test 2	10	20.9	6.59
		Test 3	10	16.7	7.79
		Test 4	10	12.5	3.37
		Total	40	15	6.98
	Total	Test 1	20	17.8	9.82
		Test 2	20	29.65	10.2
		Test 3	20	22.45	8.77
		Test 4	20	20.6	9.52
Total		80	22.625	10.39	
ESL	Advanced	Test 1	10	35.6	10.28
		Test 2	10	43.4	5.72
		Test 3	10	31.1	8.034
		Test 4	10	38.3	8.097

		Total	40	37.1	9.07
	Intermediate	Test 1	10	17.7	5.056
		Test 2	10	31.3	9.86
		Test 3	10	21.6	8.59
		Test 4	10	21.3	6.04
		Total	40	22.98	8.94
	Total	Test 1	20	26.65	12.1
		Test 2	20	37.35	10
		Test 3	20	26.35	9.45
		Test 4	20	29.8	11.15
		Total	80	30.04	11.43
Total	Advanced	Test 1	20	29.25	10.87
		Test 2	20	38.1	5.09
		Test 3	20	25.95	6.25
		Test 4	20	31.65	9.65
		Total	80	31.2375	9.3
	Intermediate	Test 1	20	12.9	5.84
		Test 2	20	26.25	10.72
		Test 3	20	18.05	7.67
		Test 4	20	16.6	6.4
		Total	80	18.45	9.16
	Total	Test 1	40	22.23	11.95
		Test 2	40	33.5	10.23
		Test 3	40	24.4	7.98
		Test 4	40	25.2	11.11
		Total	160	26.33	11.22

As stated above, a total of 160 participants took four tests. Each test was given to 40 participants, 20 participants from the EFL group (10 advanced and 10 intermediate) and 20 participants from the ESL group (10 advanced and 10 intermediate).

Table 8 shows that out of 500 expected correct responses for Test 1 ( $10 \times 50 = 500$ ), 257 (51.4%) were produced by the EFL advanced participants, with a mean of 25.7; and 99 (19.8 %) were produced by the EFL intermediate participants, with a mean of 9.9. For Test 2, 384 (76.8%) correct responses were produced by the EFL advanced

participants, with a mean of 38.4; and 209 (41.8%) were produced by the EFL intermediate participants, with a mean of 20.9. For Test 3, 282 (56.4%) correct responses were produced by the EFL advanced participants, with a mean of 28.2; and 167 (33.4%) were produced by the EFL intermediate participants, with a mean of 16.7. For Test 4, 287 (57.4%) correct responses were produced by the EFL advanced participants, with a mean of 28.7; and 125 (25 %) were produced by the EFL intermediate participants, with a mean 12.5.

Similarly, the ESL group participants produced 356 (71.2%) correct responses for advanced learners, with a mean of 35.6; and 177 (35.4%) correct responses were produced by the intermediate students, with a mean of 17.7 in Test 1. For Test 2, 434 (86.8%) correct responses were produced by the advanced participants, with a mean of 43.4; and 313 (62.6%) were produced by the intermediate participants, with a mean of 31.3. For Test 3, 311 (62.2%) correct responses were produced by the advanced participants, with a mean of 31.1; and 216 (43.2%) were produced by the intermediate participants, with a mean of 21.6. For Test 4, 383 (76.6%) correct responses were produced by the ESL advanced participants, with a mean of 38.3; and 213 (42.6%) were produced by the ESL intermediate participants, with a mean of 21.3.

As illustrated in Figure 10, the two subgroups did not perform equally on the four tests. The ESL advanced group outperformed the EFL advanced group in all tests. The mean of the ESL advanced group performance was 37.1, while that of the EFL advanced group was 30.25, a difference of 6.85 points. Similarly, the ESL intermediate group outperformed the EFL intermediate group in all tests. The mean of the ESL intermediate group performance was 22.98, while that of the EFL was 15, a difference of 7.98 points.

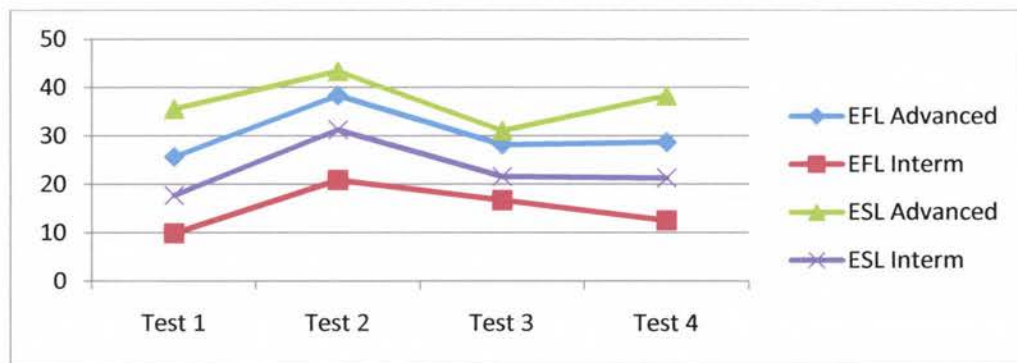


Figure 10.  
Means of Scores between the Subgroups (Advanced and Intermediate) in Each Test.

More importantly, as indicated in Table 9 and Figure 11, it is obvious that the discrepancy in the performance of the two experimental groups (EFL vs. ESL) was very high. The advanced group outperformed the intermediate group. The mean of the advanced group was 33.68 while that of the intermediate group was only 18.99, a difference of 14.69 points. Accordingly, it appears that not only educational background but also proficiency level play major roles in acquiring phrasal verbs. More analysis will be discussed later in this chapter.

Table 9.  
*The Raw Scores and Means of Scores of the Two Experimental Groups (EFL vs. ESL) Based on their Proficiency Level*

Proficiency	Test1		Test2		Test3		Test4		Total	
	Raw	Mean	Raw	Mean	Raw	Mean	Raw	Mean	Raw	Mean
Advanced	613	30.65	818	40.9	593	29.65	670	33.5	2694	33.66
Intermediate	276	13.8	522	26.1	383	19.15	338	16.9	1519	18.99



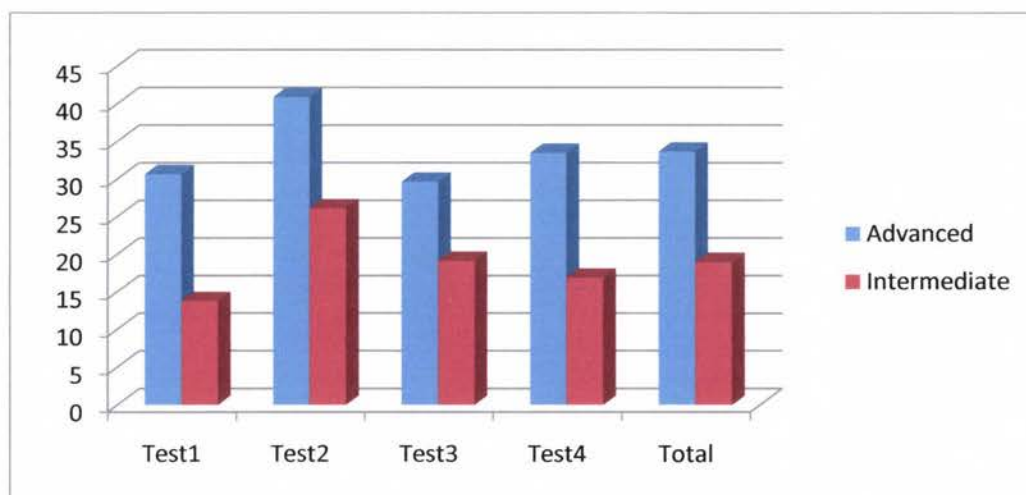


Figure 11.  
The Discrepancies in the Performances of the two Experimental Groups (EFL vs. ESL) Based on Their Proficiency Level in the Four Tests.

The third analysis looks at the impact of exposure to native speaker environment on the performance of the learners. Based on their exposure time, learners were divided into three subgroups: Group A, those who spent from zero to three months in the USA (n = 91); Group B, those who spent up to and including 12 months (n = 32); and Group C, participants who spent more than 12 months in the native environments (n = 37). See Table 10 below.

Table 10.  
*Distribution of Learners Scores Based on Their Time of Exposure*

Group	N	Mean	Std. D
A	91	22.67	9.96
B	31	25.03	11.29
C	38	36.16	9.53
Total	160	26.33	11.5

Table 10 shows the mean and standard deviation of scores for Arab learners based on their exposure time to the native environment. Group C scored the highest, with a

mean score of 36.16 and a standard deviation of 9.53. Group A scored the lowest, with a mean of 22.67 and a standard deviation of 9.96. Group B was second in rank, with a mean of 24 and a standard deviation of 11.29. This indicates that time of exposure to the native environment does play a role in learners' performance. The mean of Group C — those who spent more than 12 months in the USA— was 36.16, while that of Group A — those who spent from zero to three months—was only 22.67, a difference of 13.49 points.

The reported standard deviation indicates that learners who spent more than one year in the native environment had more preference for phrasal verbs than learners who spent from zero to 12 months in the environment. To illustrate, the mean of scores for Group A is 22.67 and the standard deviation is 9.96; though most of the learners' scores in this group are between 12.71 and 32.6 (total score = 50). For Group B, the mean of scores ( $M = 25.03$ ) and the standard deviation (11.29) indicate that most of the learners' scores are between 13.74 and 36.32. The mean of scores for Group C ( $M = 26.63$ ) and the standard deviation (9.53) indicate that most of Group C scores are between 26.63 and 45.69. Figure 12 shows the distribution of scores for the three groups.

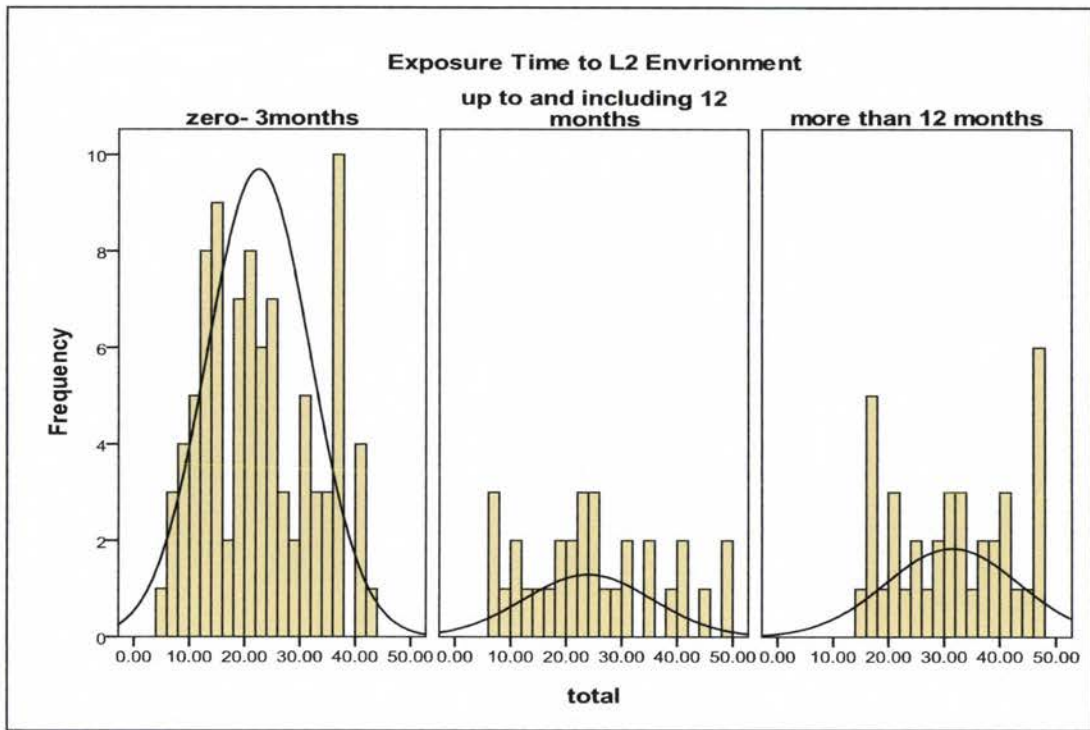


Figure 12.  
The Distribution of Scores Based on Exposure Time to L2 Environment.

It appears that the learner’s performance is positively impacted not only by educational background and proficiency level but also time of exposure to the native environment. Later in this chapter, more analysis of this factor will be discussed.

#### 4.3.2 Phrasal Verb Preference vs. Avoidance

As described in Chapter III, Part II of the test was presented in four different versions (two multiple-choice tests and two translation tasks). Each version consisted of 30 items. The first 10 items were designed to elicit literal or transparent phrasal verbs that would be easy for the learner to come up with. The second 10 items were designed to test complete and semi-transparent phrasal verbs. The last 10 items were designed to test figurative/idiomatic phrasal verbs. Table 11 shows the raw scores, the mean, and the standard deviation for learners’ performance with phrasal verbs in general and their

preference for the three types of phrasal verbs for both proficiency levels and in both settings.

Table 11.  
*Learners' Preferences of Phrasal Verbs*

Setting	Level	Test		Literal	Semi-transparent	Figurative	Total		
EFL	Advanced	T1	Mean	5.3	4.1	3.7	13.1		
			St.d	1.89	1.97	2.21	4.91		
			Sum	53	41	37	131		
		T2	Mean	9.9	9.2	7.1	26.2		
			St.d	.316	1.14	1.29	1.62		
			Sum	99	92	71	262		
		MC	Mean	6.8	5.3	3.2	15.3		
			St.d	1.4	1.83	1.48	3.86		
			Sum	68	53	32	153		
		MCA	Mean	7.5	6.1	3.4	17		
			St.d	.97	1.6	1.51	3.16		
			Sum	75	61	34	170		
		Total	Mean	7.375	6.175	4.35	17.9		
			St.d	2.08	2.49	2.27	6.12		
			Sum	295	247	174	716		
			Intermediate	T1	Mean	3.5	.9	1.1	5.5
					St.d	1.84	.99	.74	1.72
					Sum	35	9	11	55
T2	Mean			8.9	5.7	2.2	16.8		
	St.d			.876	2.63	2.53	5.007		
	Sum			89	57	22	168		
MC	Mean			4.5	3	2.7	10.2		
	St.d			2.27	2.309	1.703	2.97		
	Sum			45	30	27	102		
MCA	Mean			4.4	3.9	2.1	10.4		
	St.d			1.35	1.97	2.023	3.78		
	Sum			44	39	21	104		
Total	Mean			5.33	3.38	2.03	10.73		
	St.d			2.66	2.65	1.89	5.33		
	Sum			213	135	81	429		



ESL	Advanced	T1	Mean	7.4	6.8	6	20.2
			St.d	2.67	3.08	3.16	8.51
			Sum	74	68	60	202
		T2	Mean	9.7	9.5	9	28.2
			St.d	.675	1.58	1.89	3.99
			Sum	97	95	90	282
		MC	Mean	6.8	6.9	4.6	18.3
			St.d	2.098	1.853	2.37	4.06
			Sum	68	69	46	183
	MCA	Mean	8.3	8.1	6	22.4	
		St.d	1.64	1.85	3.127	5.76	
		Sum	83	81	60	224	
	Total	Mean	8.05	7.83	6.4	22.27	
		St.d	2.15	2.36	3.05	6.78	
		Sum	322	313	256	891	
	Intermediate	T1	Mean	3.8	2.	2.4	8.2
			St.d	1.23	.943	1.713	3.19
			Sum	38	20	24	82
		T2	Mean	8.6	8	5.9	22.5
			St.d	3.17	2.9	3.84	8.98
			Sum	86	80	59	225
MC		Mean	6.4	3.8	2.4	12.6	
		St.d	1.35	2.49	2.22	5.4	
		Sum	64	38	24	126	
MCA		Mean	6.7	5	3.5	15.2	
		St.d	1.703	2.	2.8	5.57	
		Sum	67	50	35	152	
Total		Mean	6.38	4.7	3.55	14.63	
		St.d	2.6	3.07	3.021	7.91	
		Sum	255	188	142	585	

As Table 11 shows, the results of these tests are as follows:

EFL group: Out of the total 2400 expected possible responses for phrasal verbs (30 items × 80 students = #2400), 1145 (47.7%) were produced by the EFL participants, with a mean of 14.31; the advanced learners produced 716 (62.5%) of the total produced

responses, with a mean of 17.9 and a standard deviation of 6.12, while the intermediate learners produced 429 (37.5 %) of the total produced responses, with a mean of 10.73 and a standard deviation of 5.33.

ESL group: Out of the total 2400 expected possible responses, ESL learners chose phrasal verbs in 1476 (61.5%) correct responses. Like the EFL group, the advanced learners scored higher than the intermediate ones; the advanced learners produced 891 (60.36%) of the total produced responses, with a mean of 22.3 and a standard deviation of 6.78, while the intermediate learners produced 585 (39.63%) of the total produced responses, with a mean of 14.63 and a standard deviation of 7.91.

Despite the significance of these results, which will be determined by further analysis of a factorial ANOVA presented later in this chapter, it appears that the ESL group had some educational advantage.

### **4.3.3 Phrasal Verb: Between Lucidity and Ambiguity**

One of the goals of this study was to examine Arab learners' ability to produce a phrasal verb when asked to complete a sentence with a form such as 'eat up' as in *Mary ate up \_\_\_\_\_*. We hypothesized that those who had been spent time studying in the US (ESL learners) would be more likely to supply a phrase such as 'the pizza', which implies a phrasal verb interpretation, rather than a phrase such as 'the hill', which implies a verb plus prepositional interpretation.

Another issue that this study explored is the influence of the learner's environmental background in activating lexical and syntactic information regarding

phrasal verb forms in a reading and paraphrasing task. We assumed that retrieving a phrasal verb from reading is more natural for ESL learners than for EFL learners.

Two small-scale tasks designed to investigate the role of the L2 environment in producing phrasal verbs and activating the idiomatic phrasal meaning first were included in this study. A 20-itemed list adopted from Matlock and Heredia (2002) was used in this study. Tables 12 and 13 show the raw scores and means of scores for the fill-in-the-blanks and sentence study tasks and the means of scores and the standard deviations for phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs with regard to the learners' production in the fill-in-the-blanks task (Part 3) and reading comprehension in the paraphrase task (Part 4) for both proficiency levels and in both settings.

Table 12.  
*Raw Scores and Means of Scores for the Fill-in-the-Blanks and Sentence Study Tasks in the Two Experimental Groups (EFL vs. ESL)*

Setting	Fill in the Blanks			Sentences study		
	Raw	M	St.d	Raw	M	St.d
EFL	306	3.8	3.73	359	4.49	2.5
ESL	430	5.4	3.63	497	6.2	2.2

Data from Table 12 suggest differences in the processing of ambiguous phrases such as *eat up* and *go over* among Arab learners based on their educational background. In fill-in-the-blanks tasks, ESL learners (M = 5.4) generated more correct responses, including well-formed complete sentences, than EFL learners (M = 3.8). Similarly, in the sentences study tasks, the ESL group (M = 6.2) was able to comprehend and read sentences more than the EFL group (M = 4.49). However, it is also important to pay

attention to the distribution of learners' scores for fill-in-the-blanks task. Apparently, the scores are not normally distributed for the values of the standard deviations are either higher than the means or significantly high. This could be attributed to the fact that 35 EFL learners and 19 ESL learners did not complete this task (see Figures 13 and 14). Though this could skew the results, or indicate inconsistent data, still it has its revealing significance in terms of the acquisition of productive skills in phrasal verbs, especially because those who avoided this task were intermediate level learners. See Figures 15 and 16 and Table 14 below.

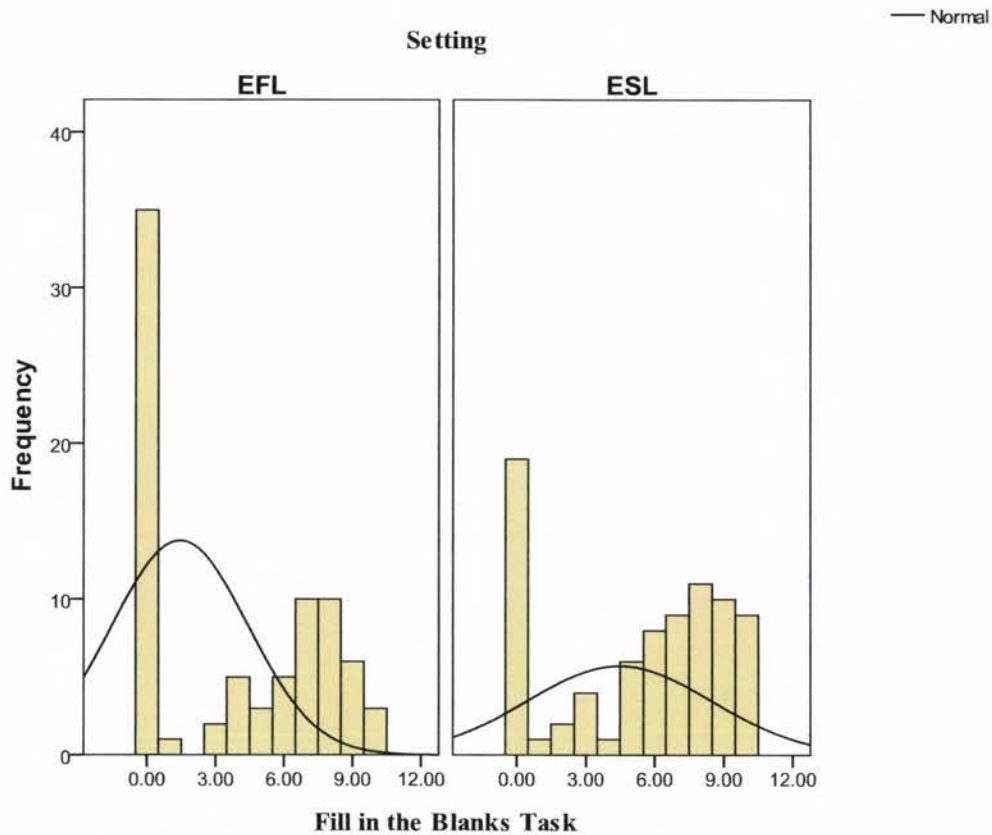


Figure 13.  
The Distribution of Scores for Fill-in-the Blanks Task.







