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**Problems and strategies in learning phrasal verbs at
intermediate level in an ELT undergraduate program**

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By

Adriana García Betán

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Dedicated to:

My parents and my brother

Dedicatory

Firstly of all, I want to thank GOD for giving me the chance to stay here in the last stage of my degree and for being with me in every moment and for taking care of me and blessing me with good and bad things and the most important for giving me patience and courage in all these years. You are my angel, I love you.

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Abstract

Problems and Strategies in learning phrasal verbs at intermediate level in an ELT undergraduate program

There is a world of words and to learn vocabulary is not an easy task for language learners. Carter (1992, p. 152) argued that “words exist in a kind of semantic space, so knowing a word in a language involves knowing what parts of the space it does and does not occupy”. Thus, acquiring this knowledge requires experimenting with words in a large range of context as it happens with first language learners.

One of the vocabulary areas in which learners are most confused and frustrated is phrasal verbs. Therefore, the purpose of the present study is to identify the most common problems that university students of intermediate level face to integrate phrasal verbs to their vocabulary use and the strategies that could be followed to overcome this learning situation that they face.

This work was carried out in an ELT undergraduate program with the help of 20 participants, all of them enrolled in an intermediate English course. This research is descriptive, it involves a qualitative method and the analysis of some statistics. The data was obtained through three different instruments; a test and a questionnaire applied to students and an interview to a teacher. The first instrument has two kinds of exercises; on one hand literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs and the other side was separable and non-separable. Participants failed the first exercise with 7 items wrong and 3 were correct and the second one has 12 items and participants obtained 5 correct, 5 incorrect, one was an unsure answer and the last one was a draw. The next instrument was a questionnaire and it had opened and close questions in order

to identify problems in learning phrasal verbs and also which strategies students tend to use. One of the results from one question was that only two students know what a phrasal verb is and related with the strategies the most selected by the participants were reading and examples. The last instrument was an interview for the teacher in charge of the English intermediate course and she supported this work by sharing her perceptions about phrasal verbs and the strategies that she applies inside the classroom.

A big part of English vocabulary is made up of phrasal verbs; they are so prevalent in everyday spoken and informal written language. If students learn and use common phrasal verbs, their vocabulary will be increased, their listening and reading comprehension will improve, and their spoken English will be more fluent and native-like. Thus, it is relevant that teacher and students have more practice in the use of phrasal verbs in the classroom.

CHAPTER I: INTRODUCTION

1.1 Introduction to the problem

The existence of words is usually taken for granted by the speakers of any language to understand and learn a language; words are an essential component of communication, but what is a word? Plag (2002, p. 4) states a word is “a unit in the writing system” and there are some categories of words as simple, complex, compound and others. The acquisition of a variety of words for a student who is learning a second language is not an easy task, because a simple word may have different functions and meanings, so these may lead to some problems to learn vocabulary. In my own experience, I have had problems with the meaning of words and besides that I have observed in classes other students with the same problem. According to some studies, one of the most common problems in learning/acquiring vocabulary is the “word’s meaning”; it is because a word can work in various contexts, so the word’s meaning depends on the context. Another one is “unteaching” and this point is really important as it refers to the way in which a teacher introduces new vocabulary, what I mean is if the teacher uses a right strategy it will have a better result in students’ learning. The following problem is “frequency” when the student listens to or reads an infrequent word, it is a little tough to get the whole message and the students may say or think something wrong. Finally, the last problem is “contextualization” and as the word indicates “context” is essential to know better a word instead of single words. This is the line between what the student can learn or forget regarding vocabulary.

It is observable that the majority of students have some difficulties to acquire specific vocabulary and I want to point out phrasal verbs. This kind of vocabulary belongs to one of

the sub-classes of multiword verbs. According with Schmitt and McCarthy (1998, p. 43), “a multi-word item is a vocabulary item which consists of a sequence of two or more words” For Spears (1994), a phrasal verb is a verb formed from two sometimes three parts; a verb and an adverb or preposition. This thesis is mainly focused on the most common problems that students of intermediate level face to learn phrasal verbs. This type of vocabulary is not academic English; it is part of the informal English language. Although phrasal verbs are introduced since previous levels, students may have some problems with these types of words because of their meaning. As it is well-known, there are two kinds of phrasal verbs, idiomatic and literal (Spears, 1994). On the one hand, literal phrasal verbs are quite easy to understand, as you can guess the meaning from their two parts verbs like “sit down” “look around” and “fall down” and they should not cause problems to students. On the other hand, deciphering the meaning of an idiomatic phrasal verb just by looking at its individual parts is not that easy. Learners need help to understand the meaning of phrasal verbs such as “get on with”, “show up” and “let down”, In this case, the context is really important. According with Thornbury (2002), words or expressions that are idiomatic like “make up your mind”, “keep an eye” will generally be more difficult than words whose meaning is transparent (decide, watch); it is their idiomaticity, as well as their syntactic complexity, that makes phrasal verbs so difficult. Another problem with phrasal verbs is that one phrasal verb may have several meanings and it is a little hard to use them correctly. According with Carter and McCarthy (1988), learning vocabulary effectively is closely bound up with a teacher’s understanding of, and a learner’s perception of the difficulties of words.