			( % 9.63)	
ESL		Phrasal Verb	430 ( % 53.75)	5.4      3.6
		Prepositional verb	125 ( % 15. 63)	1.7      2.07
EFL		Phrasal Verb	169 (% 42.25)	2.11      1.4
	<b>Sentence Study</b>	Prepositional verb	190 ( % 47.5)	2.38      1.6
ESL		Phrasal Verb	214 (% 53.5)	2.4      1.47
		Prepositional verb	283 (% 70.75)	3.54      1.3

As shown in Table 13, the results from the sentence completion in the fill-in-the-blanks task and the reading comprehension in the sentences study task indicate differences in the number of the produced and comprehended phrasal verbs vs. verb + preposition phrases based on settings. In fill-in-the-blanks, both experimental groups (EFL & ESL) generated a phrasal verb interpretation more often than they did a verb + preposition interpretation. See Figure 17 below. Surprisingly, in the sentences study task, both groups, read sentences contain a verb + preposition construction correctly more often than they read the phrasal verbs sentences. See Figure 18 below. How these results might be interpreted will be discussed in the following chapter.

Overall, the ESL group outperformed the EFL group in both tasks. Out of a total of 800 expected possible responses for phrasal verbs (10 items × 80 students = 800), the ESL group generated 430 (53.75%), with a mean of 5.38 and a standard deviation of 3.6; the advanced learners produced 323 (75.12%) — see Table 14 below—of the total

possible responses, with a mean of 8.08 and a standard deviation of 1.9, while the intermediate learners produced 107 (24.9%) of the total produced responses, with a mean of 2.7 and a standard deviation of 2.9. The EFL group produced 306 (38.25%), with a mean of 3.83 and a standard deviation of 3.7; the advanced learners produced 264 (86.3%) — see Table 14 below— of the total possible responses, with a mean of 6.6 and a standard deviation of 2.62, while the intermediate learners produced 42 (13.73%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 1.05 and a standard deviation of 2.35.

Interestingly, the ESL group produced more verb plus preposition interpretations than the EFL group. ESL learners produced 125 (15.63%), with a mean of 1.6 and a standard deviation of 2.07; the advanced learners produced 37 (29.6%)—see Table 14 below—of the total possible responses, with a mean of .963 and a standard deviation of 1.16, while the intermediate learners produced 88 (70.4%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 2.2 and a standard deviation of 2.6. On the other hand, EFL learners produced 77 (9.63%) responses with a verb plus preposition interpretation, with a mean of .96 and a standard deviation of 1.3; the advanced learners produced 52 (59.09%)—see Table 14 below—of the total possible responses, with a mean of 1.3 and a standard deviation of 1.09, while the intermediate learners produced 25 (28.4%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of .63 and a standard deviation of 1.5.



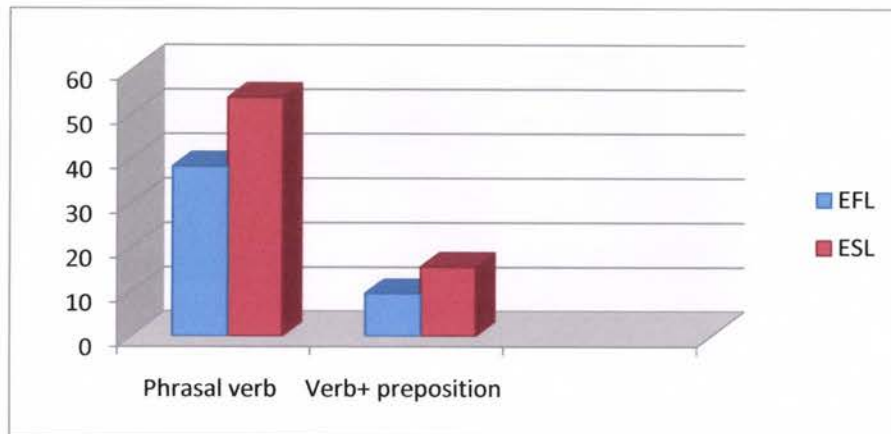


Figure 17.  
Percentage of Phrasal Verbs vs. Prepositional Verbs Generated by Arab Learners in Fill-in-the-Blank Tasks.

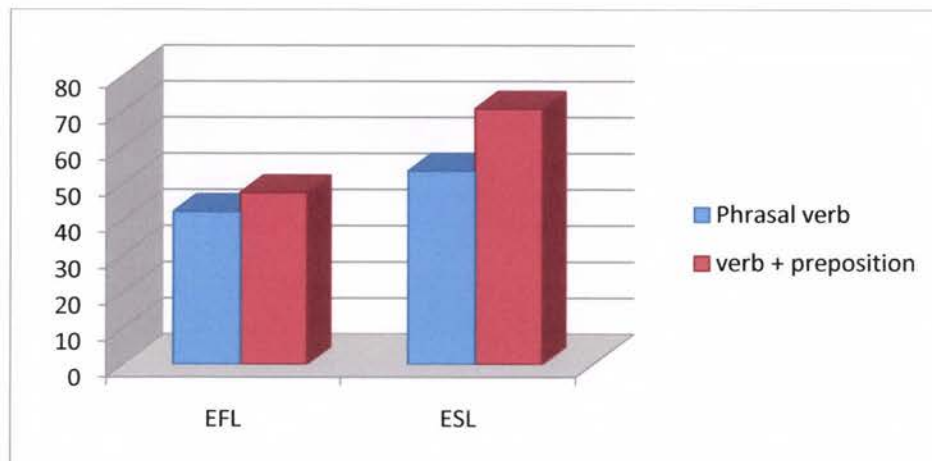


Figure 18.  
Percentage of Phrasal Verbs vs. Prepositional Verbs Generated by Arab Learners in Sentences Study Task.

In term of the sentence study task, out of the total 400 correct possible readings of phrasal verb sentences (5 items  $\times$  80 participants = 400), the ESL group produced 214 (53.5%) correct readings; the advanced group scored higher than the intermediate groups; the advanced learners produced 133 (62.15%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 3.32 and a standard deviation of 1.4, while the intermediate learners produced 81

(37.79%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 2.02 and a standard deviation of 1.27. However, the EFL group produced 169 (42.25%) correct readings for phrasal verb sentences, with a mean of 2.11 and a standard deviation of 1.4; the advanced learners produced 105 (62.13%)—see Table 14 below—of the total possible responses, with a mean of 2.63 and a standard deviation of 1.33, while the intermediate learners produced 64 (73.89%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 1.6 and a standard deviation of 1.36.

In reading verb-plus-preposition sentences, out of a possible 400 correct responses (5 items × 80 participants = 400), the ESL participants produced 283 (70.75%) correct readings, with the advanced learners scoring higher than the intermediate ones; the advanced learners produced 137 (48.4%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 3.43 and a standard deviation of 1.4, while the intermediate learners produced 146 (51.59%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 3.7 and a standard deviation of 1.19. For the EFL learners, out of 400 correct readings, they produced 190 (47.5%), with a mean of 2.4 and a standard deviation of 1.6; the advanced learners produced 125 (65.79%)—see Table 14 below—of the total possible responses, with a mean of 3.13 and a standard deviation of 1.44, while the intermediate learners produced 65 (34.21%) of the total possible responses, with a mean of 1.63 and a standard deviation of 1.33.

Table 14.

*The Mean of Scores and the Standard Deviations for Phrasal Verbs and Verb + Preposition in the Fill-in-the-Blanks Task and Reading Comprehension in the Paraphrase Task for Both Proficiency Levels and in Both Settings*

Setting	Task	Verb	Proficiency Level						Total
			Advanced			Intermediate			
	Type	Type	Raw	Mean	St. D	Raw	Mean	St. D	
EFL	Fill In the Blank	Phrasal Verb	264	6.6	2.62	42	1.05	2.35	306 (% 38.25)
ESL		Prepositional verb	52	1.3	1.09	25	.63	1.5	77 (% 9.63)
		Phrasal Verb	323	8.08	1.9	107	2.7	2.9	430 (% 53.75)
		Prepositional verb	37	.963	1.16	88	2.2	2.6	125 (% 15.63)
		EFL	Phrasal Verb	105	2.63	1.33	64	1.6	1.36
ESL		Sentence Study	Prepositional verb	125	3.13	1.44	65	1.63	1.33
	Phrasal Verb		133	3.32	1.4	81	2.02	1.27	214 (% 53.5)
	Prepositional verb		137	3.43	1.4	146	3.7	1.19	283 (% 70.75)

These descriptive results, while interesting, do not provide sufficient data analysis to address the hypotheses proposed by this study. In order to sort out some of the complexities of the data, it was determined that fine-grained statistical analyses of the results would be employed to address the hypotheses of this study. These hypotheses, as set forth on Chapter I, are:

**H<sub>0</sub>** There will be no significant difference in the preference of one-word verbs over phrasal verbs among Arab learners.

**H<sub>1</sub>** EFL groups will have a significantly higher preference for one-word verbs than ESL groups.

**H<sub>2</sub>** There will be a significant difference in ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs based on their time of exposure to the L2 environment.

**H3** There will be a significant relationship between Arab learners' preference for phrasal verbs and their proficiency levels.

**H4** There will be a significantly higher preference for the literal phrasal verbs than for both semi-transparent and idiomatic verbs.

**H5** There will be a significant difference in EFL learners' usage of idiomatic phrasal verbs as compared to ESL learners.

**H6** There will be a significant relationship between learners' productive knowledge of phrasal verbs and their avoidance of phrasal verbs.

**H7** There will be a significant relationship between learners' comprehension of phrasal verbs and learners' educational background (ESL/EFL).

The following section will discuss the factorial ANOVA that has been used to examine the effect of the independent variables on learners' preferences for or avoidance of phrasal verbs and the interpretation of the variables' main effects.

#### **4.4 Factorial ANOVA**

A major focus of this study is to investigate the effect of four independent variables on learners' preference for or avoidance of phrasal verbs. For the phrasal verb preference analysis, only three of the tests are included here. This means a total of 120 participants instead of 160 are enrolled in this analysis: Those who were enrolled in translating the target phrasal verbs from English into Arabic were excluded ( $n=40$ ). The main purpose of this task was to make sure that learners were aware of the target phrasal verb in their passive knowledge (see section 4.3.1 and Table 11).



The other three tests aim to examine learners' preference for phrasal or one-world verbs. A factorial ANOVA was conducted using the following ( $2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 3$ ) design.

$$\begin{aligned} \text{Scores} &= \text{Settings} + \text{Proficiency levels} + \text{Verb types} + \text{Test Types} \\ &= 2 + 2 + 3 + 3 \end{aligned}$$

Generally, ANOVAs are conceptually based upon a comparison of variance attributed to the independent variable (called between-groups, or treatment, variance). In this study variables are as follows:

- i. Variance due to the main effect of educational background (setting), which involves the performance difference in two locations: EFL (Saudi Arabia) and ESL (United States) learning environments.
- ii. Variance due to the main effect of proficiency levels, which involves the performance differences between two proficiency levels: intermediate and advanced learners.
- iii. Variance due to the main effect of verb type, which includes the performance differences arising from among three phrasal verb types: literal, semi-transparent, and figurative.
- iv. Variance due to the main effect of test types, which includes the performance difference arising from among three test types: translation, multiple choice, and multiple choice with the target word presented in learners' L1.

A factorial ANOVA was used to decide if learners' preferences for phrasal verbs or their equivalent one-word verbs are significant. The significance of each effect is decided by looking at the probability associated with each F-value (if  $p < .05$ , the effect is significant). See Table 15 below.

Table 15.  
*A Factorial ANOVA Showing the Significant Differences among the Four Independent Variables*

Source	SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
Setting	81.225	1	81.225	18.885	.000
Proficiency	399.003	1	399.003	92.771	.000
Verb type	353.239	2	176.619	41.065	.000
Test Type	291.006	2	145.503	33.831	.000
Error	1393.500	324	4.301		

#### 4.5 Interpretation of Main Effects

The interpretation of the main effects from this  $2 \times 2 \times 3 \times 3$  factorial ANOVA is straightforward. If  $p < .05$  for the main effect of a particular factor, then there is a significant effect caused by that factor. All that is necessary is to examine the marginal means for the levels of the factor to determine which group is significantly higher (or lower) than the other, then state in words what the differences are. The result shows the following:

##### 4.5.1 Setting

Table 15 above revealed that there were significant differences in phrasal verb preference between the EFL learners and ESL learners,  $F(1,358) = 18.885$ ,  $p < .001$ . As shown in Table 16, ESL learners had significantly higher scores ( $M = 14.75$ ) than EFL learners ( $M = 11.92$ ). According to this finding, educational background has an effect on learners' preference for phrasal verbs. Figures 19 given below delineate more graphically

the results of this significant difference between the two multiple choice tests and the translation test based on setting.

Table 16.  
*The Means of Scores for Phrasal Verbs Based on Setting*

Setting	PV Mean
EFL	11.92
ESL	14.75

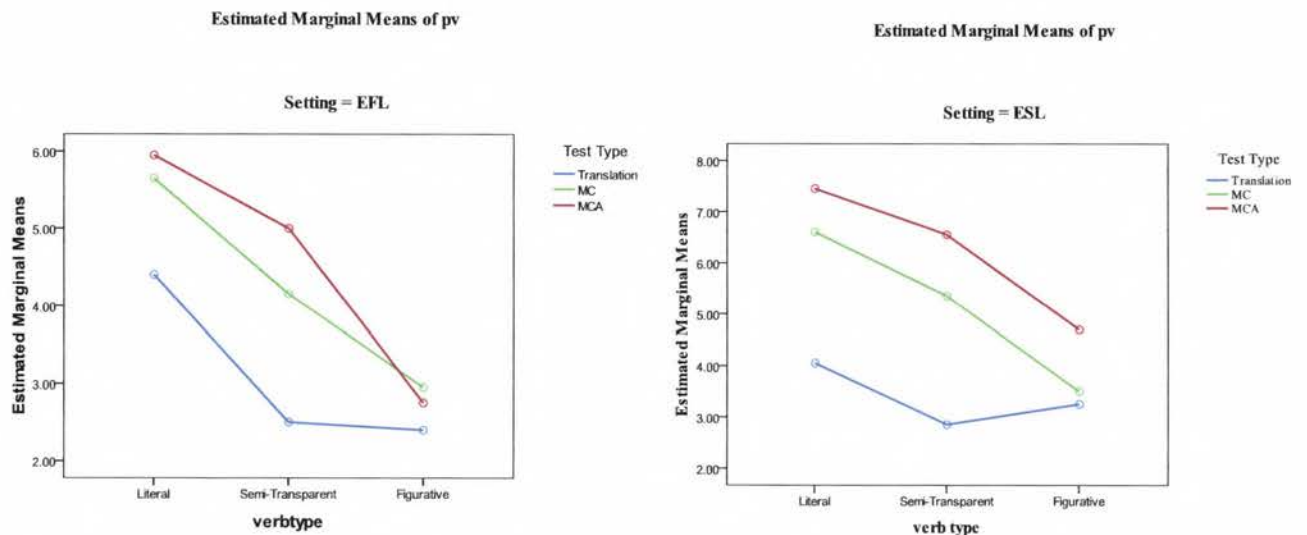


Figure 19.  
The Preference of Phrasal Verbs by EFL and ESL Learners.

#### 4.5.2 Proficiency Level

A significant main effect was obtained concerning proficiency level,  $F(1, 358) = 92.771, p < .001$ , indicating that advanced learners had significantly higher scores ( $M = 16.5$ ) than intermediate learners ( $M = 10.18$ ). See Tables 17 and 18 below. Again, this indicates that proficiency level does have an effect on phrasal verb selection and use.

Table 17.  
*The Means of Scores for Phrasal Verbs Based on Proficiency Level*

Proficiency level	PV Mean
Advanced	16.5
Intermediate	10.18

Table 18.  
*The Means of Scores for Phrasal Verbs Based on Setting and Proficiency Level*

Settings	Proficiency level	
	Advanced	Intermediate
EFL	15.1	8.7
ESL	17.5	11.6

$F(2,118) = 33.403, p < .001$

Figures 20 below shows this difference for phrasal verb and one-word verbs based on learners' level of proficiency according to learning environment.

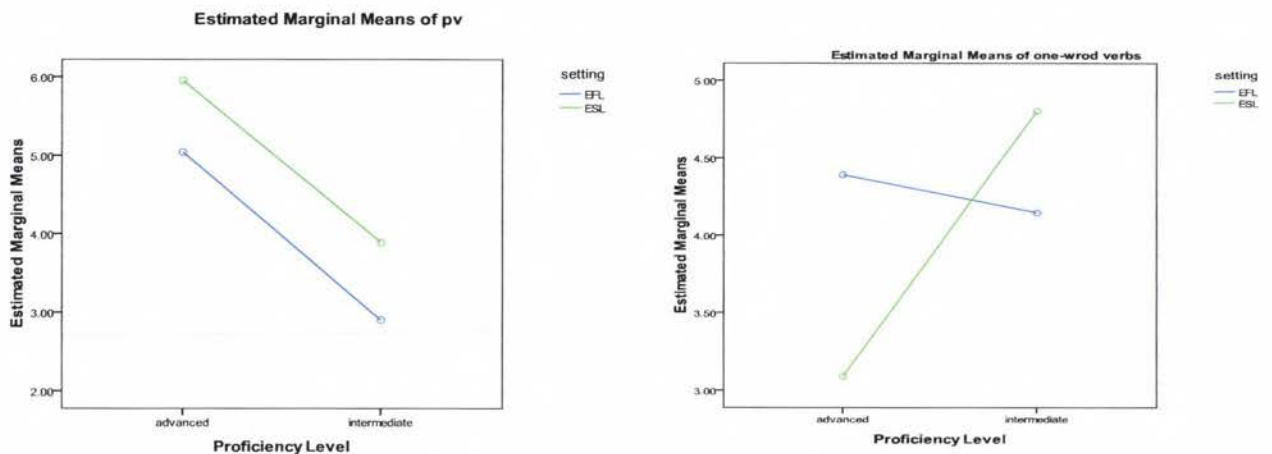


Figure 20.  
 The Preference of Phrasal Verbs vs. One-Word Verbs by Advanced and Intermediate Learners.



### 4.5.3 Verb Types

A significant main effect was also obtained with regard to performance differences based on the three verb types ( $F(2,357) = 41.065, p < .001$ ), indicating that Arab learners had a significantly higher mean for use of literal verbs ( $M = 5.68$ ) than for selecting semi-transparent ( $M = 4.4$ ) and figurative verbs ( $M = 3.26$ ). That is, learners, in selecting literal verbs, received a significantly higher performance rating than they did when selecting semi-transparent and figurative verbs. In the same fashion, learners apparently prefer semi-transparent phrasal verbs to figurative phrasal verbs. See Table 19 below.

Table 19.  
*The Means of Scores for Phrasal Verbs Based on Verb Types*

Phrasal verb type	Mean
Literal	5.68
Semi-transparent	4.4
Figurative	3.26

Figure 21 below shows this difference based on intermediate and advanced performance according to test type in graph format.

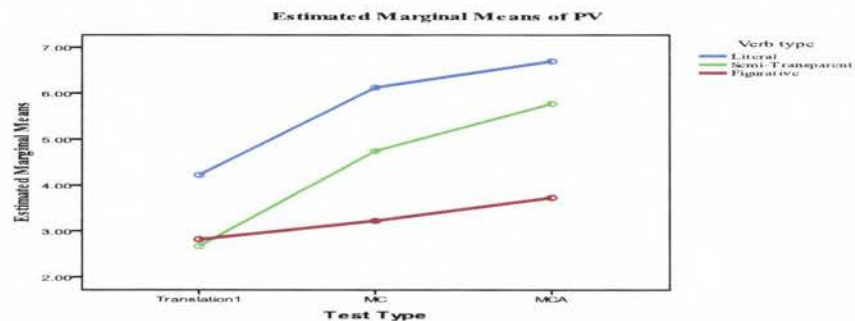


Figure 21.  
The Preference of Phrasal Verbs based on Verb Types.

However, to know which specific means are different from which other ones, a post hoc Tukey HSD (honestly significant difference) test was used. Table 20 below presents the results of all possible comparisons between means.

Table 20.  
*Post hoc Tukey HSD Test for Verb Types*

	(I) verb type	(J) verb type	Mean Difference (I-J)	Std. Error	Sig.
Tukey HSD	Literal	Semi	1.2833*	.26774	.000
		Figurative	2.4250*	.26774	.000
	Semi	Literal	-1.2833*	.26774	.000
		Figurative	1.1417*	.26774	.000
	Figurative	Literal	-2.4250*	.26774	.000
		Semi	-1.1417*	.26774	.000

\* The mean difference is significant at the .05 level.

The post hoc comparisons reveal that all three means were significantly different from each other, (literal verbs (M= 5.68), semi-transparent (M = 4.4), and figurative verbs (M = 3.26)).

#### 4.5.4 Test Types

From Table 15 above, a significant main effect was obtained for test types,  $F(2, 357) = 33.831, p < .001$ . On the translation test, learners had significantly lower scores (M= 9.47) than they had on the MC test (M = 14.1), and MCA (M = 16.2), respectively. Similarly on the MCA test, learners had significantly higher scores than they had on the MC and translation test respectively. See Table 22 below and Figure 20 above.

Table 21.  
*The Means of Scores for Phrasal Verbs Based on Test Types*

Test Types	Mean
Translation	9.47
MC	14.1
MCA	16.2

Figures 22 below shows this difference based on intermediate and advanced performance according to test type in graph format.

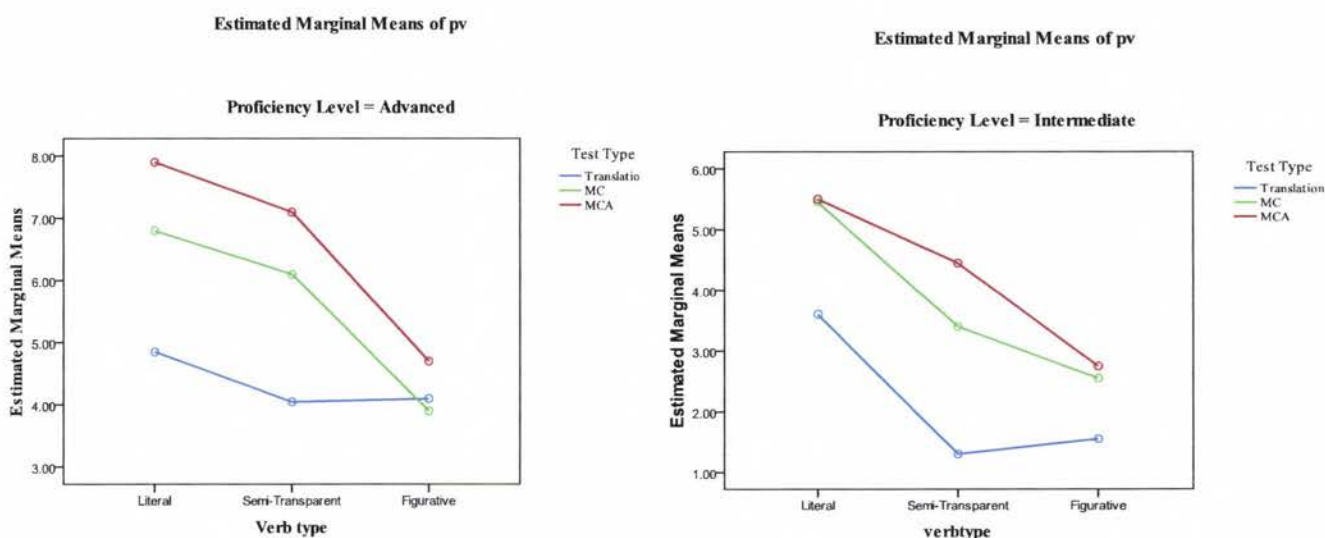


Figure 22.  
 The Preference for Phrasal Verbs by Advanced and Intermediate Learners Based on Type of Test.

The following section contains an analysis of each hypothesis and explains any further analysis entailed with testing the hypotheses.

#### 4.6 Analyses of Hypotheses

It should be clear from the above descriptive analysis that not all of the hypotheses were born out by the experiment. In this section, each hypothesis will be considered.

*H<sub>0</sub> There will be no significant difference in the preference of one-word verbs over phrasal verbs among Arab learners.*

As alluded to in Chapter III, Part II of the test was presented in four different versions (two multiple-choice tests and two translation tasks). (This is discussed in detail in sections 3.6 and 3.7). For phrasal verb preference analysis, only three of the four tasks were included here. This means a total of 120 participants instead of 160 were considered in this analysis. Those who enrolled in translating the target phrasal verbs from English into Arabic were excluded ( $n = 40$ ). The main purpose of this task was to make sure that learners were aware of the target phrasal verb in their passive knowledge (see section 4.3.1).

The other three tests were designed to examine learners' preferences for phrasal or one-word verbs. Each version contains 30 items. The first 10 items were designed to elicit literal or transparent phrasal verbs that would be easy for the learner to come up with. The second 10 items were designed to test completive and semi-transparent phrasal verbs (see section 3.5). The last 10 items test is for figurative/idiomatic phrasal verbs.

Tables 22, 23, 24, and 25 show the raw scores, the means of the scores, and the standard deviations for learners' performance for phrasal verbs versus single verbs with regard to one translation test (from Arabic to English) and two multiple choice tests in term of verb types, settings, and level of proficiency.



Table 22.  
*Arab Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verb vs. One-Word Verbs Based on Test Types*

Test Type		Phrasal Verbs	Single Verbs	Incorrect or no answer
English translation	Sum	389	544	267
	Mean	9.7	13.6	6.8
	St.d	6.3	6.46	7.1
MC	Sum	564	489	147
	Mean	14.1	12.23	3.68
	St.d	5.04	3.86	3.92
MCA	Sum	648	445	107
	Mean	16.2	11.13	2.68
	St.d	6.29	5.34	4.65
Total	Sum	1601	1478	521
	Mean	13.26	12.32	4.3
	St.d	6.57	5.38	5.6

$$x^2 = 155; df=4; p < .001$$

Table 22 shows that of the 3600 possible verbs (120 participants  $\times$  30 = 3600), Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 1601 (44.5%) cases, with a mean of 13.26 and a standard deviation of 6.57. They chose single verbs in 1478 (41.1%) cases, with a mean of 12.32 and a standard deviation of 5.38. The rest of the cases 14.4 % (n =521) were either incorrect or there were no answers provided, with a mean of 4.3 and a standard deviation of 5.6. The percentages of these responses are presented in Figure 23 below.

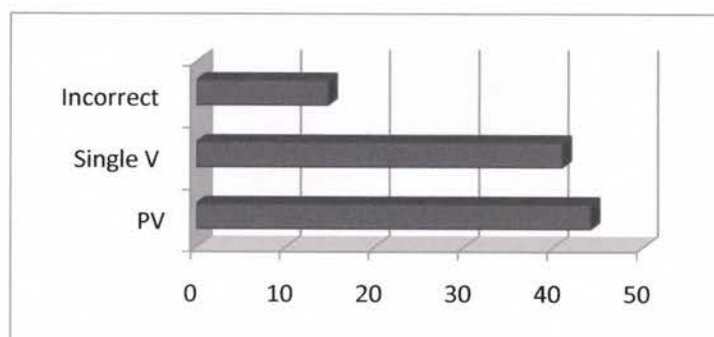


Figure 23.  
 Percent of Phrasal Verb vs. One-word Preferences.

Table 23.  
*Arab Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verb vs. One-Word Based on Verb Type*

Verb Type		Phrasal Verbs	Single Verbs	Incorrect or no answer
Literal	Sum	682	349	169
	Mean	5.7	2.9	1.4
	Std.	2.4	1.8	2.3
Semi-transparent	Sum	528	499	173
	Mean	4.4	4.2	1.4
	St.d	2.8	2.2	2.2
Figurative	Sum	391	630	179
	Mean	3.3	5.3	1.5
	St.d	2.5	2.4	1.9
Total	Sum	1601	1478	521
	Mean	4.4	4.1	1.4
	St.d	2.7	2.3	2.1

$$x^2 = 160; df=4; p < .001$$

On Table 23, we see that out of the 1200 possible phrasal verbs for each verb type (120 participants  $\times$  10 = 1200), Arab learners chose literal phrasal verbs in 682 (56.8%) cases, single verbs in 349 (29.1%) cases, and 14.1% (n =169) of the cases were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. For the semi-transparent category, Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 528 (44%) cases, single verbs in 499 (41.6%) cases, and 14.4% (n =173) were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. Finally, the participants in this study selected figurative phrasal verbs in 391 (32.6 %) cases, their equivalent one-word verbs in 630 (52.5%), and 14.9% (n =179) were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. The percentages of these responses are presented in Figure 24 below.

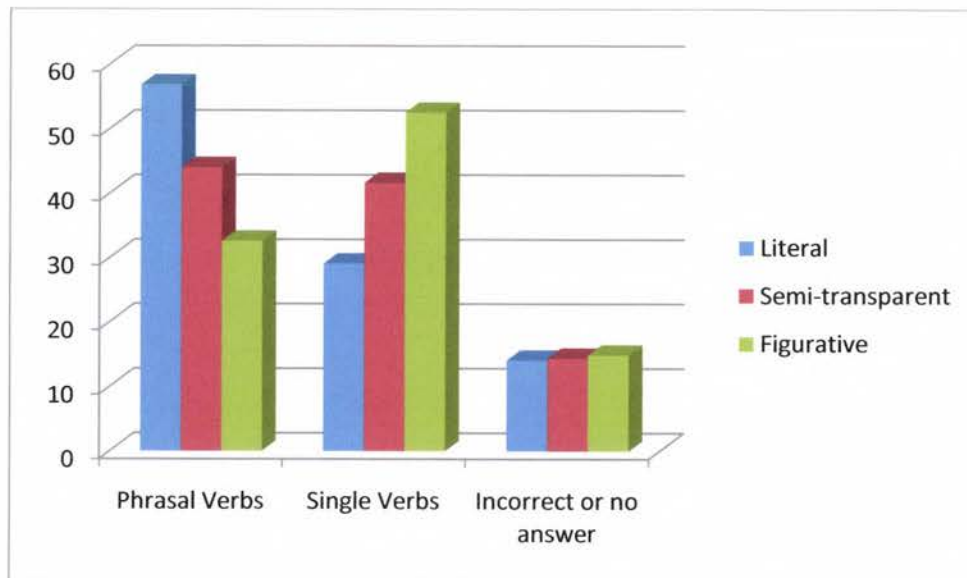


Figure 24.  
Percent of Preference for Phrasal vs. One-word Verb Based on Verb Type.

Table 24.  
*Arab Learners' Preferences for Phrasal Verbs vs. One-Word Verbs Based on Settings*

Settings		Phrasal Verbs	Single Verbs	Incorrect or no answer
EFL	Sum	715	768	317
	Mean	11.9	12.8	5.3
	Std.	5.1	4.24	5.4
ESL	Sum	886	710	204
	Mean	14.8	11.8	3.7
	St.d	7.4	6.3	6.4
Total	Sum	1601	1478	521
	Mean	13.3	12.3	4.3
	St.d	6.5	5.4	5.6

$$x^2 = 45; df=2; p < .001$$

Table 24 shows that out of the 1800 possible verbs (60 participants  $\times$  30 = 1800), EFL Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 715 (39.7%) cases, and they chose single verbs in 768 (42.7%) cases. The rest of the cases, 17.6 % (n = 317), were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. For the ESL group, learners chose phrasal verbs in 886

(49.2%) cases, and they chose single verbs in 710 (39.5%) cases. The rest of the cases, 11.3 % (n = 204), were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. Figure 25 below presents the percentages of these responses graphically.

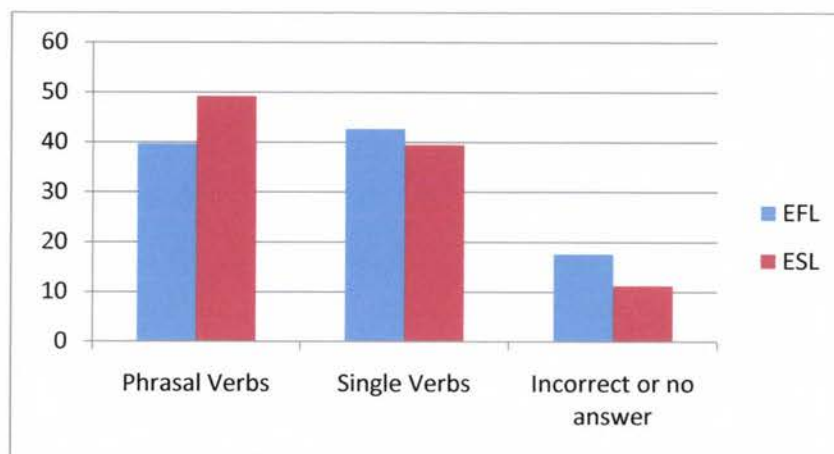


Figure 25.  
Percentage of Preference for Phrasal Verbs vs. One-Word Verbs Based on Setting.

Table 25.  
*Arab Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verb vs. One-word Verbs Based on Proficiency Level*

Proficiency level		Phrasal Verbs	Single Verbs	Incorrect or no answer
Advanced	Sum	990	673	137
	Mean	16.5	11.2	2.3
	Std.	6.3	5.9	5.1
Intermediate	Sum	611	805	384
	Mean	10.2	13.4	6.4
	St.d	4.9	4.6	5.4
Total	Sum	1601	1478	521
	Mean	13.3	12.3	4.3
	St.d	6.5	5.4	5.6

$$x^2 = 219; df=2; p < .001$$

Finally, Table 25 shows that out of the 1800 possible verbs (60 participants  $\times$  30 = 1800), advanced Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 990 (55%) cases, and they chose



single verbs in 673 (37.4%) cases. The rest of the cases, 7.6 % (n = 137), were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. For the intermediate group, learners chose phrasal verbs in 611 (33.9%) cases, and they chose single verbs in 805 (44.7%) cases. The rest of the cases, 21.4 % (n = 384), were either incorrect or there were no answers provided. Figure 26 below represents graphically the percentages of these responses.

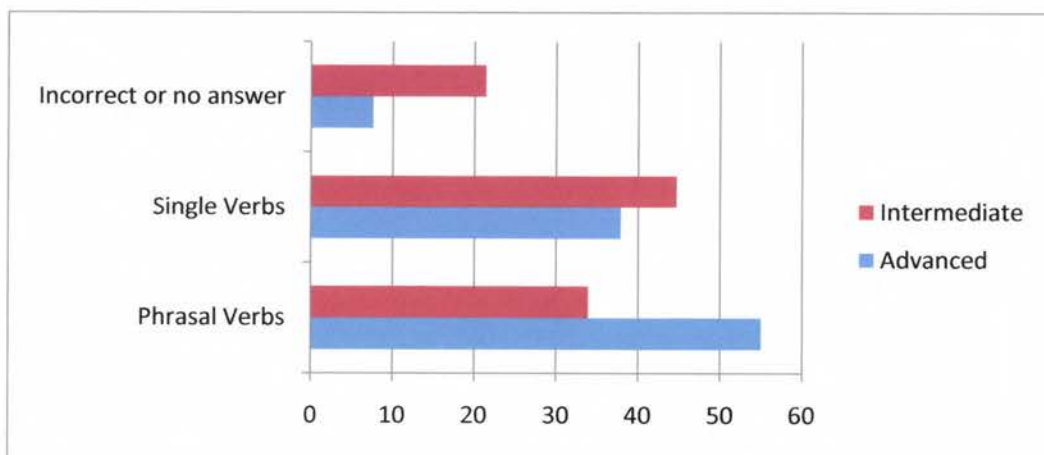


Figure 26.  
Percentage of Preference for Phrasal Verbs vs. One-Word Based on Proficiency Level.

Although these results appear to be significant, it is necessary to determine their significant relationship statistically. A Chi-square analysis was conducted to examine the relationship between Arab language learners' preference for single verbs over phrasal verbs. The Chi-square values were computed by using SPSS, and the values obtained were significant (see the following tables). Since the probability is less than .05, we can reject our null hypothesis regarding verb type preference. Arab English learners prefer phrasal verbs over their equivalent single-verb.

*H<sub>1</sub> EFL groups will have a significant higher preference for one-word verbs than ESL groups.*

This hypothesis was one of the key hypotheses generated by the initial research, but it is not supported by the data. Contrary to what I had predicted, the EFL group's mean for single verb preference was 12.8 while that of the ESL group was 11.833, a difference of 0.967 points. I had predicted that a difference in educational background would advantage EFL learners' preferences for one-word verbs compared to ESL learners. The Independent Samples Tests (see Table 26) shows that EFL learners did not differ significantly from ESL learners on their preference for one-word verbs ( $p = 0.327$ ).

Table 26.  
*Comparison of EFL and ESL Learners on One-Word Verb Preference*

Variable	N	M	SD	t	df	P
One-Word Verb Preference						
EFL	60	12.8	4.24	.984	118	.327
ESL	60	11.83	6.32			

Moreover, the one-way ANOVA analysis reveals that there is no significant difference in one-word preference between the EFL and ESL learners.  $F(1,358) = 1.724$ ,  $p > .05$ . However, the result indicates that there is a significant difference in phrasal verbs preference between the EFL and ESL learners.  $F(1,358) = 11.176$ ,  $p = .001$ . See Table 27 and Figure 27 below. This finding reveals that learners' preference for or avoidance of a phrasal verb has nothing to do with its equivalent single verb. Instead, this preference for or avoidance of phrasal verbs could be related to other factors such as verb complexity or exposure to the target language environment.

Table 27.  
*One-Way ANOVA Analysis for One-Word Preference among Arab Learners Based on Setting (EFL vs. ESL)*

DV		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
PV	Between Groups	81.225	1	81.225	11.176	.001

	Within Groups	2601.772	358	7.268		
	Total	2682.997	359			
Single V	Between Groups	9.344	1	9.344	1.724	.190
	Within Groups	1940.644	358	5.421		
	Total	1949.989	359			

DV = dependant variable, PV= phrasal verb, and Single V = single verb

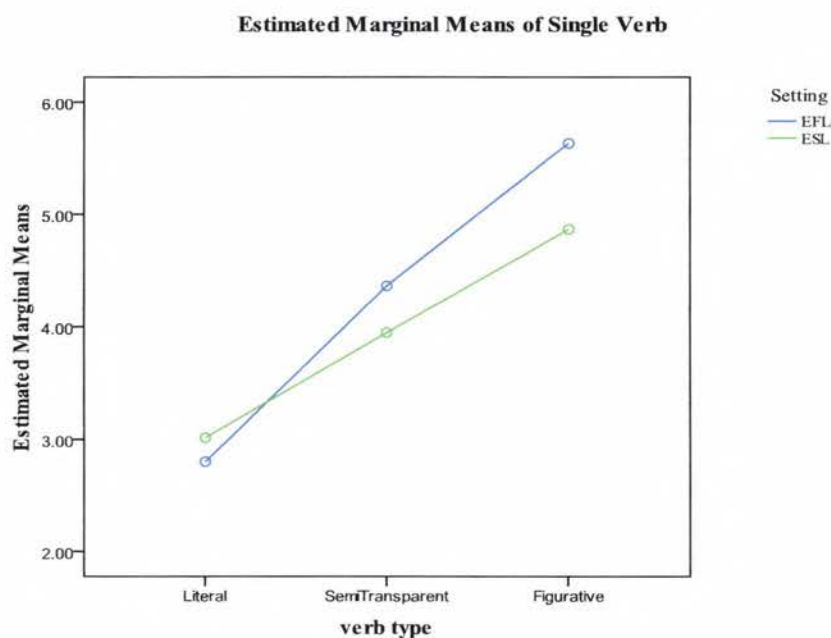


Figure 27.  
Preferences for One-Word Verbs by EFL and ESL Groups.

*H<sub>2</sub> There will be a significant difference in ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs based on their time of exposure to L2 the environment.*

A significant main effect was also obtained concerning learners' time of exposure to L2,  $F(2, 157) = 24.093, p < .001$ , indicating that learners who spent more than 12 months in the L2 environment had significantly higher scores ( $M = 36.1579$ ) in their preference for phrasal verbs than those who spent up to and including 12 months ( $M$

= 25.0323) and those who spent from zero to three months ( $M = 22.6703$ ). See Table 10 above.

Given that the  $P$  value is less than .001, Hypothesis 2 is supported by the data (see Table 28). That is, time of exposure to the L2 environment does have an effect on phrasal verb selection and use. Figure 28 given below shows this significant.

Table 28.  
*One-Way ANOVA for Total Scores of Phrasal Verbs and Time of Exposure to L2 Environment*

			SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Total * exposure	Between Groups	(Combined)	4941.313	2	2470.657	24.093	.000
	Within Groups		16100.130	157	102.549		
	Total		21041.444	159			

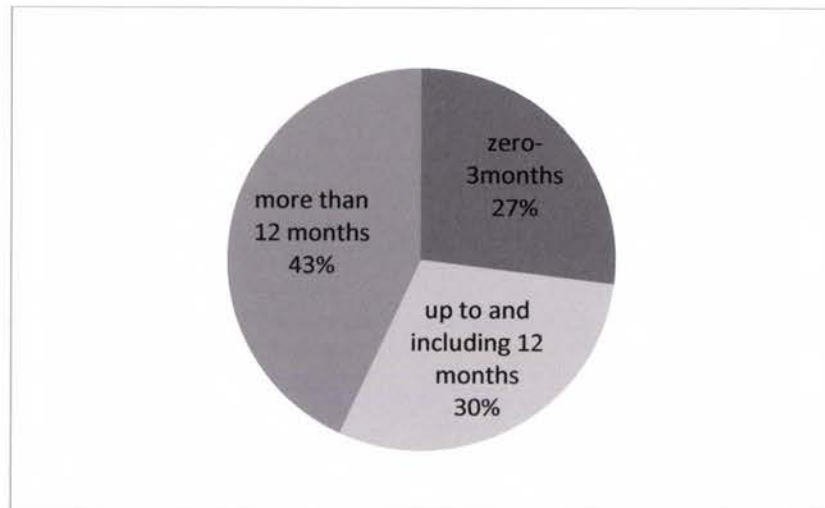


Figure 28.  
Preference for Phrasal Verbs Based on Time of Exposure to L2 Environment.