The majority of students have a lack of interest in learning phrasal verbs, although they started to work with them in previous levels. If students do not practice phrasal verbs since the

moment they are introduced, students will have some troubles in their advanced courses. For instance, students who are at intermediate level–tend to face problems as to understand advanced readings like: articles from magazines and literature books. Also, if students are having classes with native teachers, they will probably face some difficulties to get what the teacher is saying because native teachers frequently use phrasal verbs. Besides this, when a learner of a second language travels abroad, he or she will have some problems interacting with native speakers because their common way to speak implies the use of phrasal verbs and the learner mainly has a formal use of English, so the communication will not be quite successful at all.

1.2 Purpose of the research

The purpose of the present study is to identify the most common problems that students of intermediate level face with phrasal verbs and the strategies that could be followed to overcome this learning situation that they face.

Moreover, this research will lead students to understand more clearly what phrasal verbs imply and the importance of them in order to have a more successful communication inside the classroom and outside of it in different situations like talking with teachers, chatting with native speakers and reading books, magazines and other texts.

1.3 Research questions

This project addresses the following questions:

1. What are the most common problems in learning phrasal verbs for the students at intermediate level?
2. What are the strategies that students at intermediate level suggest to learn phrasal verbs?
3. What are the strategies that a teacher suggests to learn phrasal verbs?

1.4 Significance of the project

This work is important for me because when I started to see phrasal verbs in my basic courses of English, I just knew some of these and it was difficult to get them, because I had to learn this sort of vocabulary by heart. That is why I am really interested in this topic because I want to continue learning more about this field and find a better way to get it. Thornbury (2002) states that if you spend most of your time studying grammar, your English will not improve very much. You will see most improvement if you learn more words and expressions. You can say very little with grammar but you can say almost anything with words.

Besides that, this topic is important for pre-service teachers' programs because if we get conscious teachers and students as future teachers about how important phrasal verbs are to have a more successful communication, the new generations will be more prepared in different situations, inside and outside the classroom. We need to work out as students and teachers

phrasal verbs, because they are so prevalent in everyday spoken and informal written language. Phrasal verbs are frequently used by native speakers, especially in casual, laid-back spoken English. As a big part of the English vocabulary is made up of phrasal verbs, if English students can learn and use common phrasal verbs; their vocabulary will be increased, their listening and reading comprehension will improve, and their spoken English will be more fluent and native-like.

Besides that, this sort of language is really useful for students who decide to go to the translation area, because they will be working with complex texts and if students have good knowledge about this kind of vocabulary, this will contribute to improve students' level of understanding.

1.5 Definition of terms

Vocabulary: “All the words that a person knows or uses” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 1506).

Phrasal Verb: “they are combinations of verbs and adverbial or prepositional particles” (Schmitt & McCarthy, 1997, p. 45).

Literal: It is “the basic or usual meaning of a word or phrase” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 783).

Idiomatic: It refers to “expressions that are natural to a native speaker of a language” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 672).

Context: “the words that come before or after a word, phrase or statement and help you to understand its meaning” (Wehmeier, 2000, p. 254).

CHAPTER II: LITERATURE REVIEW

2.0 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter provides a theoretical framework for this research. First, it starts with vocabulary acquisition although it mainly focused on phrasal verbs. In the first section, it is explained how a student of a second language acquires vocabulary using memorization and picturing. Secondly, I mention the most common problems that a student could find through his/her learning of vocabulary as the meaning of the word.

Another point to consider is “unteaching”, which refers to the way in which vocabulary is taught by the teacher. Also, this chapter gives some strategies that teachers and students can follow to improve vocabulary, including phrasal verbs, as schemata, visual aids, dictionary work and so on and finally, the last part of it describes what a phrasal verb is and what sorts of phrasal verbs there are and the problems in learning this type of word.

2.1 Vocabulary Acquisition

Students acquire lexical items as rapidly as they build grammatical structures. There is a world of words and to learn vocabulary is not an easy task for the students, but it is easier than to build a whole sentence. Carter and McCarthy (1988, p. 152) argued that “words exist in a kind of semantic space. Knowing a word in a language involves knowing what parts of the space it does and does not occupy. The first language learner acquires this knowledge by experimenting with words in a large range of context”. According with this author, a student

who is learning a second language does not learn it as the first one. So, the teacher should provide the student with some tools and strategies to acquire vocabulary.

In the initial stages of second language learning, the student starts retaining single words or pairs of words by memorization. Pavicic (2008, p. 11) states that “human memory is very flexible and it can process a large quantity of data, but only if it is systematically organized”. Thus, memorization plays an important role in the acquisition of vocabulary. First, the student translates the words in their mother tongue and memorizes them, for example: there are some cognate words and they are easy to relate with the mother tongue as “human” or “hotel” but there are also false cognate words which are a little bit difficult and the student should learn by heart; for example, “terrific or actually”, so most of the times students have to memorize different sorts of vocabulary.

Some of the teachers introduce new vocabulary using pictures or graphic representations and it helps the student to recall the words. When the student sees an image, he relates it with the meaning and the student remembers the word. Besides that, the teacher uses repetition as much as possible. Carter (1992, p. 153) mentioned that “translation and repetition are the only means by which words can be learned and whether the kind of “picturing” of words can accompany learning can or should be of particular type”.

The acquisition of a second language is not an easy work for the student, so he/she finds some problems to get this goal. In the next section, it will be explained some problems student may face when learning vocabulary.

2.2 Problems in learning vocabulary

In my previous teaching practices, I could observe that most of the students have problems with the meaning of the words, they often do not know that a word can function as a verb, noun or adjective; that is why I consider the meaning of a word as a problem in the acquisition of lexicon. Besides, the way in which a teacher introduces vocabulary could have an effective or negative result. For instance, if the teacher applies an appropriate strategy to teach vocabulary, it will be meaningful for the student, but if vocabulary is not taught strategically it may have a negative result and it might be a problem. Also, the frequency of a word is important because students tend to work with specific groups of words that usually appear in the course book. The last two problems I want to mention briefly are collocation and contextualization. The first, “collocation”, is a very important part for learners who are learning a second language, because the collocation of the words is not the same as in the mother tongue and not all the words can go well with others; there are some exceptions. The second, contextualization, if new words are just given with the translation in a list, but the student does not apply it in a specific context, he/she may forget the word. These problems will be described in more detail in the following subsections.

2.2.1 Meaning word

When someone is learning a second language, it is probable that the person will find some problems in learning it. One of the problems is the meaning of the word because many words have more than one meaning. For example, there are words, which work like verbs, nouns and

adverbs and when the learner finds these words in a reading, sometimes he does not know what the correct function is, so he does not understand the whole message from the reading (Gairns and Redman, 1986, p. 13) “to understand a word fully, a student must know not only what it refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words of related meaning”.

McCarthy (1990) suggested that it is important to have knowledge of the words, it means, their features or in which semantic field are located to have information of them. According with these authors (Gairns and Redman, 1986, McCarthy, 1990), students should be involved in the context where the words are related, in that way, it will be easier for the student to have a better understanding of the words.

2.2.2 Unteaching

Another problem that a student faces in the acquisition of vocabulary is “unteaching”. Sometimes learners do not learn vocabulary in an easy way because in some cases teachers tend to give students a list of vocabulary and they have to learn it by heart. In these situations, students learn some words for a short time because if learners do not relate the words in a context, student will forget them. (Heinle and Heinle, 1990, p. 43). Thus, “the learning burden of a word can be affected by the way it is taught”. In other words, it is important the way that a teacher uses to teach vocabulary to their students because it will have a positive or negative result for the learner.

Heinle and Heinle (1990, p. 43) state that “whether words are learned to be recognized (receptively) or to be produced (productively) affects their difficulty”. For example, if the learner is learning just English for passing a subject, the knowledge will be mainly receptive, but if the learner has the necessity to learn English to communicate, the knowledge will be productive. Most of the students are good at listening and reading skills, because these skills are considered passive skills; on the other hand, students have problems in writing essays, texts or compositions as it implies some production. Besides this, when students have to interact inside or outside the classroom on the basis of listening or reading, these skills become active and essential to produce the language.

2.2.3 Frequency

Another important point in learning vocabulary is “frequency”. On the one hand, there are common words that all the time appear in the course book or a student uses to talk in ordinary situations, so a student practices those words most of the time. On the other hand, there are uncommon words that a student is not familiarized with and if s/he finds those words in a reading and s/he does not know the meaning, but s/he looks them up in the dictionary and after that s/he never uses them again, a student will forget the new vocabulary. According to Heinle and Heinle (1990, p. 39), “frequency adds to the learning of a word when learners want to use an infrequent word very often when a more frequent item would be more suitable”. Richard (1976, cited in Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997, p. 241) states that knowing a word means knowing how often it occurs, the company it keeps, its appropriateness in different situations, its syntactic behavior, its word associations, and its semantic features. I consider

that when a student has problems in learning infrequent words, he or she should work out using all the time those words, in that way the student could improve his/her knowledge.

Teacher plays an important role in the learning process of the student, because as the student finds some difficulties the teacher provides him/her with some strategies in order to improve their knowledge in different skills. So, the next sections show on the one hand the role of the teacher to overcome those problems and on the other hand how student can deal with those aspects.

2.3 Strategies for teaching and learning vocabulary

There are a variety of strategies for teaching vocabulary in ELT. Collocations and contextualization are common examples of that, especially found in course books. In this regard, in the former, sometimes it is confusing to use a word in the correct semantic group of word and in the latter, when a new item is presented without a context it is more difficult to learn and use the word appropriately. Besides those, I have personally observed some classes in which some teachers usually start a new topic by using “schemata” to introduce the topic to be taught. In other cases, some teachers use images or visual aids like posters, cards or physical movements to make the topic clearer. Finally, I have seen the use of dictionary word; teachers encourage the students to look up the meaning of unknown words and design index card in order to increase vocabulary.

2.3.1 Collocation

In the bank of words, there is an enormous variation of words, even though not all the words go well with others. There are certain set phrases that we associate with the word, a clear example of this is the verb “do” and it goes with the words “homework”, “housework”, “favor”, “exercise”, and more, but it is not correct to say or write “do the bed” or “do an excuse” Students need to recognize metaphorical language use and they need to know how words collocate. Tutin (2008 p. 2) states “collocations are combinations of exactly two lexemes (of category noun, verb, adjective or adverb), realizing two concepts where the choice of one of them.

It is extremely important to know what words pair with each other in order to express a message in the written or spoken way, but if learners are not aware of collocation they will not bother to learn what words go well with each other. Thus, it is important to promote a variety of activities that involve collocation to develop this strategy and facilitate the learning of vocabulary.

2.3.2 Contextualization

It is necessary to provide information when a teacher is introducing new words in order to apply them in an appropriate context, conversely as Schouten-van Parreren, 1989, cited in Heinle, 1990 states when a single word is presented without any context the learner is going to forget it as quick as he/she does not use or practice in a context; hence it may become a problem in the acquisition of vocabulary and besides that the author mentions that an isolated

word does not give a clear idea of what the word function is. Most of the words have more than a single meaning or function. For example; the item “play” it has different functions in the part of the speech (verb, noun,) and if the teacher does not exemplify, the learner will not learn the word or it will be forgotten easily.