*H<sub>3</sub> There will be a significant relationship between Arab learners' preference for phrasal verbs and their proficiency levels.*

Hypothesis 3 is supported by the data. From Table 9 and Figure 11 above we concluded that the discrepancies in the performances of the two experimental groups



(EFL vs. ESL) based on their proficiency level was very high. The advanced group outperformed the intermediate group. The mean of the advanced group was 33.68 while that of the intermediate group was only 18.99, a difference of 14.69 points. Accordingly, it appears that proficiency level plays a major role in acquiring phrasal verbs. More importantly, the ANOVA revealed that there were significant differences in preference for phrasal verbs between advanced learners and intermediate learners,  $F(1,158) = 109.838$ ,  $p < .001$ . See Table 29. Eta was used to investigate the strength of the association between learners' proficiency level and their preference of phrasal verbs ( $\eta = .640$ ). This indicates that advanced learners were more likely to prefer phrasal verbs than intermediate learners.

Table 29.

*One-Way ANOVA for Phrasal Verb Preference at Two Levels of Proficiency*

			SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
PV * Proficiency Level	Between Groups	(Combined)	8628.906	1	8628.906	109.838	.000
	Within Groups		12412.538	158	78.560		
	Total		21041.444	159			

**H4** *There will be a significantly higher preference for the literal phrasal verbs than for both semi-transparent and idiomatic verbs.*

Hypothesis 4 is supported by the data. A statistically significant difference was found among the three verb types (literal, semi-transparent, and figurative) regarding learners' preferences for phrasal verb,  $F(2, 357) = 41.06527.064$ ,  $p < .001$  (see Table 20). Table 30 below shows that learner preference for phrasal verbs changes according to verb type. The mean of preference for literal phrasal verb is higher ( $M = 5.68$ ) than for

both semi-transparent ( $M = 4.4$ ) and figurative phrasal verbs ( $M = 3.26$ ). Moreover, the Post hoc Tukey HSD comparisons support this hypothesis. See section 4.3.5.3, Table 20.

Table 30.

*Arab Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verb Based on Verb Type*

Test Items	Phrasal Verbs		
	Raw	M	St. d
Literal	682 (56.8%)	5.68	2.36
Semi-transparent	528 (44%)	4.4	2.8
Figurative	391 (32.58%)	3.26	2.49

Figure 29 shows this significant difference in learners' preference for phrasal verbs in literal, semi-transparent, and figurative items.

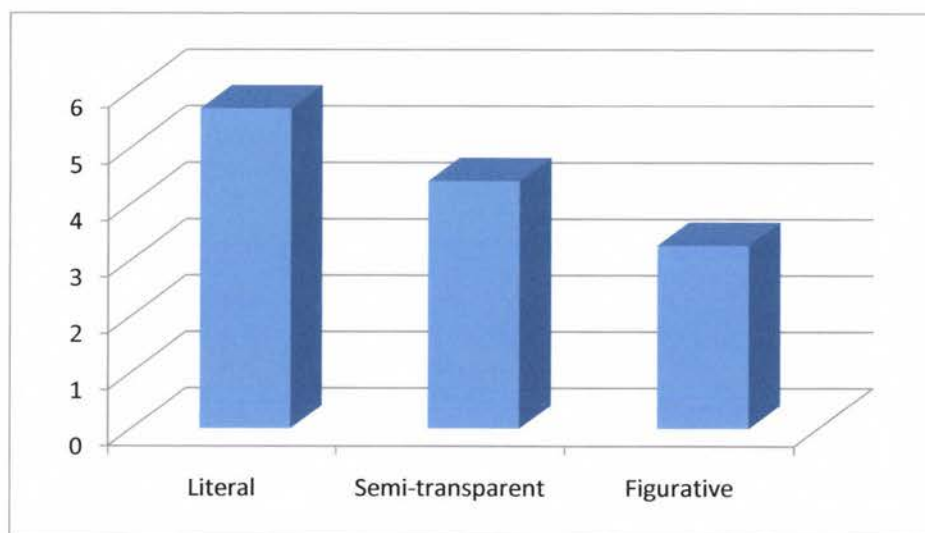


Figure 29.

Mean Difference of Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verbs Based on Verb Type.

*H5 There will be a significant difference in EFL learners' usage of idiomatic phrasal verbs as compared to ESL learners.*

Hypothesis 5 is also supported by the data. Though the groups (EFL vs. ESL) did not differ significantly in the use of one-word verbs, they differed significantly in their preference for phrasal verbs,  $F(1,358) = 11.176, p = .001$ . The ESL group's mean for phrasal verbs preference ( $M = 14.6$ ) is higher than the EFL group's mean ( $M = 11.92$ ). And for the usage of idiomatic (figurative) phrasal verbs, preferences were significant (see Table 31, Figure 30). The obtained main effect values for figurative phrasal verbs with regard to the two experimental groups were  $F(1,118) = 6.310, p = .0135$ . That is, the ESL group had a significantly higher mean in use of figurative phrasal verbs ( $M = 3.82$ ) than the EFL group ( $M = 2.7$ ).

Table 31.  
*A One-Way ANOVA Showing the Difference between EFL and ESL Groups on Figurative Phrasal Verb*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Figurative× Setting	Between Groups (Combined)	37.408	1	37.408	6.310	.013
	Within Groups	699.583	118	5.929		
	Total	736.992	119			

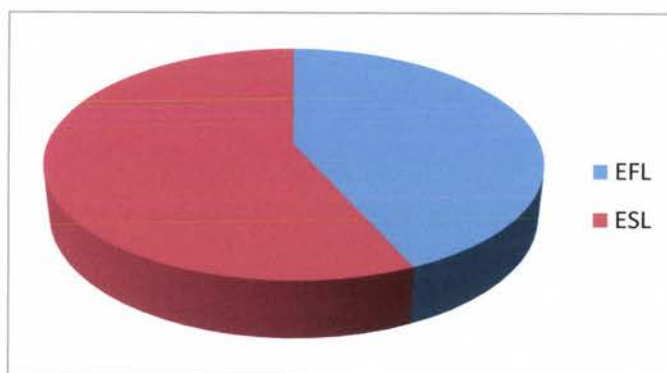


Figure 30.  
The Difference Between EFL and ESL Groups on Figurative Phrasal Verb.

*H6 There will be a significant relationship between learners' productive knowledge of phrasal verbs and their avoidance of phrasal verbs.*

As detailed in Chapter III, section 3.8, a fill-in-the-blanks task was used to examine learners' productive knowledge of phrasal verbs. More detail in section 3.8. Table 32, shows the raw scores, the means of score, and the standard deviation for learners' preference for phrasal verbs in the avoidance/preference task (Part II) versus their productive knowledge in fill-in-the-blanks task (Part III).

Table 32.  
*Arab Learners' Preference for Phrasal Verbs in Part II vs. Part III Tasks*

Test Part	Phrasal Verbs	
Part II (Avoidance/ Preference Task)	Sum	2621 (54.6%)
	Mean	16.3813
	Std. Deviation	7.8033
Part III (Fill in the Blanks Task)	Sum	736 (46%)
	Mean	4.6
	Std. Deviation	3.75

Table 32 shows that, out of the 4800 possible verbs (160 participants  $\times$  30 = 4800), Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 2621 (54.6%) cases, and of the 1600 possible verbs (160 participants  $\times$  10 = 1600), Arab learners produce phrasal verbs in 736 (46%) cases. The percentages of these responses are presented in Figure 31 below.

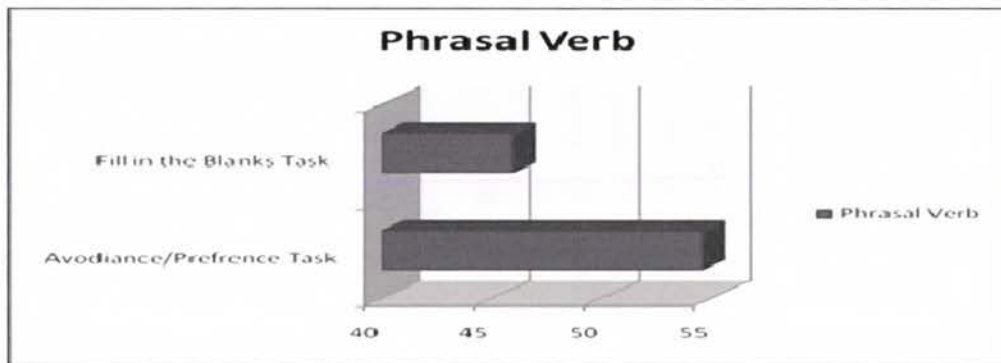


Figure 31.  
Percentage of Phrasal Verb Preferences in Two Tasks (Part II and Part III).



These results appear to be significant, yet it is necessary to determine their statistically significant relationship. The obtained main effect  $F$  value supports our hypothesis;  $F(1,158) = 479.114$ ;  $P < .001$ . See Table 33 and Figure 32 below.

Table 33.

*The Main Effect of the Relationship Between Learners' Productive Knowledge of Phrasal Verbs and their Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs*

Source	factor1	Type III SS	Df	MS	F	Sig.
(Fill*Preference)	Linear	11103.828	1	11103.828	479.114	.000
factor1						
factor1 * setting	Linear	133.903	1	133.903	5.778	.017
Error(factor1)	Linear	3661.769	158	23.176		

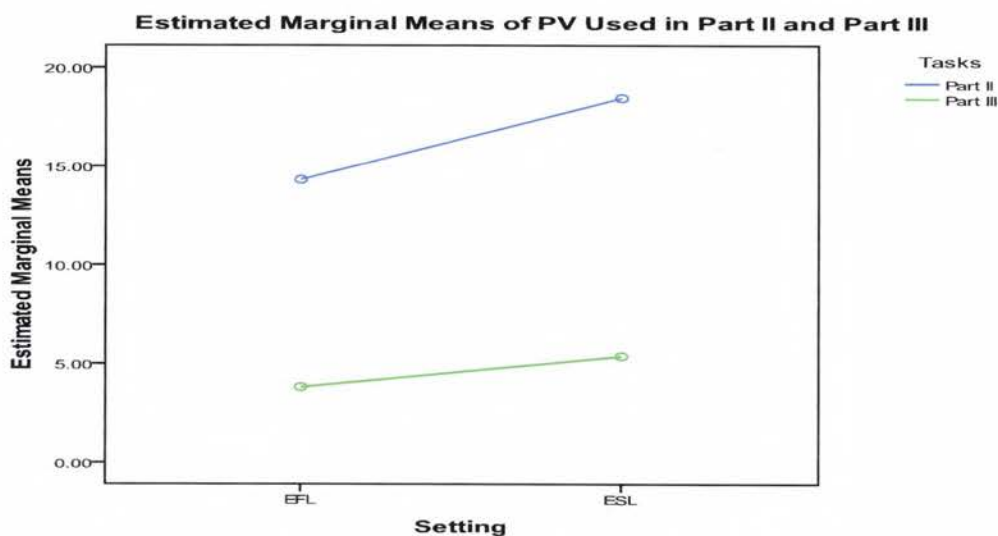


Figure 32.

The Relationship Between Learners' Productive Knowledge of Phrasal Verbs (Part III) and their Preference for Phrasal Verbs (Part II).

The performance of the EFL group was compared to that of the ESL group in order to determine if the group means differed from random behavior. Table 32 shows that the mean for the produced phrasal verb in Part III ( $M = 4.6$ ) is differed significantly between the two groups.

*H7 There will be a significant relationship between learners' comprehension of phrasal verbs and learners' educational background (ESL/EFL).*

Our final hypothesis is also supported by the data. Setting produced a significant main effect with regard to learners' reading comprehension task in general  $F(1,58)=21.533, p < .001$ , and of phrasal verbs comprehension in particular  $F(1,158) = 6.068, p = .015$ . See Table 34.

Table 34.  
*The F Significance Value for Reading Comprehension and Phrasal Verb Comprehension*

		SS	df	MS	F	Sig.
Reading comprehension	Between	119.025	1	119.025	21.533	.000
	Within	873.375	158	5.528		
	Total	992.400	159			
PV comprehension	Between	12.656	1	12.656	6.068	.015
	Within	329.538	158	2.086		
	Total	342.194	159			

Apparently, ESL learners ( $M = 2.68$ ) had an advantage in comprehending phrasal verbs over EFL learners ( $M = 2.113$ ). However, in order to sort out some of the complexities of the data reported above, I made several more fine-grained analyses of the results of the study. The following section addresses with analyses of the error data produced by the learners.

#### **4.7 Analysis of Error and Avoidance**

So far only preferences for or rejections of phrasal verbs have been dealt with. The learners' preferences for a phrasal verb were believed to be governed by structural difference between L1 and L2. It would be plausible to expect that Arabs, because of the

lack of genuine phrasal verbs in their L1, would tend to avoid phrasal verbs. Based on our analysis so far, this claim was proved to be true of the early stages of learning (i.e., intermediate Arab learners) and more observable with EFL learners as well as with figurative phrasal verbs. This could be due to the fact that both EFL and ESL Arab learners have to approach the acquisition of English phrasal verbs from a slightly different educational background (knowledge state). Thus, it was thought more revealing to look at learners' errors. For the best assumption, the number of errors, if not a good, then at least will be a reasonable measure of learning difficulty.

According to the early studies in contrastive analysis, linguistic differences lead to learning difficulties and accordingly to error. If the target language is different from the mother tongue, it is difficult to master the new language because of the interference (i.e., negative transfer) role in the learning progress. The greater the differences, the more errors will occur.

A major focus of this section is to investigate the effect of three independent variables (setting, level of proficiency, and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs) on learners' error. The error data were drawn from all 30 items of Part II in the instrument used in this study (see section 3.3 in Chapter III). The difference in errors was believed to be a point of departure between learning difficulty and the transferability of phrasal verbs.

In Table 35 below, the number (and percentages) of errors and correct responses is given for both experimental groups. For the scoring procedure, both of the two correct alternatives (the phrasal and single verbs) were judged as correct.

Table 35.  
*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among EFL and ESL Learners in a 30-items Test (Part II) of English Phrasal Verbs Usage*

		Error	Correct
EFL	F	317	1483
(N=60)	%	18%	82%
ESL	F	214	1586
(N=60)	%	12%	88%

$\chi^2 = 23.44; df = 1; p < .0001$

Table 35 shows that both groups scored fairly well in the test. However, the data suggested that EFLs learner made significantly more errors than the ESL learners did. The chi-square value indicates very significant differences between the two experimental groups. Thus, differences in errors produced are largely to be explained in terms of educational background. Arabic is a Semitic language which is very distinct from analytic languages like English. It is not surprisingly that analytic phrasal verb construction, which is non-existent in Arabic, would then cause special learning difficulties for Arabs. These difficulties seemed greater in EFL learners because they lack native language input.

Table 36 shows that most errors were located in the intermediate level learners, which indicates that proficiency levels influence the acquisition of phrasal verbs.

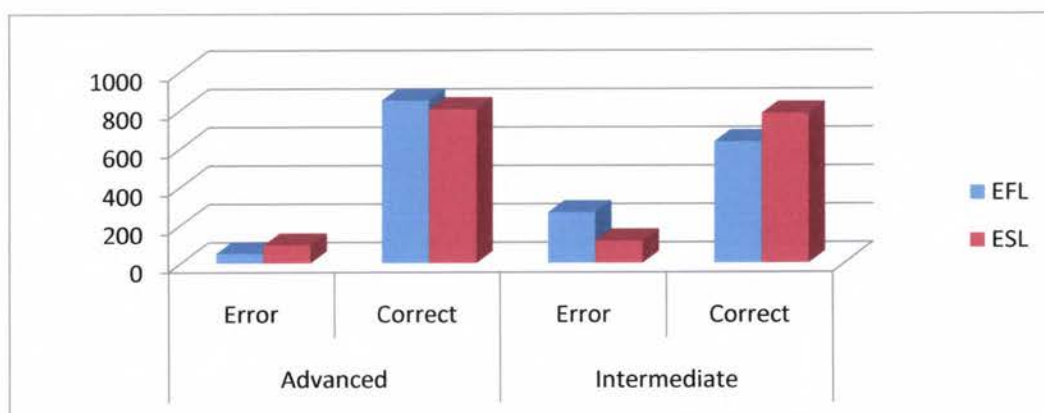


Table 36.  
*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among EFL and ESL Learners at Two Levels of Proficiency*

		Advanced		Intermediate		
		Error	Correct	Error	Correct	Total
EFL	F	51	849	266	634	1800
(N=60)	%	2.8%	47.2%	14.8%	35.2%	100%
ESL	F	96	804	118	782	1800
(N=60)	%	5.3%	44.7%	6.6%	43.4%	100%
Chi square	$\chi^2 = 15; df=1; p<.001$			$\chi^2 = 72; df=1; p<.001$		

Table 36 shows the percentage of errors in the total test made by EFL and ESL learners at two proficiency levels (advanced vs. intermediate). The data indicate that obvious differences between EFL and ESL learners are to be found in the intermediate level, but at the advanced level the differences tend to be leveled out. A chi-square analysis showed statistically significant differences at all levels. This is congruent with prior evidence that L1 influence (and transfer processes) tends to decrease with increased language knowledge (cf. Taylor 175; Major 1986).

In Figure 33, the frequencies of errors and correct responses were compared between EFL and ESL groups separately for each level of proficiency.



Note:  $\chi^2 = 15$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .001$        $\chi^2 = 72$ ;  $df = 1$ ;  $p < .001$

Figure 33.  
Errors Made by EFL and ESL Learners at Two Levels of Proficiency.

So far we examined the effect of learning environment and level of proficiency on learners' errors. It was also postulated in Hypothesis 2 that ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs will be significantly different based on their time of exposure to the L2 environment. That is, increasing the time of exposure to L2 will increase phrasal verbs preference and decreases learners' errors. Table 37 below shows the comparison between the correct responses and the errors ones.

Table 37.  
*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among ESL Learners at Three Levels of Exposure*

ESL		Error	Correct	Total
Group A*	F	45	255	300
(N=10)	%	15%	85%	100%
Group B	F	64	596	660
(N=22)	%	9.7%	90.3%	100%
Group C	F	47	793	840

(N=28)	%	5.6%	94.4%	100%
Total	F	156	1644	1800
N = 60	%	8.7%	91.3%	100%

$\chi^2 = 26.1$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < .001$

\*Group A = 0 – 3 months exposure to L2; Group B = up to and including 12 months; Group C = more than 12 months.

The results reported in Table 37 above indicate that the most conspicuous differences among the Arab ESL learners can be attributed to time of exposure to the L2 environment. Group C produced the fewest number of errors while the greatest number of errors was produced by Group A. This finding is congruent with the prior evidence that L1 influence tends to decrease with increased longer exposure to the target language environment.

Our final analysis of learners' errors will consider the semantic properties of phrasal verbs. Tables 38, 39, and 40 show the percentage of errors and correct responses in the total test made by EFL and ESL learners for literal phrasal verbs. The data indicate that errors of ESL learners tend to be leveled out. A chi-square analysis showed statistically significant differences between EFL and ESL learners. This provided evidence that learning environments influence the learners' processes regarding literal phrasal verb.

Table 38.

*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among EFL and ESL Learners for Literal Phrasal Verbs*

		Error	Correct
EFL	F	112	488
(N=60)	%	18.7%	81.33%

ESL	F	57	543
(N=60)	%	9.5%	90.5%
$\chi^2 = 20.8; df = 1; p < .001$			

The data reported in Table 39 indicate that there is a discrepancy in the error production for semi-transparent phrasal verbs among Arab learners based on their learning environments. A significant difference is found,  $\chi^2 = 9.25; (df) = 1; p = .002$ , which shows again that the learning environment plays a role in acquiring semi-transparent phrasal verbs. EFL learners produced more errors than ESL learners.

Table 39.

*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among EFL and ESL Learners for Semi-Transparent Phrasal Verbs*

		Error	Correct
EFL	F	105	495
(N=60)	%	17.5%	81.33%
ESL	F	68	532
(N=60)	%	11.3%	88.7.5%
$\chi^2 = 9.25; df = 1; p = .002$			

However, the analysis of the error data in Table 40 shows insignificant differences in the produced figurative phrasal verbs errors for both EFL and ESL learners. This indicates that figurative phrasal verbs induced more errors than the literal and semi-transparent ones. One may argue, then, that phrasal verbs carrying the feature of opacity or idiomaticity tend to be less attractive or even avoided. See Chapter II, Section 2.1.4.2 for more details on idiomaticity.



Table 40.

*Number and Percentage of Errors and Correct Responses among EFL and ESL Learners for Figurative Phrasal Verbs*

		Error	Correct
EFL	F	100	500
(N=60)	%	16.7%	83.3%
ESL	F	79	521
(N=60)	%	13.2%	86.8.5%

$\chi^2 = 2.9; df = 1; p = .089$

As a matter of fact, the error data in this study provide us with some fairly interesting information about the roles of learning environment, level of proficiency, and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs have on learnability and transferability of phrasal verbs. This will be discussed in the following chapter.

#### **4.8 Conclusion**

This chapter summarized the results of the instruments used, introduced the statistical analysis used and presented responses to the hypotheses laid out in Chapter I. Raw scores, means, and standard deviations were computed and comparisons were conducted between the variables under investigation. Various procedures were implemented in order to test each hypothesis. Chapter V will include discussion and interpretation of the study.

## CHAPTER V

### Discussion

This chapter presents a discussion of the main results of the study laid out in Chapter III and reported in Chapter IV. Each research question and its results will be examined with reference to previous studies and to our current theoretical knowledge of second language acquisition. The chapter will conclude with remarks on limitations of the study and some suggestions for future research.

#### **5.1 The General Aims of the Study**

As mentioned in Chapter I, the general purpose of the present study was to gain new insights into the phenomenon of the avoidance of English phrasal verbs among native Arab speakers learning English as a second/foreign language using tests evaluating the learners' use of English phrasal verbs. Specifically, the study explores the impact of educational background (EFL, ESL), levels of proficiency (advanced, intermediate), and the inherent semantic complexity of phrasal verb (literal, semi-transparent, figurative) on the avoidance of phrasal verbs. More explicitly, the issues of this study could be summarized into the following general aims.

- (i) To explore the preference/avoidance of Arab ESL/EFL learners in using phrasal verb when an equivalent one-word expression is available.
- (ii) To reveal the influences of learners' educational background, proficiency levels, and the semantic complexity of phrasal verb on inducing avoidance.

- (iii) To investigate the role of exposure time to the native speaker environment on usage of phrasal verbs.
- (iv) To inquire into how different learning settings (EFL/ESL) affect the production of phrasal verb.
- (v) To explore the role of the environmental background in comprehending phrasal verb.

These general aims were further divided into eight main research questions, from which eight hypotheses were deduced.

## **5.2 Overview of the Main Results of the Study**

The data in this study, presented in Chapter IV, show that Arab English learners face difficulty in acquiring/learning English phrasal verbs. This could be attributed to the structural difference between Arabic and English (Arabic lacks phrasal verbs). Thus, Arab learners were expected to under-use phrasal verbs. Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in only (44.19%) of the cases presented to them. Unexpectedly, their performances had nothing to do with their preference for one-part verbs. They chose single verbs in (41.05%) of the presented cases.

However, the error data (14.76%) showed that the learners' performance and preference for phrasal verbs were influenced by language environment, level of proficiency, and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs. The ESL group had more educational advantages than the EFL learners in preference for phrasal verbs; ESL learners achieved higher scores than EFL learners. Also, level of proficiency had prominent advantages for learners' preference; advanced learners achieved higher scores

than intermediate learners. That means the degree of underproduction diminished among the advanced learners.

In addition, learner preference for phrasal verbs changes according to verb type. Arab learners tended to produce fewer figurative and semi-transparent verbs than literal phrasal verbs. Moreover, the result shows that time of exposures to the native environment influences learners' preferences for phrasal verb. Learners who spent more than one year in the L2 environment tend to score significantly higher in their preference for phrasal verbs than do those who spent from zero up to and including 12 months in the L2 environment.

In terms of phrasal verbs production, the study results indicated that the most serious learning difficulties with phrasal verbs occur in production, while learners seem to face fewer problems in comprehension. ESL learners had more advantages in comprehending phrasal verbs than did EFL learners.

In sum, the results show that the Arab learners in the study had a tendency to under-use English phrasal verbs. However, there was a developmental manifestation observed among the participants ranging from avoidance to nonavoidance based on their educational background (EFL vs. ESL), levels of proficiency (advanced vs. intermediate), and the semantic properties of phrasal verbs (literal, semi-transparent, and figurative).

An interesting question to ask is whether this under-use of phrasal verbs among the Arab learners is an indication of avoidance of the structure under investigation. This will be the focus of a discussion later in this chapter.



### 5.3 Research Questions

The present study was designed with the following eight main research questions, which will be examined in turn:

1. Do Arab learners avoid using phrasal verbs?
2. Do learners' performances reflect their preference for a one-word verb over its equivalent phrasal verb?
3. Do language learning environments (EFL vs. ESL) affect learners' preferences for phrasal verb?
4. Does longer exposure to the native speaker environment enhance ESL learners' usage of phrasal verbs?
5. Does learners' proficiency levels (intermediate vs. advanced) affect learners' usage of phrasal verbs?
6. Does the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs influence students' familiarity with phrasal verbs?
7. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their productive knowledge for the selected phrasal verbs (e.g., as demonstrated in the fill-in-the-blanks task)?
8. Is there a relationship between learners' preference and their comprehension for the selected phrasal verbs (e.g., in the sentence study task)?

To have a comprehensive discussion of whether Arab learners of English 'avoid' using phrasal verbs (question 1), I will leave this question to the end. Thus, I will start the discussion with research question two.

#### **5.4 The Influence of One-Word Verb Preference**

The second question asked whether Arab learners prefer one-word verbs over their equivalent phrasal verbs. It was suggested that Arab learners of English when choosing between phrasal verbs and their synonymous one-word verbs tend to prefer the one-word verb and avoid the phrasal verb. In their studies Dagut & Laufer (1985) reported that Hebrew-speakers preferred single-word verbs over equivalent phrasal verbs. Another study conducted by Sjöholm (1995) confirmed this observation; Finns prefer one-word verbs to their equivalent phrasal verbs. Ben Duhaish (2008), too, reported that 60.90% of the Arab learners preferred one-word verbs in the cases presented while only 36.98% were in favor of phrasal verbs. The researchers interpreted their data as avoidance. They attributed this avoidance to an L1-L2 structural difference; that is, as an indirect influence from L1 because the phrasal verb structure does not exist in their L1 (Hebrew, Finn, and Arabic).

Surprisingly, in the preference task (Part II), the reported data indicated that out of the 3600 possible verbs (120 participants  $\times$  30 = 3600), Arab learners (N = 120) who took the translation and multiple choice tests prefer phrasal verbs over their equivalent one-word verbs. They preferred phrasal verbs in 1601 (44.5%) cases, and single verbs in 1478 (41.1%) cases (see Table 24 in Chapter IV). In examining our null hypothesis (see Chapter IV section 4.3.3), a statistically significant difference was found in the preference of phrasal verbs over one-word verbs among Arab learners ( $\chi^2 = 68.5$ ;  $df = 2$ ;  $p < .001$ ). Therefore, the findings of this study do not support the conclusion of the studies cited above that proposed that the L1-L2 differences is a good predictor of

learners' preference for one-word verbs and avoidance of phrasal verbs. This issue will be further discussed below.

### **5.5 The Influence of Language Environment**

Research question three asked whether the language environment has an effect on learners' preference for phrasal verb versus one-word verbs. As mentioned in our justification for including our first hypothesis (see Chapter III, section 3.12), there is not sufficient evidence that educational backgrounds (language environments) can be an important factor influencing learners' preference for phrasal verbs versus one-word verbs. In their studies, Sjöholm (1995), Liao and Fukuya (2004), and Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) pointed out the importance of the social context in which the phrasal verb construction has been introduced. As mentioned in Chapter II, there are two types of L2 learning settings: the 'natural' and the 'educational' which are not mutually exclusive for an L2 learner. The educational setting refers to the formal learning that takes place through conscious attention to rules and principles in order to master the subject matter. The natural setting refers to the interaction of L2 learners with other speakers of L2 in different settings (e.g. workplace, home, media, street, market, etc.). Thus, in our study we examined two groups of learners. The first group was comprised of students studying in Saudi Arabia. Those learners experienced only formal education in English, and we labeled them the EFL group. The second group comprised of Arabic students studying in the United States of America. Learners in this setting are experiencing the target language (L2) in natural settings and/or educational settings as well.

Ben Duhaish (2008) concluded that the language environment had a significant impact on learners' preference. He reported that ESL learners had scored significantly higher ( $M = 14.54$ ) than EFL learners ( $M = 13.5$ ) in their preference for phrasal verbs. Thus, it is predicted that the scores of ESL learners in this study will be higher than the scores of EFL learners in terms of a preference for phrasal verbs since they have the advantage of experiencing phrasal verb in their natural setting. The natural setting was assumed to provide the learners with a threshold of input-rich experience that will make them rely less on one-word verbs. Similarly, it was reasonable to assume that EFL learners will be more inclined to choose one-word verbs due to their lack of familiarity with the phrasal verb construction in their native language.

In Hypothesis 1, it was assumed that EFL learners will score higher in preference for one-word verbs. Contrary to what had been expected, the reported data did not support our assumption. The EFL group's mean for single verb preference was 12.8, while that of the ESL group was 11.833, a difference of 0.967 points. This difference was statistically insignificant (see Tables 25, 26 in Chapter IV).

In term of phrasal verb preference, the reported result revealed that there were significant differences in phrasal verb preference between the EFL learners and ESL learners,  $F(1,358) = 18.885, p < .001$  (see Table 15 in Chapter IV). ESL learners had significantly higher scores ( $M = 14.75$ ) than EFL learners ( $M = 11.92$ ). More importantly, our analysis of error produced by both groups signified that EFL learners, who made significantly more errors than ESL learners, had greater difficulties in mastering phrasal verbs than ESL learners. This could be attributed to the lack of natural language input (see Chapter IV, Section 4.7).



To sum up, the data in this study provide definite support for the effect of the language learning environment on learners' preference for phrasal verbs. Further, the findings revealed that learners' preference or avoidance of the phrasal verb has nothing to do with its equivalent single verb. There was no statistically significant difference in one-word preference between the EFL and ESL learners. Instead, this preference/avoidance could be related to other factors such verb complexity or exposure to the target language environment.

### **5.6 The Influence of Long Exposure to Native Speaker Environment**

The third hypothesis addressed whether longer exposure to the native speaker environment will make ESL Arab learners more comfortable with the use of phrasal verbs. Sjöholm (1995), Liao and Fukuya (2004), and Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) also highlighted the importance of examining the impact of the quantity and quality of input on the acquisition of phrasal verbs. Sjöholm defined quantity of input as “the total time the subjects had been engaged in learning the target language” (p.220). Liao and Fukuya (2004) found that the amount of time the learners had been exposed to the L2 environment might be a contributing factor to learners' progress from avoidance to non-avoidance. In the Siyanova and Schmitt (2007) study, the exposure to the L2 environment was found to have no effect on the likelihood of using phrasal verbs. They attributed their findings to the fact that the participants did not vary much in term of their L2 exposure. They suggested “that the complexity of multi-word ...means that learners require an extremely long period of time to become comfortable with them,” and participants need at least exposure to “more than 12 months” to show an effect (p. 132).

Despite the fact that spending more than a year abroad was not enough to bring the non-native speakers to a native-like level, exposure to natural input was hypothesized to be crucial to a full understanding of English phrasal verbs. Thus, the ESL participants in this study were divided into three groups according to time spent in the United States environment: Group A was comprised of learners who spent from zero to three months ( $n = 10$ ) in the US; group B contained those who spent up to and including 12 months ( $n = 22$ ); and group C included participants who spent more than 12 months in the native environments ( $n = 28$ ) (see Table 10 in Chapter IV.)

The results showed that those L2 learners who spent over 12 months in an English-speaking environment had lower one-word verb preference scores than the other groups. Hypothesis 2 was supported by the data; a significant main effect was obtained concerning learners' time of exposure (see Table 28 in Chapter IV). Thus, a learner's long-term stay in an English-speaking environment of more than 12 months can lead to a high preference for phrasal verbs and a lower preference for one-word verbs.

Moreover, our analysis of error data in Chapter IV indicates that the longer period of time a learner spends in the L2 environments decreases the interaction of his/her L1 and that the anticipation of this separation will aid in establishment of an L1-independent L2-system. That is, the L1 influence tends to decrease with increased longer exposure to the target language environment (see Table 37).

### **5.7 The Influence of Learners' Level of Proficiency**

One of the necessary aspects that SLA accounts for is input. As mentioned earlier, the quantity and quality of input are very important conditions for both L1 and L2

acquisition (Sjöholm, 1995). Sjöholm relates what he terms “quantity input” to the total time learners spend engaging in learning L2. Quality input, however, is attributed to two different types of input. The first type of input is characterized as predominantly formal classroom teaching. The second type of input in addition to formal classroom teaching, also contains a fair amount of “natural” input that learners had been exposed to in some L2 environments. Cummins (1983) called this type of input basic interpersonal communication skills (BICS). In this study, the participants were divided into four subgroups (two advanced and two intermediate). The EFL participants were exposed to only the first type of input with the following qualification: EFL intermediate level learners who were non-English majors studying English in formal classrooms and EFL advanced learners who were English majors studying at the sophomore or senior levels or teaching English at the intermediate and secondary levels. The ESL intermediate group, however, were those who were enrolled in either 300- or 400-level classes at the IEP. The ESL advanced group contained Arab graduate and undergraduate CSU learners who passed the TOFEL test or had already graduated from the IEP. Proficiency level was hypothesized to have a significant effect on phrasal verb selection and use.

Research question 5 asked if the L2 learner’s proficiency level affects the use or selection of various phrasal verb types. Hypothesis 3 stated that learners’ preference for phrasal verbs will be influenced by their level of proficiency in L2. Data from the administered tests (Table 17 in Chapter IV) showed that intermediate level learners ( $M = 10.18$ ) of both language groups preferred phrasal verbs considerably less than advanced learners ( $M = 16.5$ ). A significant main effect was obtained,  $F(1, 358) = 92.771, p < .001$ . However, Table 18 indicated that the advanced ESL learners preferred phrasal



verbs significantly more ( $M = 17.5$ ) than the advanced EFL learners did ( $M = 15.1$ ). Similarly, the intermediate EFL learners preferred phrasal verbs significantly less ( $M = 8.7$ ) than the ESL intermediate group ( $M = 11.6$ ). See Figure 20 in Chapter IV. Indeed, it became evident that the learners' quality input influenced the differences of phrasal verb preferences between ESL and EFL learners. The paucity of natural input led to a decreased socio-cultural competence among EFL learners. Intermediate EFL learners' avoidance was marked with significantly more produced errors than ESL learners showed (see Chapter IV, Section 4.7). Somewhat surprisingly, however, Table 36 showed that advanced ESL learners were more inclined to produce errors than advanced EFL learners; could this indicate language incompetence among advanced ESL learners? In fact, here Schechter's view of avoidance was helpful. In her study, she showed that error analysis of student learning problems was often misdiagnosed because learners frequently avoided certain difficult L2 elements. The advanced ESL learners' errors were due to a high number of produced wrong phrasal verbs. This indicted that although the advanced learners had a high competence level in English, they lacked a full knowledge of phrasal verbs.

So far, this study's findings support previous studies' results. In Ben Duhish (2008), the advanced Arab learners produced more phrasal verbs ( $M = 14.32$ ) than the intermediate level learners ( $M = 13.71$ ). Liao and Fukuya (2004) found that intermediate Chinese learners avoid phrasal verbs. The advanced learners, although they did not avoid phrasal verbs, produced fewer phrasal verbs than native speakers. Overall, advanced learners, though producing or selecting fewer phrasal verbs than native speakers, use or select more phrasal verb than intermediate speakers do.



## 5.8 The Influence of Semantic Properties of Phrasal Verbs

The sixth research question dealt with the possible effects of the semantic properties of phrasal verbs on learners' preference for or avoidance of phrasal verbs. These properties are governed by the degree of dependency between the verb and its particle (see Chapter II section 2.1.4.2). Phrasal verbs were classified into (1) literal (transparent), where the verb retained its original meaning; (2) figurative (idiomatic), where the verb-particle combination formed a new and specific meaning that deviated considerably from the meanings of their individual parts; (3) semi-transparent, where the verb-particle combination is more transparent than that of idiomatic one but perhaps not as transparent as a literal phrasal verbs. In most cases, the particle specifies the verb to retain its universal common meaning or specifies a new dimension to the overall meaning that cannot be deduced from the combined meanings of its parts. Thus, we predicted that the idiomaticity of phrasal verbs is crucial and will influence Arab learners' preference/avoidance of these verbs.

Hypotheses 4 and 5 in this study dealt mainly with the effect of types of phrasal verbs. Hypothesis four was concerned with the differential effects of transparency and idiomaticity phrasal verbs on learners' performance. The study hypothesized that Arab learners would prefer literal phrasal verbs more than the other two types. Table 20 showed that a statistically significant difference was found among the three verb types (literal, semi-transparent, and figurative) in learners' preferences of phrasal verbs,  $F(2, 357) = 41.06527.064, p < .001$  (see Table 15). Table 19 revealed that Arab learners' preference for phrasal verbs changes according to verb type. They prefer literal phrasal

verbs over the other types ( $M = 5.68$ ). The mean for the semi-transparent phrasal verbs ( $M = 4.4$ ) was higher than the mean for the figurative ones ( $M = 3.26$ ).

Hypothesis 5, which is related to the previous hypothesis, stated that EFL learners would tend to choose figurative phrasal verbs proportionately less than ESL learners. This hypothesis was also strongly supported by the results of the study (see Tables 16, 19, and 31 in Chapter IV). The ESL group's mean for phrasal verbs preference ( $M = 14.6$ ) is higher than the EFL group's mean ( $M = 11.92$ ). Further, the ESL group had a significantly higher mean for use of figurative phrasal verbs ( $M = 3.82$ ) than the EFL ( $M = 2.7$ ). The data in Table 40 strongly supported this hypothesis. They showed that figurative phrasal verbs were, in term of errors, much difficult for EFL than ESL learners as compared with semi-transparent and literal phrasal verbs.

To sum up, Arab learners tend to choose literal phrasal verbs proportionately more often than figurative phrasal verbs. Figurative phrasal verbs tend to be less attractive to or even avoided by Arab learners, particularly EFL learners. This could be attributed to the semantic nature of figurative phrasal verbs and to the fact that EFL learners had insufficient training in understanding figurative phrasal verbs.

### **5.9 Preference for Phrasal Verbs and Productive Knowledge of Phrasal Verbs**

Another issue taken up in this study is whether there was a relationship between learners' preference and their productive knowledge (as measured by fill-in-the-blanks test) for the selected phrasal verbs. It was suggested that Arab learners educated in the USA who were affected by increased natural input would be more likely to supply a phrase such as 'the pizza' when asked to complete a sentence with a phrasal verb such as

‘eat up’ than Arab learners educated in their home country. The latter, it was assumed, would supply a phrase such as ‘the hill’, which implies a verb plus prepositional interpretation. As mentioned earlier, the dependency between the verb and its particle involved a dependency of a third category; that is the object NP (see Chapter II, Section 2.1.4.2).

Hypothesis 6 stated that a high preference for phrasal verbs, the task in Part II, entail a high number of the produced phrasal verb interpretation sentences in Part III (the fill-in-the-Blanks task). We predicted that high production for phrasal verbs would indicate nonavoidance. Data from Table 32 showed that Arab learners chose phrasal verbs in 54.6% of the presented cases, and produced phrasal verb interpretations (Part III) in 46% cases. The correlation between the preferred phrasal verbs and the produced phrasal verbs in the completion task was low ( $r = .47$ ). The paired or correlated samples  $t$ -test indicated that the students preferred phrasal verbs in Part II more than in Part III,  $t(159) = 21.57, p < .001, d = 1.71$ . The difference, although statistically significant, was much larger than typical using Cohen’s (1988) guidelines. This could be attributed, as mentioned in Chapter IV, to the missing responses of 54 participants. Comparison of the two groups indicated that the ESL group was significantly more likely to produce a sentence with a phrasal verb than the EFL group,  $t(79) = 3.79, p < .001$ .

Therefore, we may conclude that natural language knowledge of the input (ESL) increased learners’ awareness of phrasal verbs’ structure. Although Arab learners found it difficult to map the meaning of phrasal verb with their forms, ESL learners, apparently, were more able to process the form as a one-lexicon unit and not as two separated unit. That is to say, in fill-in-the-Blanks tasks the experienced group (ESL learners) was more



inclined to generate phrasal verb sentences ( $M = 5.4$ ) than the inexperienced group of EFL learners ( $M = 3.8$ ). This indicates that the learning environment plays a role in learning and acquiring phrasal verbs. More elaboration will be provided in section 5.12.

### **5.10 The Preference for and Comprehension of the Phrasal Verbs**

The final research question in this study dealt with the relationship between Arab learners' preference and their ability to understand the phrasal verb as evidenced in reading paraphrasing tasks. Paraphrasing tasks test learners' ability to connect form with meaning. Learners in this type of task have to be able to recognize which of several forms carry the same meaning. Thus, paraphrasing tasks would tap both structural knowledge (which structures carry the same or similar meaning), and vocabulary knowledge (which words carried same or similar meaning). Paraphrasing has been used in language testing to test both reading comprehension and knowledge of vocabulary and grammar.