To sum up briefly, contextualizing items into a meaningful and real context rather than being treated as isolated items is an important and useful way to get vocabulary instead of just giving single words without specific way of use, in addition, the context can help learners remember the language and recall it at a later date.

2.3.3 Schemata

A student knows a word, but sometimes the learner does not know exactly how it works and how to learn it. According with McCarthy (1990), new knowledge is most efficiently and easily absorbed when the student has previous knowledge about what he is going to learn and when the appropriate framework or schemata are activated in the mind of the learner. “Schemata are structured frameworks of knowledge, about the word and about language, in relationship to which new information may or may not be received to make sense by the receiver” (Carrel and Eisterhold, 1983, cited in McCarthy, 1990, p. 108). To implement schemata at the beginning of the class as warming, it will help the class to have an idea of the topic and the teacher could activate existing knowledge in the students. For example, a schema for “holiday”, a teacher asks some questions like: when do you usually travel? Where? What kind of stuff do you need? etc. So, teacher makes a scheme on the board and students relate

their experiences with the new vocabulary and the class starts developing with the students' participation. This is a good way of pre-teaching any kind of vocabulary before students read a text or listen to a record. Besides, schemata are a strategy to encourage the student to ask the teacher words that he wants to know. This strategy is straightforward and can evoke in the learner the vital feeling of "need" for a word to fit a meaning that has been activated in the mind.

2.3.4 Visual aids

Visual aids are available in many forms; some of them are easy to prepare in order to use them in the English classroom. Many teachers, who work with basic levels like kinder garden or primary schools, commonly use pictures to introduce new vocabulary and then, plan an activity to practice it. Also, the teacher can give their students some magazines or books to cut images and for the students will be fun and they will remember the new words because they are working directly with the images.

French (1983, p. 33) pointed out "successful language learning outside the school is generally in a situation where the learner can see what is named by the word to be learned, but the condition of successful learning should be provided in second language classroom".

Other visual aids are: real objects and when the teacher uses them in the classroom for teaching new vocabulary, it is meaningful for the students, because they can see and touch the objects. The sense of touch can be added to the sense of sight in order to strengthen the association between the object and the English word. Another kind of visual aid is performing instructions or actions, it means, the teacher can say "everybody sit down" and he sits down or "jump" and

teacher jumps, so s/he shows his students the actions or instructions so that the students identify words like verbs and nouns. The teacher and the class can practice this strategy at the same time, the teacher gives an instruction and the class follows it and this is a good way to learn new vocabulary without doing expensive material and spending enough time.

From my point of view, visual aids are attractive for the students because they pay more attention and if they do activities or games with images or real objects, they will be interested in the class, so students learn new words.

2.3.5 Dictionary work

Another useful strategy that some teachers use is “dictionary work”. This strategy consists of collecting words that the student is working in his/her course book or readings and students have to look up the words and their definitions.

According to Schmitt and McCarthy (1997), some examples of “dictionary words” are:

- a) Highlighting the word on the wording and glossing its meaning in the margin.
- b) Copying the word a number of times while saying it or while visualizing its meaning.
- c) Copying the word and then looking up the definition.
- d) Paraphrasing the word
- e) Creating a set of index cards of the words or morphemes and their definitions or words with pictures.
- f) Matching words with definitions, in conventional exercises or on computer vocabulary programs.

Dictionary word is a good way to start acquiring vocabulary because most of the time the student finds unknown words in everywhere and s/he looks them up, but whether the student does not know how to work those words and it is probably that students forget the new vocabulary and if the students just write a list on their notebook, they may forget the new vocabulary, but if they work the new words by doing an activity like relating images with pictures or creating index cards the students will learn them. In addition to this, it is useful to develop the writing skill in the students and their own knowledge.

Besides the strategies for teaching vocabulary, some others could be mentioned regarding the learning of vocabulary. Two useful strategies that students may focus on are pointed out in the following paragraphs. The first one is grouping in which students can classify the words in groups and work one and then continuing another group. The second one is sense relations where the student can look words up with the same meaning, it means, its synonyms or its antonyms by using prefixes or suffixes in some cases. These strategies are easy to work with the help of a dictionary, so student can work them by themselves.

2.3.6 Grouping

Grouping words is a good strategy to organize different kind of vocabulary, in that way the students make a list of groups like: animals, fruits, clothes, vegetables, objects for the kitchen and so on. Furthermore, the student could focus in learning first a group and looking up as many words as the learner can and practice the new vocabulary with some activities like: writing sentences to remember the words in a specific context or relating pictures with the

meaning of the words. “Group is an important way to aid recall, and people seem to organize words into the groups naturally without prompting” (Bousfield, 1953, cited in Schmitt and McCarthy, 1997 p. 213). If the learner groups the words, he will remember them without having a hard time memorizing, because as s/he organized the words, the learner looks back the vocabulary and the recall is improved.