In Hypothesis 7, it was proposed that the tendency for ESL learners to comprehend phrasal verbs will be higher than for EFL learners. Table 34 showed that ESL learners were better able to comprehend phrasal verbs than EFL learners. The mean of the scores for the ESL learners ( $M = 2.68$ ) differed significantly from the EFL learners' ( $M = 2.113$ ). These differences were more pronounced among the advanced learners than among the intermediate ones (see Table 14 in Chapter IV).

However, Table 13 indicated that Arab learners were more inclined to understand sentences with a verb plus preposition than with a phrasal verb. The ESL group produced more verb plus preposition interpretations ( $M = 3.54$ ) than phrasal verbs interpretations ( $M=2.4$ ). Similarly, the EFL group produced more verb plus preposition readings ( $M =$



2.38) than phrasal verbs reading ( $M= 2.11$ ). This could be attributed to the fact paraphrasing is essentially a bottom-up strategy because of the syntactic decoding it often involves rather than close analysis of the meaning of individual words.

Though the difference in scores for verb plus preposition and phrasal verbs in both groups appeared to be insignificant ( $\chi^2 = 1.36$ ;  $df=1$ ;  $p= .243$ ), it seemed that ESL participants' previous knowledge of phrasal verbs, coupled with their exposure to the natural L2 environment, aided them in understanding the phrasal verbs more easily than the EFL learners did.

### **5.11 Phrasal Verb and Avoidance**

One of the key ideas in this study was the concept of avoidance and the issue of when Arab learners tend to avoid phrasal verbs. The first research question asked whether Arab learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs. The analyzed data of this study indicated that Arab learners under-use English phrasal verbs in general. The reported results of the general performance of the instruments used ( $n$  of items = 50) showed that 52.66% of Arab learners' responses were phrasal verbs (with mean of scores,  $M = 26.3$ ; see Table 6 in Chapter IV).

In the preference task (Part II), the reported data indicated that 44.5% of Arab learners' responses were phrasal verbs, 41.1 % were single word verbs, and 14.4% of the responses were wrong or no answer (Tables 11 and 22 in Chapter IV).

However, looking at Arab learners' preference in a choice situation (multiple choice tests) between phrasal verbs and their equivalent one-word verbs, we found that 50.5% of Arab learners' responses were phrasal verbs, 38.92% were one-word verbs, and

10.58% were wrong or no answers. When we examined the Arab learners' performance in a situation where no choice was provided (the translation test), learners preferred one-word verbs over than phrasal verbs. They produced phrasal verbs in 32.4% of the cases, 45.3% of the responses were one-word verbs, and 22.25% were wrong or no answers.

As discussed in Chapter II, avoidance of phrasal verbs has been found in several studies and with different types of data. In her study, for example, McPartland (1983) found that Russian learners of English who were bilinguals (fluent in both Russian and English) used significantly fewer phrasal verbs. She also found that the phrasal verbs they used were verbs with a lower degree of idiomaticity. Yorio (1989) found the same pattern emerged in his written composition data. His advanced learners of English used somewhat fewer phrasal verbs than native speakers of English.

A similar result was noted by Dagut and Laufer (1985). They found that Hebrew learners of English in a choice situation between phrasal verbs and their synonymous one-word verbs tended to prefer the one-word verb. They interpreted their data as avoidance, i.e., as an indirect influence from L1, because the phrasal verb structure does not exist in Hebrew. In a later study, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) suggested that the structural interpretation made by Dagut and Laufer may not, after all, be entirely correct. They argued that a corollary to be derived from Dagut and Laufer's study is that native speakers of Germanic languages like Dutch "would not avoid English phrasal verbs, since both the English and the Dutch language system comprise phrasal verbs" (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989, p. 242). In a similar study to the one conducted by Dagut and Laufer, they found that Dutch learners of English tended to avoid phrasal verbs, probably because

“the phrasal verbs often had a specific, idiomatic meaning, whereas their equivalent one-word verb often had a more general prototypical meaning” (Sjöholm ,1995, p. 121).

In their 2004 study, Liao and Fukuya suggested that the avoidance or nonavoidance of phrasal verbs could be a manifestation of learners’ interlanguage development rather than caused by L1-L2 structural differences or similarities. They found advanced Chinese learners did not avoid phrasal verbs though they did produce fewer phrasal verbs than native English speakers. Intermediate learners, however, did avoid phrasal verbs. Ben Duhish’s (2008) data supported the assumption that L1-L2 structural difference between Arabic and English was “a good predictor of avoidance behaviors in second language acquisition concerning the area of phrasal verbs” (p.74). He found that Arab learners preferred one-word verbs over phrasal verbs. Do these various studies offer a way to seek an answer to the question in this study; if Arab learners avoid phrasal verbs?

Though the findings in this study did not support the conclusions of all the previous research studies that have shown that L1-L2 differences might motivate learners to develop a “natural tendency to avoid using what they do not properly understand and prefer the more familiar one-word verb” (Dagut & Laufer, 1985, p. 78), and from the reviewed studies on avoidance of phrasal verbs (see Chapter II), it seems that the concept of avoidance is not as straightforward as it might appear. Some studies equated avoidance with not approaching native-like performance (e.g., McPartland, 1983; Yorio, 1989).

Other studies equated the phenomena with the use of “one form rather than another with which they feel safer (grammatical or lexical), in order to express the intended meaning” (Laufer, 2000, p. 186) (see Chapter II, Section 2.4). A third category



looked at avoidance as “a form of underproduction not caused by an inability to master a particular L2 construction, but by the transfer of the frequency distribution and function patterns from the native language” (Kamimoto, et al., 1992, p. 253) (see Chapter 2.3.2). In fact, most of the studies detailed here, had shown that L1-L2 difference might motivate learners to develop a “natural tendency to avoid using what they do not properly understand and prefer the more familiar one-word verb” (Dagut & Laufer, 1985, p. 78).

Schachter’s (1974) original claim was that language difference leads to avoidance. However, Kleinmann (1977) and Seliger (1989) argued that true avoidance presupposes a choice between options. This entails that (1) the learner must know the avoided form, (2) the native speakers must identify the obligatory environments for the use of the form, and (3) there must exist in L1 a form that basically requires the same rule of realization as the avoided form (see Seliger, 1989 for more details and elaboration of those three conditions). According to Seliger, it is illogical to term as avoidance the non-use of a form which the learners have incomplete or no knowledge of from either their L2 learning experience or their L1.

Following Kleinmann (1977), phrasal verbs that were included in this study were comprehensively tested by 20 Arab learners. Each one was asked to choose the correct particle that would complete a sentence and indicate his/her degree of confidence about the choice on a five-point scale. (See Chapter III, Section 3.4 for more details). For the second condition, a preference test for those phrasal verbs was performed on 10 native speakers of English, which aided in modifying our lists of phrasal verbs into the current selected list. (See Appendix VI for the list of phrasal verbs included in this study). As for the existence of the phenomenon of avoidance in Arabic language, this study reviewed



two studies in which Arab learners were aware of avoidance. The first is Schachter's 1974 study in which Arab learners had the choice of using or avoiding relative clauses. The second was the case of active/passive preference investigated by Seliger (1989) (see Chapter II, Section 2.3.2).

Observations such as these make answering the first question seem quite confusing. But for the sake of understanding, I will answer this question in a different way. I will organize the discussion considering a key observation of the phenomenon; that is, approach-avoidance of a native goal (preference).

Though in the present study, the performances of the native speakers in similar elicitation formats were not recorded, our assumption—at least in a conservative way—was that the native speakers would score the maximum scores in every part of these tests. In fact, this is one of the limitations discussed in more depth below.

However, this study indicated that tendencies to approach (prefer) or avoid phrasal verbs may vary considerably based on the learner's level of proficiency, which changes over time. In order to sort out some of the complexities of the data presented so far, I made several more fine-grained analyses of the result of the study. In the present study, the two settings (EFL and ESL) were chosen to address four proficiency levels (Level 1 = EFL intermediate, level 2 = ESL intermediate, level 3 = EFL advanced, and level 4 = ESL advanced) as well as the amount of L2 exposure, derived through testing students in an English-speaking environment and an EFL environment.

Table 41 below represents the entire performance of the learners in their approach-avoidance of the goal (preference for phrasal verb). Our assumption was that

the native speakers would approach the goal by scoring the maximum scores (scores = 50) in these tests.

Table 41.  
*Mean of Scores for Total Performance of Approach-Avoidance of the Goal Based on Learning Level*

	N	Approach	Avoidance
Level 1	40	15	35
Level 2	40	22	28
Level 3	40	30.25	19.75
Level 4	40	37.1	12.9
Total	160	26.1	23.9

$\chi^2 = 22$ ;  $df = 3$ ;  $p < .001$

Not surprisingly, Table 41 shows that the mean of scores of avoidance for the intermediate levels (level 1 and level 2) are higher than their scores for approaching the goal. Their means of scores for avoidance are 35 and 28, while their means of scores for approaching the goal are 15 and 22, respectively. However, Table 41 shows that the scores of approaching the goal for both advanced language groups (Level 3 and Level 4) are higher than their avoiding scores. Their means of scores for approaching are 30.25 and 37.1, while their means of scores for avoidance are 19.75 and 12.9, respectively. The chi-square value indicates very significant differences between the four levels. It should be borne in mind, however, that both intermediate and advanced groups are taken from two different settings (EFL and ESL). Thus, a chi-square test showed statistically significant differences between all the levels for both settings. The statistically significant differences are compiled in Table 42 below.

Table 42.  
*Statistical Difference of Preference for Phrasal Verbs between Different Levels of Proficiency*

Settings	N	Levels	Difference
EFL	80	Level 1&Level 3	$\chi^2 = 9.09$ ; $df = 1$ ; $p = .003$
ESL	80	Level 2 & Level4	$\chi^2 = 9.30$ ; $df = 1$ ; $p = .002$
EFL & ESL	160	Level 1-4	$\chi^2 = 22$ ; $df = 3$ ; $p < .001$

Figure 34 below shows these differences in a graphic way. The diagram in Figure 34 indicates that learners' inclination to approach the goal in preference for phrasal verbs increases from one proficiency level to the next. Similarly, a learner's tendency to avoid phrasal verbs decreases from one proficiency level to the next. It is striking that the avoidance curve for both Level 1 and Level 2 is higher than the approach curve, but at later stages (levels 3 and 4) phrasal verbs were preferred more. Accordingly, the curve of approaching the goal was higher than the avoidance curve. Thus, learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs could be located in the early stages of learning. This finding also indicates that Arab learners who had received a greater quantity of input (that is, more advanced learners) would prefer phrasal verbs more often than learners who had received less input (intermediate learners).

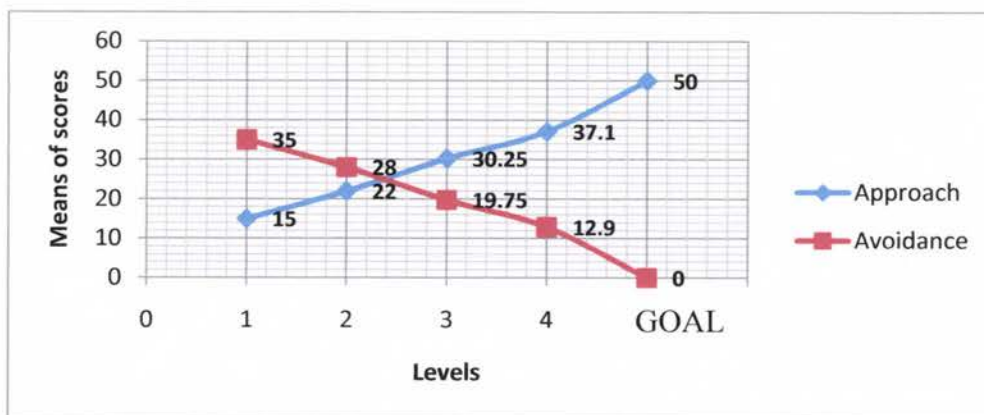


Figure 34. Arab Learners' Total Performance to Approach-Avoidance of the Phrasal Verbs Based on Level of Proficiency.

Although the number of years of instruction (formal classroom setting) is a crude measure of quantity of input, the EFL group with more average time spent studying English in their home countries did not perform better than the ESL group (Table 5 and Figure 7 in Chapter IV).

Table 43 below shows the impact of a second type of input-- the amount of natural input on learners' preference for phrasal verbs. This type of input was estimated by establishing the learners' average time spent in an English-speaking environment. This measure was accomplished by grouping the 160 Arab learners into three categories based on their L2 exposure time. The first was Group A (N = 91), those who had spent from zero to 3 months in the US; this includes all the EFL learners. The second was Group B (N = 31) comprised of ESL learners who spent more than 3 months and up to 12 months. Finally, Group C (N=38) was comprised of ESL learners who spent more than 12 months in the US. The ESL group averaged approximately seven months studying English in the United States and almost three years spent living in the United States.



Table 43.

*Mean of Scores for Total Performance of Approach-Avoidance of the Phrasal Verbs Based on L2 Exposure Time*

	N	Approach	Avoidance
A	91	23	27
B	31	25.03	24.97
C	38	36.2	13.8

$$\chi^2 = 7.95; df = 2; p = 0.019$$

The data in Table 43 indicates that Arab learners in groups A and B tended to avoid phrasal verbs. Their means of scores for avoidance were 27 and 24.97, respectively, while their means of scores for approaching the goal were 23 and 25.03, respectively. In fact, the increase of acceptance of phrasal verbs from Group A to Group B or the decrease for such acceptance was statistically insignificant ( $p = 0.7$ ). For group C, however, Arab learners were considerably (and significantly) more inclined to choose phrasal verbs ( $M = 36.2$ ) compared with the other two groups. Figure 35 below depicts these tendencies in a more vivid way.

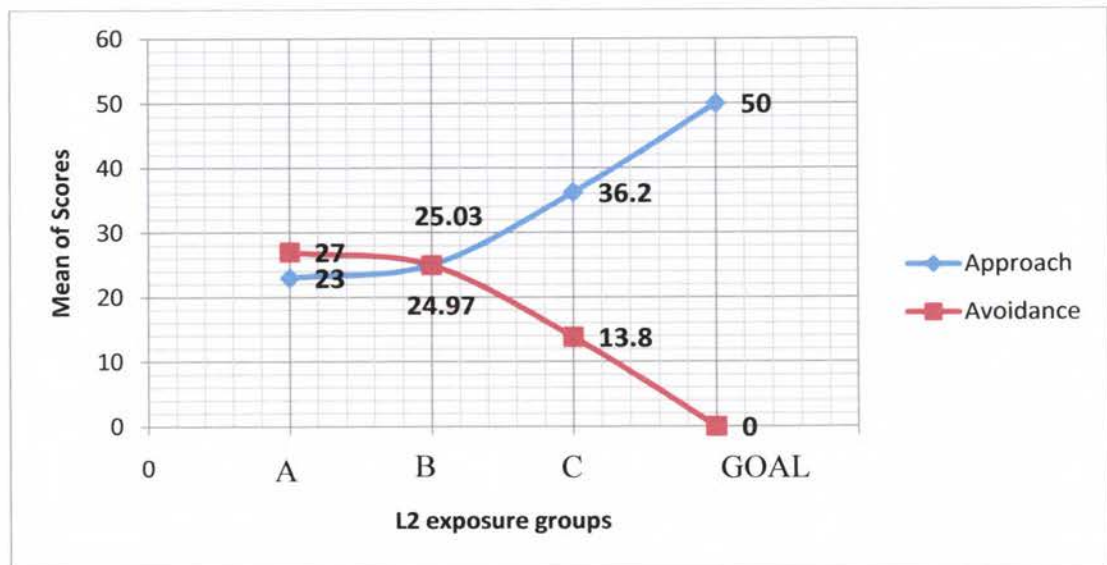


Figure 35.

Arab Learners' Total Performance in Approach-Avoidance of the Phrasal Verbs Based on L2 Exposure Time.

Figures 34 and 35 above do not suggest any overwhelmingly clear tendencies for learners' avoidance or nonavoidance of phrasal verbs. This is due to two main reasons. The first is the fact that what has been represented in those figures demonstrates learners' performance in three-part tests, one part of which (Part III) lacked a significant portion of data (see 4.3.3 in Chapter IV). The second is that most studies that dealt with avoidance of phrasal verbs equated avoidance with learners' preference for one-word verbs instead of phrasal verbs. Thus, it becomes very important to examine the approach-avoidance conflict for Part II of the tests administered.

Table 44 and Figure 36 below demonstrate the mean of scores for approach and avoidance for the four levels of Arab learners. Again, the mean of scores for avoidance of phrasal verbs for intermediate levels (Level 1 and Level 2) are higher than their scores for approaching the goal. Their means of scores for avoidance are 35 and 28, while their means of scores for approaching the goal are 15 and 22, respectively.

Table 44.

*Mean of Scores for the Four Levels of Arab Learners' Approach-Avoidance of Phrasal Verb based on Their Performance in Part II*

	N	Approach	Avoid
Level 1	30	8.7	12.43
Level 2	30	11.7	14.4
Level 3	30	15.13	13.2
Level 4	30	17.9	9.3
Total	120	13.4	12.3

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$$x^2 = 3.38; df = 3; p = 0.338$$

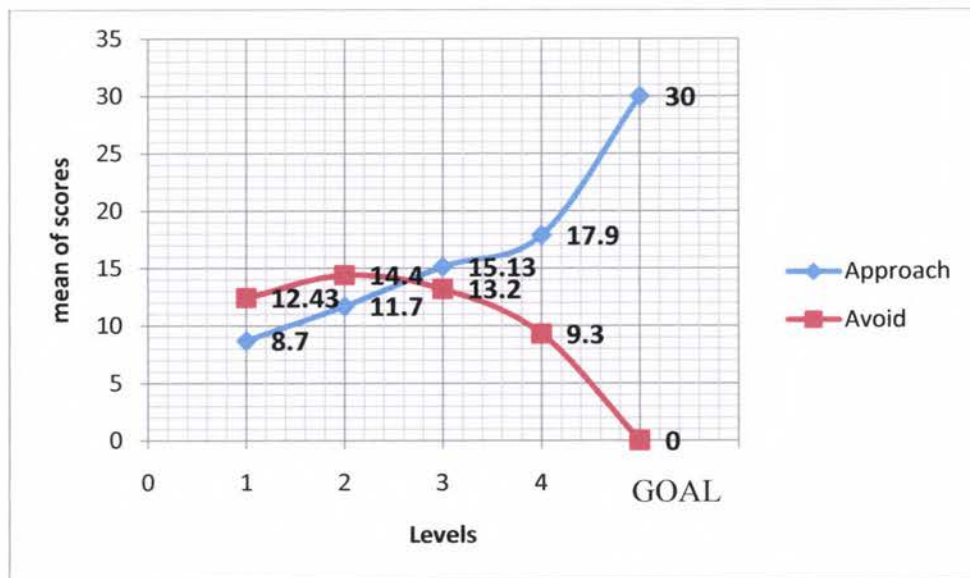


Figure 36.  
Mean of Scores for the Four Levels of Arab Learners' Approach-Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs Based on Their Performance in Part II.

Again, the diagram in Figure 36 indicates that a learner's tendency to avoid phrasal verbs decreases from the intermediate levels to the advanced levels, and the inclination to approach the goal of preference for phrasal verbs increases from one proficiency level to the next.

This finding could be somehow consistent with Figure 34 above. But since we implemented three types of phrasal verbs in Part II, an examination of the phrasal verb approach-avoidance of each type of phrasal verbs is important. Figures 37, 38, and 39 depict the tendencies of Arab learners to approach or avoid literal phrasal verbs, semi-transparent phrasal verbs, and figurative phrasal verbs.

Figure 37 shows that the preference for literal phrasal verbs among Arab learners is higher than their preference for one-word verbs. This tendency to approach the goal of preference for literal phrasal verb increases from one proficiency level to the next. Similarly, the tendency to avoid phrasal verbs decreases from one level to the next.

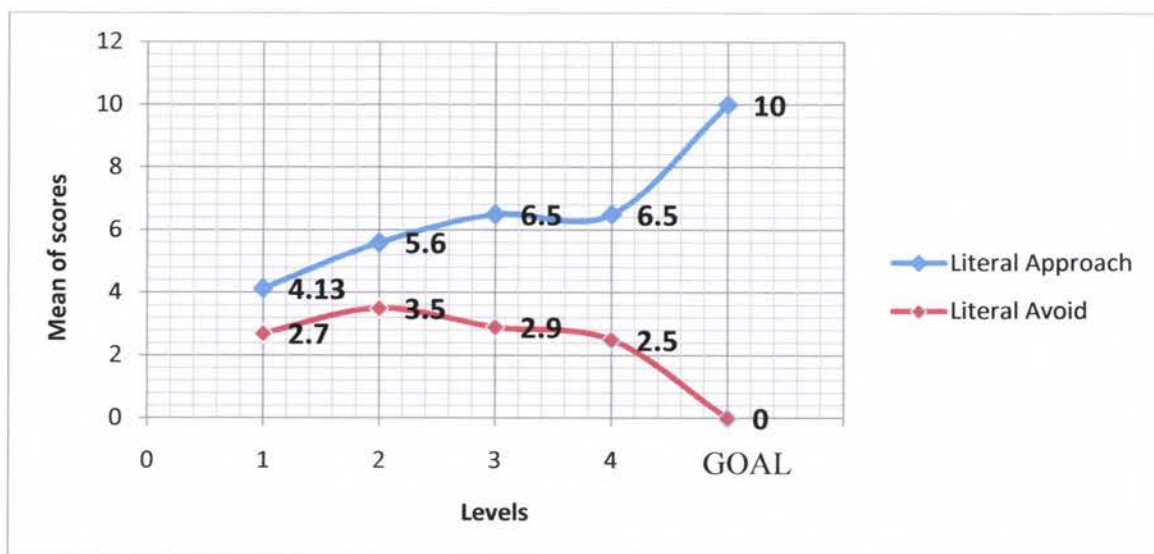


Figure 37.  
Mean of Scores for the Four Levels of Arab Learners' Approach-Avoidance of Literal Phrasal Verbs.