2.3.7 Sense Relations

According to Heinle and Heinle (1990), the meaning of a word can only be understood and learnt in terms of its relations with other words in the language. Jackson and Amvele (2000, p. 91) said that “sense is an internal meaning relation. Sense relations hold between words within the vocabulary. The two most obvious sense relations are those of “sameness” and “oppositeness”, called synonymy and antonym respectively”. The English language has lots of vocabulary that the student of this language has to learn. A useful strategy to achieve this goal is making a sense relation of the words, it means, a student can work with some verbs, adjectives or adverbs and look up another word to say the same, its synonymy. Jackson and Amvele (2000, p. 92) state that “the term synonymy comes from a Greek word (sunonumon) meaning having the same name”. For example, the verb “smile” is the same as “grin” or the adjective “skinny” as “thin”.

The opposite for synonymy is antonym. It has an important role in getting new vocabulary. This is especially in the adjective words, where many words occur in antonymous pairs e. g. long-short, old-new, light-dark, and so on. Besides this, English can also derive antonyms by

means of prefixes and suffixes. Some of them are: honest- dishonest, fertile-infertile, kind-unkind and so on. Making the opposite of word can give the student a big list of words.

Synonymy and antonym are excellent ways to increase the vocabulary in a student. Also, this strategy helps the learner in improving the writing and speaking skills. In that way, the student will have a variety of vocabulary to express ideas and feelings in a more accurate way. I also consider this strategy is interesting and important because the learner notices that there are many words that we do not find in the course book and when the student finds them in readings, it is difficult to get the whole message and when the learner looks up the unknown words he realizes that the meaning of the words are synonyms or antonyms of those.

2.4 Phrasal verbs

2.4.1 Definition of phrasal verb

It is necessary to take the grammar references to explain what phrasal verbs are. Wehmeier (2000) defines a **phrasal verb** or sometimes called multi-words verbs as verbs that consist of two or sometimes three words. The first word is a verb and it is followed by an adverb “turn down” or a preposition “eat into” or both “put up with” these adverbs or prepositions are sometimes called particles. And an **adverb** is a word that adds more information about place, time, manner, cause or degree to a verb, an adjective, a phrase or another adverb. And a **preposition** is a word or group of words, such as in, from, to, out and on, used before a noun or pronoun to show place, position, time or method. Walter (2008) said that “a phrasal verb is

a verb followed by an adverb or preposition for example: run away (verb + adverb). The adverb or preposition in a phrasal verb is also called the **particle**".

Phrasal verbs sometimes have meanings that can easily be guessed such as "sit down or look for". But in most cases their meanings are quite different from the meaning of the verb they are formed from. For example, hold up can mean "to cause a delay" or "to try to rob someone" and has no obvious connection with the idea of "holding" something.

Maldonado (2010) claims that phrasal verbs are widely believed to be particularly difficult to master because the choice of verb-particle combinations seems so unsystematic. According to cognitive linguistics, however, those combinations are in fact motivated. Particles in phrasal verbs are like many other aspects of language in showing a great deal of semantic coherence.

Phrasal verbs are usually used informally in everyday speech as opposed to the more formal Latinate verbs, such as "to get together" rather than "to congregate", "to put off" rather than "to postpone", or "to get out" rather than "to exit".

2.4.2 Classification of phrasal verbs

Phrasal verbs can be classified on the basis of their meaning and grammatical structure. According with Spears (1994), phrasal verbs can be literal or idiomatic.

Literal: It refers to the normal or expected semantic interpretation of a word or sequence of words. Many verbs in English can be combined with an adverb or a preposition, and readers or listeners will easily understand a phrasal verb used in a literal sense with a preposition.

For example: I used a key to **get into** the house.

Idiomatic: It refers to a phrase whose meaning cannot be figured out by studying the meanings of the individual words in the phrase. It is when the combined meaning of verb plus adverb, or verb plus preposition is totally different from each of its component parts, that the semantic content of the phrasal verb cannot be predicted by its constituent parts and so becomes much more difficult for a student learning English to recognize them.

For example: I'll **look after** the children if you want to go out.

On the basis of grammatical structure, you can say that phrasal verbs are just more words and should be treated as such. However, phrasal verbs have different grammar that may generate some problems. Wehmeier (2000) points out four types of phrasal verbs. These are:

1. **Intransitive Phrasal Verbs** (Phrasal Verbs that do not take an Object)

Some phrasal verbs do not have to have an object. They can exist on their own:

- Verb (V) + Preposition (P)

For example: You're driving too fast - you ought to **slow down**.

(V) (P)

2. **Transitive separable Phrasal Verbs** (Phrasal Verbs that take an Object)

Some phrasal verbs have to have an object:

- a. Verb (V) + Preposition (P) + Object (O)

For example: **put on** my jacket. I think I'll **put** my jacket **on** OR I think I'll **put on** my jacket.

(V) (P) (O)

3. Non-separable Phrasal Verbs

Some transitive phrasal verbs cannot be separated by the object. For example:

✓ **look after** my dog

✗ **look** my dog **after**

4. Phrasal Verbs with More Than one Particle

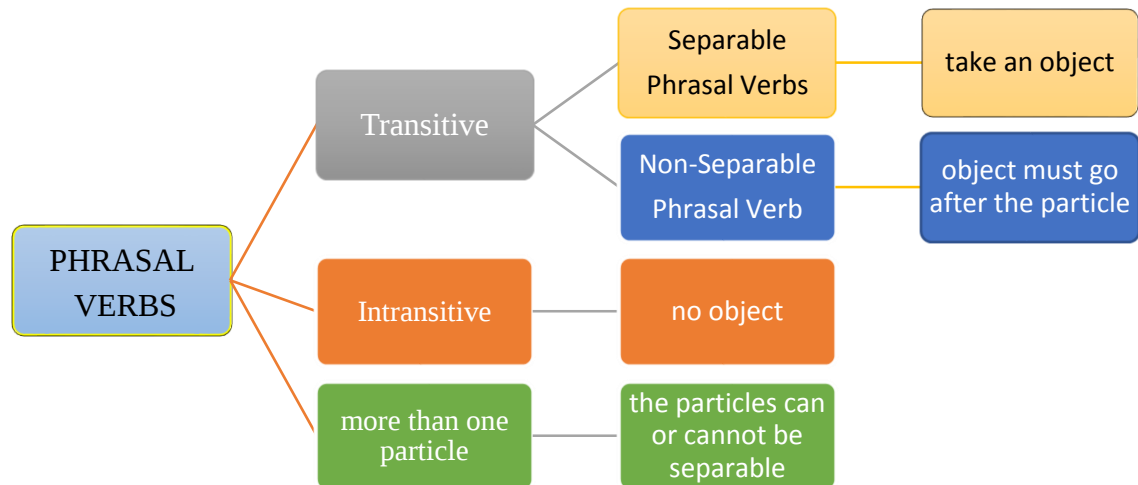
Some phrasal verbs are made up of more than one preposition

For example:

- I'm **looking forward to** the holidays.
- Do you **get on with** your neighbors?

Figure 1: Diagram of types of phrasal verb

Based on Wehmeirer (2000)



2.4.3 Problems in learning phrasal verbs

The lack of varied sources aimed at teaching phrasal verbs is one of the most common problems in teaching vocabulary. There are merely grammatical approaches or some dictionaries in which the meaning is explained, exemplified or translated.

Phrasal verbs are another instance of the fuzziness at the boundary between words and grammar. They are particularly problematic for learners both because of their lexical meaning which are often idiomatic and their grammatical form.

Besides the already mentioned problems, there is another one, which encompasses “particles”. Among the first words encountered by non-native learners of English are one-syllable verbs like *make, get, take, go, put* and prepositions or adverbs such as *in, on, up, down, for, off, out, over*. These words are very easy to understand when used in isolation, but when a single verb and a preposition or an adverb is mixed, it works like a phrasal verb and its meaning could be idiomatic, but this is not the whole matter, the problem is when a verb can be combined with more than one particle. Schmitt & McCarthy (1997, p. 47) argued that “the particle reinforces the degree of the action denoted by the verb”; therefore, only one simple verb with various particles can form a variation of phrasal verbs and each of them with their own meaning. In other words, the varieties have different meaning, so the learner should learn to use them in the correct context. This is one of the reasons why students avoid these kinds of items. Another related problem is the position of the object in the case of a transitive separable phrasal verb. There are three different ways, in which a transitive phrasal verb can be written and if the student does not know where the object noun or the object pronoun has to be set, this is going to be one of the biggest headaches for him/her. Moreover, we have to have in mind that there is not a rule to identify which verbs are transitive or intransitive, the only certain strategy is to learn them by context and with the help of a specialized phrasal verb dictionary.

CHAPTER III: METHODOLOGY

3.0 Introduction to the chapter

This chapter describes what the methodology was to carry out this research according with the objective and it explains the chosen method design and techniques. It also gives a short description of the instruments as their objectives, and how they were applied with the participants.

3.1 Context and participants

This work was developed in an ELT undergraduate program in the center of Mexico. This institution has four public programs: LEMO (Licenciatura en Lenguas Modernas), LEI (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Inglés), LEF (Licenciatura en la Enseñanza del Francés) and MEI (Maestría en la Enseñanza del Inglés). The participants of this research were an experienced teacher in charge of an intermediate English course and 20 students of that course. In the case of students, they were 14 females and 6 males; their age range was from 19 to 25 years old. All of them enrolled in an intermediate English course. They belonged to the LEI program. This group was chosen based on a convenience sample. Besides that, in this level, phrasal verbs seem to be more continuously taught and students appear to be in contact with these types of words in the classroom through readings, course books and tape records mainly-

3.2 Method

This research is descriptive; it mainly involves a qualitative method and according with Burns (1999), “a qualitative research gathers “rich” data and interprets them through “thick” description and analysis”. Besides, it interprets human behavior from participants’ perspectives. The teacher in charge of the intermediate English course was interviewed to know her opinion about how students learn phrasal verbs and which problems she had detected with this sort of vocabulary. Besides, this work carries some data with numbers that help to describe the findings in the test and in the questionnaire which were applied for the class.

3.3 Design and techniques

For this research, the design was the interview in order to get the teacher’s opinion about how students learn phrasal verbs and some strategies that she uses to help students to improve this lexicon. The techniques that I used were: a test and a survey for the class, in that way I could identify the main problems students face with phrasal verbs and suggest some strategies with the opinion of the teacher and students.

3.4 Instruments

This part of the research describes three different instruments that were designed to get information. The first one is a questionnaire, the second one is a small test and the last is an interview; the first two were for the students and the third one was for the teacher of the intermediate English course.

3.4.1 Questionnaire

For this research, the first chosen instrument was a questionnaire that has different sorts of questions (See appendix 1). The main objective for this instrument was to collect the data in order to identify the main problems that students at intermediate level have with phrasal verbs. The questionnaire was designed with twelve questions, which contained two types of questions; opened and multiple choice, and a chart with some statements, where the student had to tick an option (true/false/unsure).

I decided to use this kind of questions because I will get different points of view and I will compare them.