Overall, the diagram in Figure 37 suggests that Arab learners did not have any problem with processing literal phrasal verbs. However, they seem more inclined to prefer literal phrasal verbs than to avoid them.

In terms of semi-transparent phrasal verbs, the graph in Figure 38 indicates that learners' inclination to approach the goal in semi-transparent phrasal verbs preference increases from one proficiency level to the next. Moreover, the avoidance curve for both level 1 and level 2 is higher than the approach curve, but at later stages—for both advanced levels—semi-transparent phrasal verbs were preferred more often.



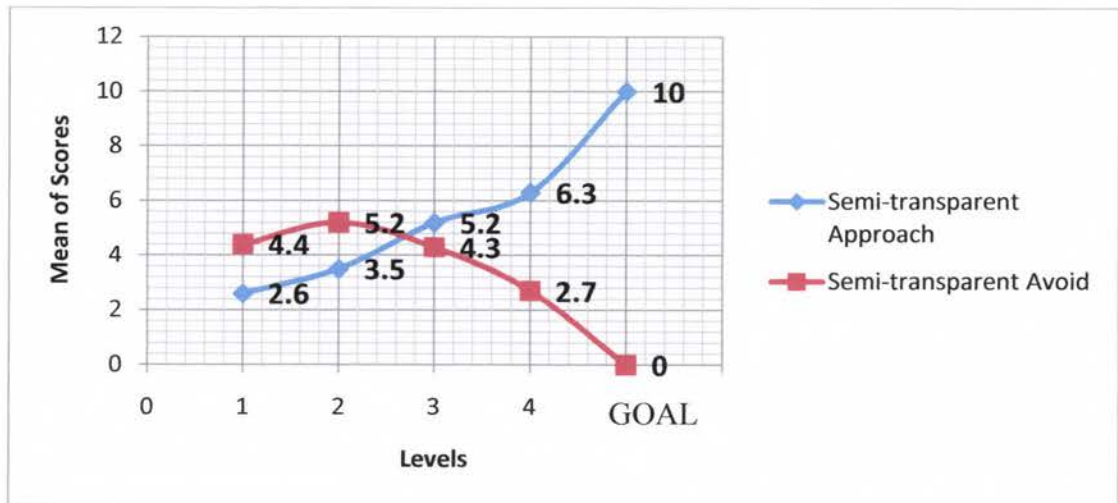


Figure 38.  
 Arab Learners' Approach-Avoidance of Semi-Transparent Phrasal Verbs.

Apparently, the curve of that describes approaching the goal of semi-transparent phrasal verbs is higher than the avoidance curve for the advanced levels and vice-versa for the intermediate levels (Levels 1 and 2). Thus, learners' avoidance of semi-transparent phrasal verbs could be located in the early stages of learning. This also indicates that Arab learners who had received a greater quantity of input (i.e., the more advanced learners) would prefer semi-transparent phrasal verbs more often than learners who had received less input (intermediate learners).

Finally, Figure 39 shows the approach-avoid preference for figurative phrasal verbs among Arab learners. The lines in Figure 38 indicate that learners' inclination to approach the goal in figurative phrasal verbs preference increases from one proficiency level to the next though it is pronounced at Level 4 (ESL Advanced). However, a learner's tendency to avoid phrasal verbs decreases from one proficiency level to the next. Again, it is immediately apparent that the avoidance curve for all levels except Level 4 is higher than the approach curve. At Level 4, figurative phrasal verbs were preferred more often.

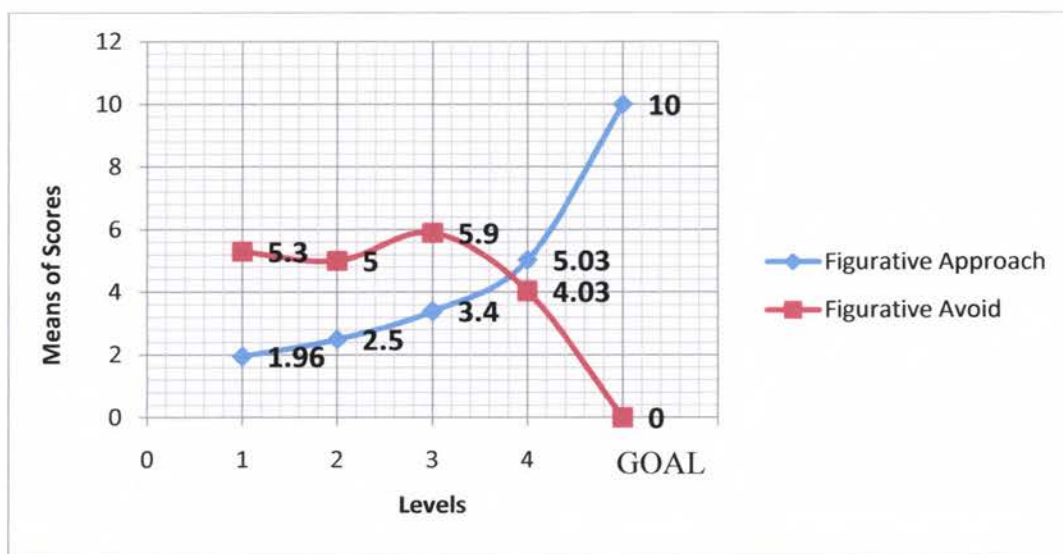


Figure 39.  
Arab Learners' Approach-Avoidance of Figurative Phrasal Verbs.

Accordingly, the curve of approaching the goal was higher than the avoidance curve at the advanced level. Thus, learners' avoidance of figurative phrasal verbs could be located in all stages of learning except Level 4. This indicates that Arab learners who had received a greater quantity of input, coupled with a long time exposure to the L2 environment, would prefer phrasal verbs more often than learners who had received less input (intermediate learners) or had had a shorter time of L2 exposure.

Clearly, the attitude of Arab learners toward phrasal verbs cannot be boiled down into avoidance or nonavoidance without taking into account the impact of proficiency level, L2 exposure, and the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs. Though the findings of this study did not support the conclusion of all the previous researches which have shown that L1-L2 distance might motivate learners to develop a "natural tendency to avoid using what they do not properly understand and prefer the more familiar one-word verb" (Dagut & Laufer, 1985, p. 78), from a general language distance point of view, it could

be expected that Arab EFL learners would have greater problems than ESL learners in the acquisition of English phrasal verbs

However, the result of this study did demonstrate that the structural difference in phrasal verbs correlate with learning difficulty. Considering the typological and structural dissimilarities of Arabic and English, Arab learners tended to commit a fairly high rate of errors in their phrasal verb usage of 14.4% —especially at the intermediate level (see Table 35 and 36). Moreover, the results of the study showed that Arab learners used more phrasal verbs in the multiple-choice tests than they did on the translation test (see Table 21). Also, intermediate learners tended to avoid all types of phrasal verbs with the exception of literal ones; it seemed that the Arab learners had a good command of the literal phrasal verbs. Both advanced and intermediate learners tended to avoid figurative phrasal verbs with the exception of advanced learners with longer exposure to the L2 environments, who tended to prefer more figurative phrasal verbs than their equivalent one-word verbs (see Figure 39).

Arab learners' underproduction of phrasal verbs could be interpreted as an avoidance phenomenon at the early stages of learning (intermediate levels), whether in a native speaker environment or not, or as nonavoidance at the later learning stages (advanced levels). These findings support previous studies' results. In the Ben Duhish 2008 study, the advanced Arab learners produced more phrasal verbs ( $M = 14.32$ ) than the intermediate level learners ( $M = 13.71$ ). Liao and Fukuya (2004) found the intermediate Chinese learners avoid phrasal verbs. The advanced learners, while not avoiding phrasal verbs, did produce fewer phrasal verbs than the native speakers did.



It also seems plausible to conclude that EFL learners faced the greatest problems at the early stages of learning because the category phrasal verb does not exist in Arabic. Advanced learners, however, with longer exposure to the L2 environment, tend not to avoid phrasal verbs. Finally, the figurative phrasal verbs seemed to be less transferable than the literal and semi-transparent phrasal verbs, and the one-word verbs were more preferred by EFL learners than by ESL learners.

According to Sjöholm (1995), there is a strong connection between the notion of learnability and transferability of lexical items. A general claim is that linguistically unmarked features of L1 will tend to transfer, whereas marked L1 features will not (see Eckman 1977 and Kellerman 1977). Sjöholm asserted that “at lexical level, the distinction unmarked/marked roughly corresponds to the similar distinctions core/non-core and prototypical/non-prototypical meanings” (1995, p.119). He described core items as those “that are the most basic and simple and possess properties that are generic rather than specific” (p. 119). Therefore, for transfer to occur in the first place, the occurrence of linguistic equivalence between L1 and L2 must be established.

Kellerman (1983) argues that two factors act as constraints or triggers of transfer. The first is the learners’ perception of language distance (learners’ psychotypology) that influences the nature of their L2 utterances and their general willingness to transfer. Thus, “perceived closeness between any two (or more) languages was believed to be favorable to transfer” (Sjöholm, 1995, p.119).

The second factor for Kellerman is the speaker’s own perceptions of the structure of his or her L1 as a “transferability constraint”. Kellerman argues that if an L1 feature was perceived as “infrequent, irregular, semantically or structurally opaque, or in any



other way exceptional,” or what he called *psycholinguistically* marked, “then its transferability will be inversely proportional to its degree of markedness” (1983, p.117). According to Kellerman, the psycholinguistically marked L1 features, which as a rule are treated as language-specific relative to other structures in L1, are not easily transferable to a given L2. On the other hand, L1 features that are treated as language-neutral, are readily transferable to L2 (Kellerman, 1983, p.117).

This explains why Arab learners tended to prefer English literal phrasal verbs to their equivalent one-word verbs and to avoid the figurative phrasal verbs. Learners could be transferring the structure of verb-plus-preposition of their Arabic language into English literal phrasal verbs. Although Hailal (1994) indicated that Arabic verb-plus-preposition combinations could not be considered phrasal verbs (see Chapter II, Section 2.1.9), he added that “the Arabic verb + preposition often keeps most of its meaning,” (p.145) and the Arabic preposition preserves a degree of its physical meaning.

### **5.12 Limitation of the Study**

The study was limited by the inefficiency of the elicitation formats applied in this study. As discussed earlier, 54 participants did not respond to Part III (fill-in-the-blanks task), which could result in serious shortcomings in the analysis preference for phrasal verbs and productive knowledge of this structure.

Also, the two experimental groups (ESL and EFL) were derived from small sample population not representative of all Arab learners; accordingly, the conclusions drawn from this study cannot be carried over to other groups of students with different characteristics and language backgrounds. It is also important to note that the

experimental groups were lacked a representative sample of female Arab learners, which was another serious shortcoming in this study.

Another limitation of the study concerns the documentation of native speakers' preference for phrasal verbs. The study was restricted to a pilot test of the phrasal verbs used in the study on 10 CSU students in order to find the baseline of native-speaker judgment.

Further, the technical problems encountered with the use of the traditional paper-based tests (interaction among learners, copying, etc.), reduced the efficiency of the results obtained. The present study was based on small numbers of phrasal-verb items and a small population sample. A larger population and more items would make it more feasible to generalize the results.

Without strong statistical evidence, the findings of the study are not generalizable to a larger student population. Moreover, given that the present study was only a brief experiment, I was not able to measure aspects such as learners' motivation and anxiety. Also, because the study was mainly focused on avoidance of phrasal verbs in preference situations, there were no serious measures of the production abilities in speaking or writing.

Finally, the study was not concern itself with the processes of learning phrasal verbs (implicit or explicit) of the two experimental groups. Nonetheless, the results of the study, I believe, have great value for the ESL research community with regard to the role of natural input in and time of exposure to the L2 environment. The study offered interesting clues as to the success of advanced ESL students in learning and preferring phrasal verbs, including the figurative ones.

### **5.13 Suggestions for Future Research**

Experimental research in the future could be planned to overcome the limitations of the present study. Future research could include a larger sample in order to ensure more balance of learners' educational background and time of exposure to the L2 environment. A larger sample drawn from a heterogeneous population of students (including both male and female) would also increase the possibility of achieving statistical significance in the results and addressing gender role in acquisition of phrasal verbs and idioms. Sjöholm (1995) indicates that the acquisition of idioms seems somehow to be connected with such theoretical concepts as learnability, transferability, and avoidance (or non-use). A study focusing on simple and frequent idiom-types such as phrasal verbs could be a contribution to our general understanding of SLA.

As mentioned in the limitation section above, a study with no record of the performance of a representative sample of the native-speaker population cannot be a conclusive source from which to draw inferences to discover whether advanced Arabic speakers learning English phrasal verbs will use multi-word verbs in a way similar to native speakers. A study similar to the present one could be carried out on native-speakers of English to see if there are differences between the native and the advanced ESL learners in their use of phrasal verbs.

In terms of the elicitation format and to gain better control over some of the methodological problems that cropped up in the present study, I suggest carrying out a fairly extensive study applying one type of task (one test type). A multiple-choice test would have a great advantage in this type of investigation for it only takes 20 minutes to administer and is quite easy to control.



Finally, it would be interesting in future research, to focus on the way phrasal verbs have been taught. This could be achieved by constructing an experimental study examining using two different approaches to teaching (explicit deductive teaching vs. implicit inductive teaching) in order to determine which method is indeed valuable in helping adult Arab learners to learn and master phrasal verbs quickly and effectively. Also, further research is needed to determine the specific cognitive processes involved Arab speakers' learning of phrasal verbs.

#### **5.14 Conclusions**

The present study certainly does not answer all of the questions of how and why Arab learners avoid phrasal verbs. However, the findings do not support the conclusions of previous studies that have shown that L1-L2 differences might motivate learners to develop a genuine avoidance; Arab learners in this study did not avoid literal phrasal verbs. As a matter of fact, in a choice situation (i.e. multiple-choice tests), they preferred phrasal verbs, in contrast to their behavior on the translation test. Second, level of proficiency plays a significant role in the avoidance of phrasal verbs. Arab learners tend to avoid phrasal verbs at the early stages of learning (i.e., intermediate levels), whether in a native speaker environment or not. At later learning stages (i.e., advanced levels), they tend not to avoid phrasal verbs. Finally, the semantic complexity of English phrasal verbs could be the major reason for Arab learners' avoidance. Both advanced and intermediate learners tend to avoid figurative phrasal verbs.

The most important conclusion I can draw from this study is that Arab learners who received considerable natural language input (more than 12 month) tended to show



the most native-like performance. Advanced Arab learners who spent over 12 months in an English environment did not avoid figurative phrasal verbs and they had lower one-word verb scores than the other groups. Thus, the study offers interesting clues to the success of advanced ESL students in learning and mastering phrasal verbs including the figurative ones.

This study has confirmed that avoidance is not a straightforward phenomenon. Perhaps one may think that not approaching native-like performance is a manifestation of avoidance. Another viewpoint interprets the preference of one-word verbs over the phrasal verbs as avoidance. But avoidance could be a form of underproduction caused by a transfer of the frequency distribution and function patterns from the native language. It is hard, then, to overgeneralize about the avoidance of phrasal verbs based exclusively on the evidence that the present study provides. But the impact of educational background, proficiency level, phrasal verbs type, exposure to the L2 environment, and test type on Arab learners' avoidance behavior must not be underestimated.

One important question that arises in thinking about avoidance of phrasal verbs is why is there such a heavy focus on avoidance of phrasal verbs? One reason for this centrality is that avoidance is amazingly pervasive throughout the language learning/acquisition process. One finds it operating in both obvious and unexpected ways, influencing negatively the production of the preferred linguistic structure. As a result, the learner is blocked from sounding as natural and native-like as possible because the learner tends to displace phrasal verbs with their equivalent one-word verbs.

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## Appendix I: Demographic Questioner

Please respond to the following by either choosing a predefined answer or writing your own answer.

1. Gender: Male  Female
2. Nationality \_\_\_\_\_ 3. Native Language \_\_\_\_\_
4. What is the highest level of education that you have completed?
  - a. High School
  - b. Bachelor Degree
  - c. MA. Degree
  - d. Ph.D. Degree
  - e. Other (please specify) \_\_\_\_\_
4. Years of education in home country: \_\_\_\_\_ Years, \_\_\_\_\_ months
5. Time studying English in home country: \_\_\_\_\_ Years, \_\_\_\_\_ months
6. Time in the U.S. A.: \_\_\_\_\_ Years, \_\_\_\_\_ months
7. Time studying English in U.S.A.: \_\_\_\_\_ Years, \_\_\_\_\_ months
8. Other languages spoken: \_\_\_\_\_
9. Have you ever taken the TOEFL test?  Yes  No  
 If yes, what was your total score? \_\_\_\_\_ What was your reading score? \_\_\_\_\_
10. How many hours per week do you spend using English outside class to ...  
 (Circle as many as you can)

Do homework	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Prepare for quizzes and exams	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Listen to language tapes	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Read for fun	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Listen to music	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Watch TV, videos & movies	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Talk to friends	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Talk to tourists	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Talk to family members	0	1-2	3-4	5-6
Other				

## Appendix II: Test Part II

### Multiple-Choice Test 1

This part has 30 short dialogues. Please read and complete each dialogue by selecting ONLY ONE appropriate response that you would use in your daily conversation. It is possible to have more than one correct answer, but choose the one that is most natural to you. Below is an exemplar.

**Example:**

A: I heard that the company is sending you to Germany again.

B: Yes, It's been a long time since I was there, so I guess it's time to \_\_\_\_ on my German.

- a. abolish
- b. revise
- c. brush up ✓
- d. calm down

1. A: When the weather is nice I love to \_\_\_\_ early.  
B: Me, too. It's good to enjoy the morning air.  
a. arise                      b. release                      c. get up                      d. let down
2. A: I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to say those things. I was just angry.  
B: Just \_\_\_\_\_. I don't want to see you for a while.  
a. leave                      b. confuse                      c. go away                      d. mix up
3. A: Welcome to my house. Please \_\_\_\_\_?  
B: Oh! Thanks; maybe next time. I'm in hurry now.  
a. come in                      b. smoke                      c. enter                      d. speak up
4. A: Don't \_\_\_\_\_ those empty cans and bottles.  
B: Why not mom?  
A: I goanna recycle them.  
a. insert                      b. pay up                      c. throw away                      d. discard
5. (In a restaurant)  
A: Excuse me, could I get some more soda when you've got a chance  
B: Sure. Would you like me to \_\_\_\_\_ these plates first?  
a. remove                      b. take away                      c. mix                      d. drop in

6. A: Hi Ali, did the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ the test papers?  
 B: Yes, she did.  
 a. return      b. show up      c. arrive      d. give back
7. A: Where is the injured man?  
 B: He has been \_\_\_\_\_ by the ambulance.  
 a. turned      b. carried away      c. removed      d. go off
8. A: Why did people ----- in the courtroom yesterday?  
 B: Out of respect cause the judge entered the room.  
 A: Oh, I see.  
 a. stand up      b. rise      c. support      d. make up
9. A: Did the police arrest the thief?  
 B: Unfortunately, he \_\_\_\_\_ when the police arrived.  
 a. ran away      b. held up      c. met      d. escaped
10. A: Who did \_\_\_\_\_ the prizes at the Speech Day yesterday?  
 B: Mrs. Wilson.  
 a. distribute      b. go off      c. give away      d. turn
11. A: What is the matter?  
 B: \_\_\_\_\_ the car! We're leaving now.  
 a. get in      b. go away      c. appear      d. enter
12. A: Who else wants to register for our next field trip?  
 B: Could I \_\_\_ Sam: He would like to go on this field trip with us.  
 A: Sure.  
 a. register      b. expel      c. sign up      d. go on
13. A: Did you hear about yesterday bombing?  
 B: That was a disaster. Fortunately, there weren't that many people in the building when the bomb \_\_\_\_\_.  
 a. went off      b. kicked out      c. exploded      d. replied
14. A: I was late for my work yesterday, so I \_\_\_\_\_ a story about traffic jam.  
 B: But did your boss believe it at all?  
 A: I'm not sure.  
 a. invented      b. made up      c. followed      d. came down
15. A: Do you want to hear what happened to them?  
 B: Absolutely. Tell me the entire story from beginning to end. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ anything.  
 a. omit      b. believe in      c. leave out      d. stop

16. A: Dad when I will grow into a big boy?  
 B: \_\_\_your dinner and then you will grow into a big boy.  
 a. Finish      b. Eat up      c. Run out      d. Insert
17. A: -----your shoes.  
 B: What's the matter?  
 A: You're getting mud on the carpet.  
 a. remove      b. save up      c. cancel      d. take off
18. A: If you want to be healthy again, you have at least to \_\_\_ smoking.  
 B: I can't promise. But I'll try.  
 a. cut down      b. close      c. turn off      d. reduce
19. A: You and your big mouth!  
 B: Why! What did I do?!  
 A: We're having a great time until you \_\_\_ this silly issue about not having a vacation this year.  
 a. mentioned      b. brought up      c. got up      d. escaped
20. A: would you mind \_\_\_ the water in the building?  
 B: Why!  
 A: Cause the plumber wants to do some repairs.  
 a. stopping      b. holding      c. shutting off      d. turning on
21. A: How do you like David?  
 B: He is one of those few people who never -----his friends.  
 a. solves      b. disappoints      c. lets down      d. carries on
22. A: She did it again!  
 B: What is the matter?  
 A: My wife forgot to -----the fire when she finished coking.  
 a. break into      b. foresee      c. put out      d. extinguish
23. A: Robert and Paul were fighting on the street this morning.  
 B: So I heard. Was it serious?  
 A: They didn't stop until Paul twisted his ankle and had to \_\_\_\_\_.  
 a. realize      b. give in      c. surrender      d. look up
24. A: How is your business going?  
 B: Pretty good, though I have to \_\_\_ several good offers because I am just short of time.  
 a. offend      b. turn down      c. cheer up      d. reject
25. A: I owe Mark \$500.  
 B: I owe him \$100.  
 A: I hope I don't \_\_\_ him before I get paid on Monday.  
 B: me too.



a. go over      b. run into      c. meet      d. applaud

26. A: Do you notice that Mark likes to \_\_\_\_\_?

B: Yes, but I don't think that he has anything to be proud of.

a. lie      b. boast      c. show off      d. break out

27. A: Did you hear the news?

B: What!