“Pretending what learners will need in the way of vocabulary is important in selecting what to teach; equally important is creating a sense of need for a word” (Allen, 1983:90, cited in McCarthy, 1990, p. 87).

3.4.2 Interview

According with Quinn (1987), “interviewing involves asking open-ended questions, listening to and recording the answers, and the following up with additional relevant questions”. The purpose for this interview is to know the teacher’s opinion about which problems students have when they are learning phrasal verbs and which strategies she uses to teach this kind of lexicon and some pieces of advice to learn them easier. This interview is based on six open questions (see appendix 3). It was done to a teacher who was in charge of an intermediate English course.

3.4.3 Test

A text was applied at the intermediate English course, the main objective was to test the class and with the collected data I identified if the students knew the meaning of some literal and idiomatic phrasal verb and also how much students know about some grammatical aspects, other words, separable and non-separable (see Appendix 2).

This test contains 22 items; they are divided into two different exercises, the first one has 10 sentences with some literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs and each sentence has two options, so the student has to underline the correct meaning for each phrasal verb.

The second exercise has 12 items and some phrasal verbs are separable and non-separable, so the students had to read them carefully and to identify if the verbs are collocated in the correct way, other words, if they are separable or not and according with this, students completed a table.

3.4 Piloting

The designed questionnaire for this project was piloted in the research class with the help of 10 people. According with the results, the instructions were clear, there was not any comment in this section and I noticed that people preferred answering questions with options than open question, because the open questions did not have enough information as I expected, but they are necessary to get as much data as possible, and taking into account the suggestion of the teacher of research seminar, I modified the context of some questions to make them more understandable.

The second instrument was the test and it was piloted with a group of intermediate level; students answered it and according with their answers I noticed that the first exercise was easy for the students, because students got high results in the majority of the items and taking into account some aspects that I learned in my learning evaluation class, if the students got high score, the item was very easy and on the other hand if students got really low score, the item was quite difficult. Furthermore, my thesis supervisor suggested modifying the exercise and I added two more possible answers, so finally each item had four choices.

3.4 Data Collection

This research has three different instruments; a questionnaire, a test and an interview. They were applied in a group at intermediate level and it was done in the second chance, because I tried to do it in the first week of the current month. I asked for permission to the teacher who was in charge of this subject to apply the instruments on Monday or Tuesday, but the teacher told me it would not be possible, because she worked very hard and fast from Monday to Thursday, the only day I could apply my instruments may be on Friday and the day I talked with her was Friday, but before, I explained to her about my thesis and the instruments and she gave me the chance for the next Friday, but she asked me not to take too much time of the class, just 10 or 15 minutes and I also asked her for an interview, she said that she did not have too much time, but she agreed as long as the interview was short.

The instruments were applied in the classroom and some of the students were on time, but others were arriving late. They showed a good attitude to answer the questionnaire and the test. First, I applied the test and later the questionnaire, because the second one is related with

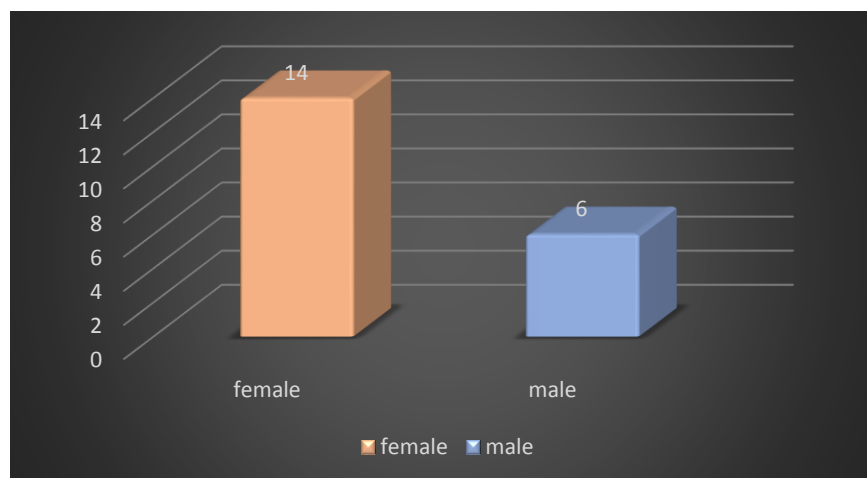
problems, that is to say, if the students had problems with the test in the questionnaire they would write about them on it. While the students were answering the instruments, I could observe that some of them were concentrated and others were talking with a partner about the test questions. Before the students finished, I interviewed the teacher and a practitioner was there and he stayed with the class while the teacher and I were out the classroom, the teacher was very kind and her interest for it was helpful for me. The interview was for almost five minutes and it had few questions.

After doing that step, the second one was to codify all the data; for the questionnaire and the test, the items with different options were codified with numbers (0-3) and processed with the program excel in order to create graphs with the results. Besides this, the open-questions were codified with key words, other words, in those questions in which students gave their opinions and ideas, I chose the most mentioned and I organized the key words and ideas based on that. Moreover, I transcribed the interview and analyzed the information in order to answer my research questions and accomplish the objectives.

CHAPTER IV: RESULTS

In this section, the data which was obtained through the three different instruments will be interpreted with the support of some graphs and tables. As it was mentioned before, the participants who were enrolled in this research were at intermediate level and the first results to be analyzed are from the test, then the ones from the questionnaire and finally the from the teacher's interview.