A: Neeta's decided to \_\_\_\_\_ the wedding.

B: Oh! What a pity.

a. call off      b. cancel      c. report      d. write up

28. A: Why don't you be like your brother?

B: In what matter!

A: Instead of eating lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays go to the recreation center to \_\_\_\_\_.

a. work out      b. exercise      c. put in      d. reduce

29. A: If you don't believe me, talk to John. He'll -----my story.

B: sure I will.

a. support      b. back up      c. get in      d. invent

30. A: How was the attendance at the conference yesterday?

B: Not bad; 70 \_\_\_\_\_.

a. removed      b. arrived      c. turned up      d. went on

## Multiple-Choice Test 2

This part has 30 short dialogues. Please read and complete each dialogue by selecting ONLY ONE appropriate English translation of the Arabic word(s) in parentheses that you would use in your daily conversation. It is possible to have more than one correct answer, but choose the one that is most natural to you. Below is an exemplar.

### Example:

A: I heard that the company is sending you to Germany again.

B: Yes, It's been a long time since I was there, so I guess it's time to \_\_\_\_\_ my German. (يراجع)

- a. abolish
- b. revise
- c. brush up ✓
- d. calm down

1. A: When the weather is nice I love to \_\_\_\_\_ early. (استيقظ)  
B: Me, too. It's good to enjoy the morning air.  
a. arise                      b. release                      c. get up                      d. let down
2. A: I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to say those things. I was just angry.  
B: Just \_\_\_\_\_. I don't want to see you for a while. (أغرب عني)  
a. leave                      b. confuse                      c. go away                      d. mix up
3. A: Welcome to my house. Please \_\_\_\_\_? (تفضل)  
B: Oh! Thanks; maybe next time. I'm in hurry now.  
a. come in                      b. smoke                      c. enter                      d. speak up
4. A: Don't \_\_\_\_\_ those empty cans and bottles. (يتخلص من)  
B: Why not mom?  
A: I goanna recycle them.  
a. insert                      b. pay up                      c. throw away                      d. discard
5. (In a restaurant)  
A: Excuse me, could I get some more soda when you've got a chance  
B: Sure. Would you like me to \_\_\_\_\_ these plates first? (أزِيل)  
a. remove                      b. take away                      c. mix                      d. drop in
6. A: Hi Ali, did the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ the test papers? (يُعِيد)  
B: Yes, she did.

- a. return      b. show up      c. arrive      d. give back
7. A: Where is the injured man?  
B: He has been \_\_\_\_\_ by the ambulance. (حُمل)  
a. turned      b. carried away      c. removed      d. go off
8. A: Why did people \_\_\_\_\_ (يقفوا) in the courtroom yesterday?  
B: Out of respect cause the judge entered the room.  
A: Oh, I see.  
a. stand up      b. rise      c. support      d. make up
9. A: Did the police arrest the thief?  
B: Unfortunately, he \_\_\_\_\_ (هرب) when the police arrived.  
a. ran away      b. held up      c. met      d. escaped
10. A: Who did \_\_\_\_\_ (يوزع) the prizes at the Speech Day yesterday?  
B: Mrs. Wilson.  
a. distribute      b. go off      c. give away      d. turn
11. A: What is the matter?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (ادخل) the car! We're leaving now.  
a. get in      b. go away      c. appear      d. enter
12. A: Who else wants to register for our next field trip?  
B: Could I \_\_\_\_\_ (أسجل) Sam: He would like to go on this field trip with us.  
A: Sure.  
a. register      b. expel      c. sign up      d. go on
13. A: Did you hear about yesterday bombing?  
B: That was a disaster. Fortunately, there weren't that many people in the building when the bomb \_\_\_\_\_ (انفجرت).  
a. went off      b. kicked out      c. exploded      d. replied
14. A: I was late for my work yesterday, so I \_\_\_\_\_ (يولف) a story about traffic jam.  
B: But did your boss believe it at all?  
A: I'm not sure.  
a. invented      b. made up      c. followed      d. came down
15. A: Do you want to hear what happened to them?  
B: Absolutely. Tell me the entire story from beginning to end. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يهمل) anything.  
a. omit      b. believe in      c. leave out      d. stop
16. A: Don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يلتهم) the whole cake. Leave some for your sister.  
B: But mother, I want to grow into a big boy.  
A: Finish your dinner and then you will grow into a big boy.

- a. Finish      b. Eat up      c. Run out      d. Insert
17. A: \_\_\_\_\_ (اخلع) your shoes.  
 B: What's the matter?  
 A: You're getting mud on the carpet.  
 a. remove      b. save up      c. cancel      d. take off
18. A: If you want to be healthy again, you have at least to \_\_\_\_\_ (نقلل) smoking.  
 B: I can't promise. But I'll try.  
 a. cut down      b. close      c. turn off      d. reduce
19. A: You and your big mouth!  
 B: Why! What did I do?!  
 A: We're having a great time until you \_\_\_\_\_ this silly issue about not having a vacation this year. (ذكرت)  
 a. mentioned      b. brought up      c. got up      d. escaped
20. A: would you mind \_\_\_\_\_ the water in the building? (وقف/قطع)  
 B: Why!  
 A: Cause the plumber wants to do some repairs.  
 a. stopping      b. holding      c. shutting off      d. turning on
21. A: How do you like John?  
 B: He is one of those few people who never \_\_\_\_\_ his friends. (يخذل)  
 a. solves      b. disappoints      c. lets down      d. carries on
22. A: She did it again!  
 B: What is the matter?  
 A: My wife forgot to \_\_\_\_\_ the fire when she finished coking. (تطفئ)  
 a. break into      b. foresee      c. put out      d. extinguish
23. A: Robert and Paul were fighting on the street this morning.  
 B: So I heard. Was it serious?  
 A: They didn't stop until Paul twisted his ankle and had to \_\_\_\_\_. (يستسلم)  
 a. realize      b. give in      c. surrender      d. look up
24. A: How is your business going?  
 B: Pretty good, though I have to \_\_\_\_\_ several good offers because I am just short of time. (يرفض)  
 a. offend      b. turn down      c. cheer up      d. reject
25. A: I owe Mark \$500.  
 B: I owe him \$100.  
 A: I hope I don't \_\_\_\_\_ him before I get paid on Monday. (يصادف)  
 B: me too.  
 a. go over      b. run into      c. meet      d. applaud



26. A: Do you notice that Mark likes to \_\_\_\_? (يتباهى)  
 B: Yes, but I don't think that he has anything to be proud of.  
 a. lie                      b. boast                      c. show off                      d. break out
27. A: Did you hear the news?  
 B: What!  
 A: Neeta's decided to \_\_\_\_ the wedding. (تلغي)  
 B: Oh! What a pity.  
 a. call off                      b. cancel                      c. report                      d. write up
28. A: Why don't you be like your brother?  
 B: In what matters!  
 A: Instead of eating lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays go to the recreation center to \_\_\_\_\_. (يتمرن)  
 a. work out                      b. exercise                      c. put in                      d. reduce
29. A: If you don't believe me, talk to John. He'll \_\_\_\_ my story. (يؤيد)  
 B: sure I will.  
 a. support                      b. back up                      c. get in                      d. invent
30. A: How was the attendance at the conference yesterday?  
 B: Not bad; 70 people \_\_\_\_\_. (حضروا)  
 a. removed                      b. arrived                      c. turned up                      d. went on

## Translation Test 1

This part has 30 short dialogues. Please read each dialogue and translate the underline words into Arabic that you use in your daily conversation. Below is an exemplar.

### Example:

A: I heard that the company is sending you to Germany again.

B: Yes, It's been a long time since I was there, so I guess it's time to brush up my German. (يراجع)

1. A: When the weather is nice I love to get up early. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Me, too. It's good to enjoy the morning air.
2. A: I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to say those things. I was just angry.  
B: Just go away I don't want to see you for a while. \_\_\_\_\_
3. A: Welcome to my house. Please come in. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Oh! Thanks; maybe next time. I'm in hurry now.
4. A: Don't throw away those empty cans and bottles. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Why not mom?  
A: I goanna recycle them.
5. (In a restaurant)  
A: Excuse me, could I get some more soda when you've got a chance  
B: Sure. Would you like me to take away these plates first? \_\_\_\_\_
6. A: Hi Ali, did the teacher give back the test papers? \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Yes, she did.
7. A: Where is the injured man?  
B: He has been carried away by the ambulance. \_\_\_\_\_
8. A: Why did people stand up in the courtroom yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Out of respect cause the judge entered the room.  
A: Oh, I see.
9. A: Did the police arrest the thief?  
B: Unfortunately, he ran away when the police arrived. \_\_\_\_\_
10. A: Who did give away the prizes at the Speech Day yesterday? \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Mrs. Wilson.

11. A: What is the matter?  
B: ***Get in*** the car! We're leaving now. \_\_\_\_\_
12. A: Who else wants to register for our next field trip?  
B: Could I ***sign up*** Sam: He would like to go on this field trip with us. \_\_\_\_\_  
A: Sure.
13. A: Did you hear about yesterday bombing?  
B: That was a disaster. Fortunately, there weren't that many people in the building when the bomb ***went off***. \_\_\_\_\_
14. A: I was late for my work yesterday, so I ***made up*** a story about traffic jam.  
\_\_\_\_\_  
B: But did your boss believe it at all?  
A: I'm not sure.
15. A: Do you want to hear what happened to them?  
B: Absolutely. Tell me the entire story from beginning to end. Don't ***leave out*** anything. \_\_\_\_\_
16. A: Don't ***eat up*** the whole cake. Leave some for your sister. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: But mother, I want to grow into a big boy.  
A: Finish your dinner and then you will grow into a big boy.
17. A: ***Take off*** your shoes. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: What's the matter?  
A: You're getting mud on the carpet.
18. A: If you want to be healthy again, you have at least to ***cut down*** smoking. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: I can't promise. But I'll try.
19. A: You and your big mouth!  
B: Why! What did I do?!  
A: We're having a great time until you ***brought up*** this silly issue about not having a vacation this year. \_\_\_\_\_
20. A: would you mind ***shutting off*** the water in the building?  
B: Why!  
A: Cause the plumber wants to do some repairs.
21. A: How do you like John?  
B: He is one of those few people who never ***lets down*** his friends. \_\_\_\_\_
22. A: She did it again!  
B: What is the matter?

- A: My wife forgot to ***put out*** the fire when she finished coking. \_\_\_\_\_
23. A: Robert and Paul were fighting on the street this morning.  
B: So I heard. Was it serious?  
A: They didn't stop until Paul twisted his ankle and had to ***give in***. \_\_\_\_\_
24. A: How is your business going?  
B: Pretty good, though I have to ***turn down*** several good offers because I am just short of time. \_\_\_\_\_
25. A: I owe Mark \$500.  
B: I owe him \$100.  
A: I hope I don't ***run into*** him before I get paid on Monday. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: me too.
26. A: Do you notice that Mark likes to ***show off***? \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Yes, but I don't think that he has anything to be proud of.
27. A: Did you hear the news?  
B: What!  
A: Neeta's decided to ***call off*** the wedding. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: Oh! What a pity.
28. A: Why don't you be like your brother?  
B: In what matters!  
A: Instead of eating lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays go to the recreation center to ***work out***. \_\_\_\_\_
29. A: If you don't believe me, talk to John. He'll ***back up*** my story. \_\_\_\_\_  
B: sure I will.
30. A: How was the attendance at the conference yesterday?  
B: Not bad; 70 ***turned up***. \_\_\_\_\_



## Translation Test II

This part has 30 short dialogues. Please read and complete with an appropriate English translation of the Arabic word(s) in parentheses that you would use in your daily conversation. You can use one or two words. Below is an exemplar.

1. A: When the weather is nice I love to \_\_\_\_\_ (استيقظ) early.  
B: Me, too. It's good to enjoy the morning air.
2. A: I'm sorry I hurt you. I didn't mean to say those things. I was just angry.  
B: Just \_\_\_\_\_ (اغرب عني) . I don't want to see you for a while.
3. A: Welcome to my house. Please \_\_\_\_\_ (تفضل)?  
B: Oh! Thanks; maybe next time. I'm in hurry now.
4. A: Don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يتخلص من) those empty cans and bottles.  
B: Why not mom?  
A: I goanna recycle them.
5. (In a restaurant)  
A: Excuse me, could I get some more soda when you've got a chance  
B: Sure. Would you like me to \_\_\_\_\_ (أزيل) these plates first?
6. A: Hi Ali, did the teacher \_\_\_\_\_ (يُعيد) the test papers?  
B: Yes, she did.
7. A: Where is the injured man?  
B: He has been \_\_\_\_\_ (يُحمل) by the ambulance.
8. A: Why did people \_\_\_\_\_ (يقفوا) in the courtroom yesterday?  
B: Out of respect cause the judge entered the room.  
A: Oh, I see.
9. A: Did the police arrest the thief?  
B: Unfortunately, he \_\_\_\_\_ (هرب) when the police arrived.
10. A: Who did \_\_\_\_\_ (يوزع) the prizes at the Speech Day yesterday?  
B: Mrs. Wilson.
11. A: What is the matter?  
B: \_\_\_\_\_ (ادخل) the car! We're leaving now.

12. A: Who else wants to register for our next field trip?  
 B: Could I \_\_\_\_\_ (أسجل) Sam: He would like to go on this field trip with us.  
 A: Sure.
13. A: Did you hear about yesterday bombing?  
 B: That was a disaster. Fortunately, there weren't that many people in the building when the bomb \_\_\_\_\_ (انفجرت).
14. A: I was late for my work yesterday, so I \_\_\_\_\_ (يؤلف) a story about traffic jam.  
 B: But did your boss believe it at all?  
 A: I'm not sure.
15. A: Do you want to hear what happened to them?  
 B: Absolutely. Tell me the entire story from beginning to end. Don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يهمل) anything.
16. A: Don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يلتهم) the whole cake. Leave some for your sister.  
 B: But mother, I want to grow into a big boy.  
 A: Finish your dinner and then you will grow into a big boy.
17. A: \_\_\_\_\_ (اخلع) your shoes.  
 B: What's the matter?  
 A: You're getting mud on the carpet.
18. A: If you want to be healthy again, you have at least to \_\_\_\_\_ (تقلل) smoking.  
 B: I can't promise. But I'll try.
19. A: You and your big mouth!  
 B: Why! What did I do?!  
 A: We're having a great time until you \_\_\_\_\_ (ذكرت) this silly issue about not having a vacation this year.
20. A: would you mind \_\_\_\_\_ (وقف/قطع) the water in the building?  
 B: Why!  
 A: Cause the plumber wants to do some repairs.
21. A: How do you like John?  
 B: He is one of those few people who never \_\_\_\_\_ (يخذل) his friends.
22. A: She did it again!  
 B: What is the matter?  
 A: My wife forgot to \_\_\_\_\_ (تطفئ) the fire when she finished coking.

23. A: Robert and Paul were fighting on the street this morning.  
 B: So I heard. Was it serious?  
 A: They didn't stop until Paul twisted his ankle and had to \_\_\_\_\_ . (يستسلم)
24. A: How is your business going?  
 B: Pretty good, though I have to \_\_\_\_\_ (يرفض) several good offers because I am just short of time.
25. A: I owe Mark \$500.  
 B: I owe him \$100.  
 A: I hope I don't \_\_\_\_\_ (يصادف) him before I get paid on Monday.  
 B: me too.
26. A: Do you notice that Mark likes to \_\_\_\_\_ ? (يتباهى)  
 B: Yes, but I don't think that he has anything to be proud of.
27. A: Did you hear the news?  
 B: What!  
 A: Neeta's decided to \_\_\_\_\_ (تلغي) the wedding.  
 B: Oh! What a pity.
28. A: Why don't you be like your brother?  
 B: In what matters!  
 A: Instead of eating lunch on Mondays, Wednesdays, and Fridays go to the recreation center to \_\_\_\_\_ . (يتمرن)
29. A: If you don't believe me, talk to John. He'll \_\_\_\_\_ (يؤيد) my story.  
 B: sure I will.
30. A: How was the attendance at the conference yesterday?  
 B: Not bad; 70 people \_\_\_\_\_ . (حضروا)

### Appendix III: Fill-in-the-Blanks Task (Part III)

Please complete the following with a word or two to make meaningful sentences.

1. Jim stood up \_\_\_\_\_.
2. Ali ran over \_\_\_\_\_.
3. Tom worked out \_\_\_\_\_.
4. They ran out \_\_\_\_\_.
5. Mary ate up \_\_\_\_\_.
6. Essam ran into \_\_\_\_\_.
7. Jack showed up \_\_\_\_\_.
8. Jim went over \_\_\_\_\_.
9. Lana looked up \_\_\_\_\_.
10. Nancy wrote up \_\_\_\_\_.



## Appendix IV: Paraphrasing Task (Part IV)

This part has 10 pairs of sentences. Read each pair of sentences carefully. Then indicate your degree of agreement by choosing a number that most describes what you think of the paraphrased sentence (written in lower case).

1. Completely disagree
2. Disagree
3. Neither agrees nor disagrees
4. Agree
5. Completely agree

Example		Completely disagree
Please circle the number closest to your answer:		
SAM RAN OVER THE BRIDGE WHILE JOGGING YESTERDAY.		
Sam damaged the bridge.	<b>1</b> 2 3 4 5	
1 TOM WORKED OUT OF HOME ON MONDAYS. Tome exercised in his house gym.		1 2 3 4 5
2 PAUL WENT OVER THE BRIDGE WITH HIS STUDENTS. Paul crossed the bridge.		1 2 3 4 5
3 MARY SHOWED HER FRIENDS UP THE STAIRS TO THE OFFICE. Mary guided her friends upstairs.		1 2 3 4 5
4 ALI BROUGHT HIS NEW BICYCLE UP THE WALKWAY. Ali mentioned the tires.		1 2 3 4 5
5 JANE WROTE OUT THE POEM IN RED INK. Jane used a pen in writing a poem.		1 2 3 4 5
6 MARK SHOWED HIS FRIEND UP BY DOING 100 PUSHUPS. Mark watched his friends exercise together.		1 2 3 4 5
7 SUE BROUGHT HIS SALARY INCREASE UP AT THE MEETING. Sue mentioned a raise.		1 2 3 4 5
8 LANA WROTE OUT ON THE PATIO IN THE SUN. Lana was outside while writing.		1 2 3 4 5
9 HUSSAM WENT OVER THE EXAM WITH HIS STUDENTS. Hussam had to take the exam.		1 2 3 4 5
10 JIM WORKED OUT IN HIS RED T SHIRT EVERY OTHER DAY.		

## Appendix V

### List of Phrasal Verbs Used in the Tests

Phrasal verb	
back up	make up
bring up	put out
call off	run away
carry away	run into
come in	run out
cut down	run over
eat up	show off
get in	show up
get up	shut off
give away	sign up
give back	stand up
give in	take away
go away	take off
go off	turn down
go over	turn up
leave out	throw away
let down	write up
look up	work out

## Appendix VI

### List of Phrasal Verbs and Their One-Word Synonyms Used in Part II

Phrasal verb	Single-word verb
<b>Literal</b>	
get up	Arise
go away	Leave
come in	Enter
throw away	Discard
take away	Remove
give back	Return
carry away	Remove
stand up	Rise
run away	Escape
give away	Distribute
<b>Semi-transparent</b>	
get in	Enter
sign up	Register
go off	Explode
make up	Invent
leave out	Omit
eat up	Finish
take off	Remove
cut down	Reduce
bring up	Mention
shut off	Stop
<b>Figurative</b>	
let down	Disappoint
put out	extinguish
give in	Surrender
turn down	Reject
run into	Meet
show off	Boast
call off	Cancel
work out	exercise
back up	Support
turned up	Arrive