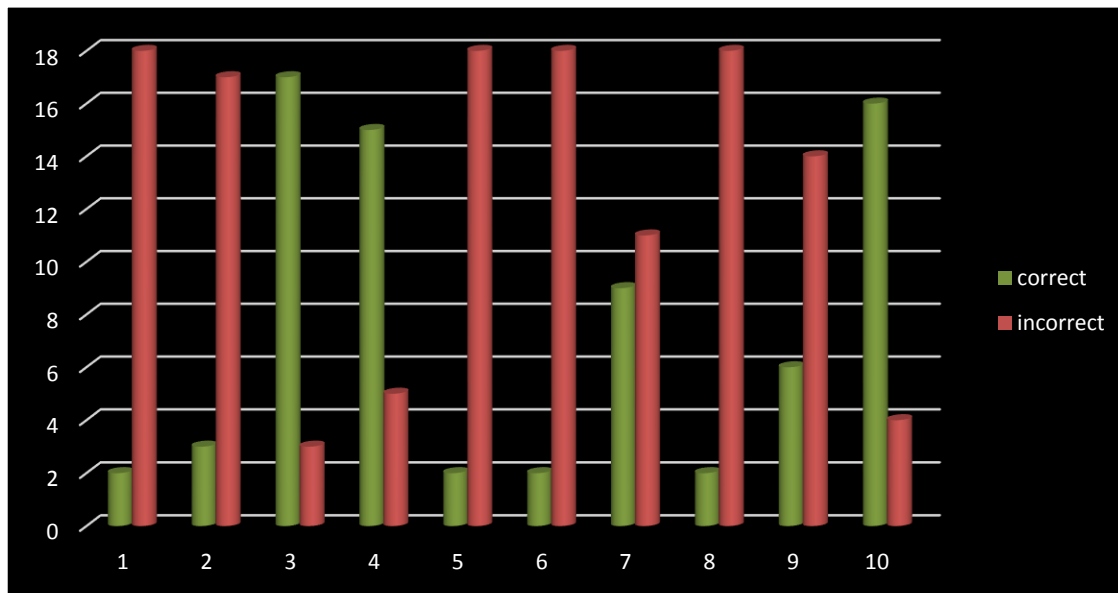
Figure 2: Gender



4.1 Test

The test had two different kinds of exercises, the first one was about phrasal verbs, there were 8 idiomatic and 2 literal. This exercise had 10 statements and each statement had 4 different possibilities, but just one was the correct one. In the following graph, the results of that exercise are shown.

Figure 3: Phrasal verbs



It is observable in the graph that most of the students failed this exercise, the color green represents the correct items and the red color represents the incorrect items. It can be seen that for the 10 statements 7 of the red color are higher than the green color, it means, students had problems with the majority of those phrasal verbs.

In the following tables, it is explained in detail each of the items of the first exercise of the test.

Table 1: items 1, 2, 3, 4

Statement	1)my boss <i>made out</i> a check for ten pounds	2) I have <i>run out of</i> chalk; will you fetch some, saahah?	3)when the grandma is seeing some old pictures, she <i>looks back</i> especial events	4) when Bod and Sally got their house, it was in bad state, so they spent six months <i>doing it up</i>
Type	Idiomatic	Idiomatic	Literal	Idiomatic
Answers	gave/ wrote/used/paid	found/ took/ have not left / bought enough	get happy/ cry/ dream/ remember	buying/ repairing/ cleaning/ investing
Number of students	5/2/2/11	7 /5 / 3 /2 and 3 people did not check any option	3/ 0/ 0/ 17	2/ 15 /2 /1

In this first item as can be observed almost all the participants thought was “paid” they got confused and just two people had the correct answer; 5 students circled “gave”, 2 “used” and 11 “paid”. So, 18 of 20 people were wrong.

For the second item, we can see it is an idiomatic phrasal verb, too. This expression means that something has finished, so the correct answer was “have not left” but just 3 students got it and the rest of the class chose other answers: 7 said “found”, 5 “took”, 3 “have none left”, 2 “bought enough” and 3 participants did not check any item. The two first options were higher

than the last; therefore, the students thought that meaning for this phrasal verb could have been “found or took”, but they were wrong.

For the third item, from the 20 students, 17 of them got the correct answer “remember”. Although it was a literal phrasal verb, just 3 students chose the first option, it was “get happy”, but it was not the correct one.

The fourth statement was an easy item for the students as the previous one, because 15 students got the correct answer, it was “repairing” and the other 5 students chose the first option “buying” (2), “cleaning” (2) and only one “investing”.

The next item in the exercise shows these results.

Table 2: items 5, 6, 8

Statement	5) My brother takes after my dad with his bad temper.	6) The teacher said he struggled to make out my handwriting. It’s always terrible	8) Joe’s mother brought him up well. She loved and behaved him, too.
Type	Idiomatic	Idiomatic	Idiomatic
Answers	resemble/follow/get angry/ discuss	read/decipher/correct/grade	appreciate/nurture/teach/spoil
Number of Students	2/4/7/6 and 1 did not answer	4/2/12/2	9/2/7/0 and 2 students did not answer.

And for the following items 5, 6 and 8 the students failed them with really low result, just two students for each item knew the correct answer and the others wrote wrong answers. In the statement number 5 the correct answer is “resemble” and only two participants knew the right answer and other 18 participants chose others. For the item 6, two participants answered correctly and the rest got incorrect answers and along with the two others items, in the case of the item 8, 18 participants were wrong and only two got the right answer.

The next table shows us the results obtained in the other items.

Table 3: items 7, 9, 10

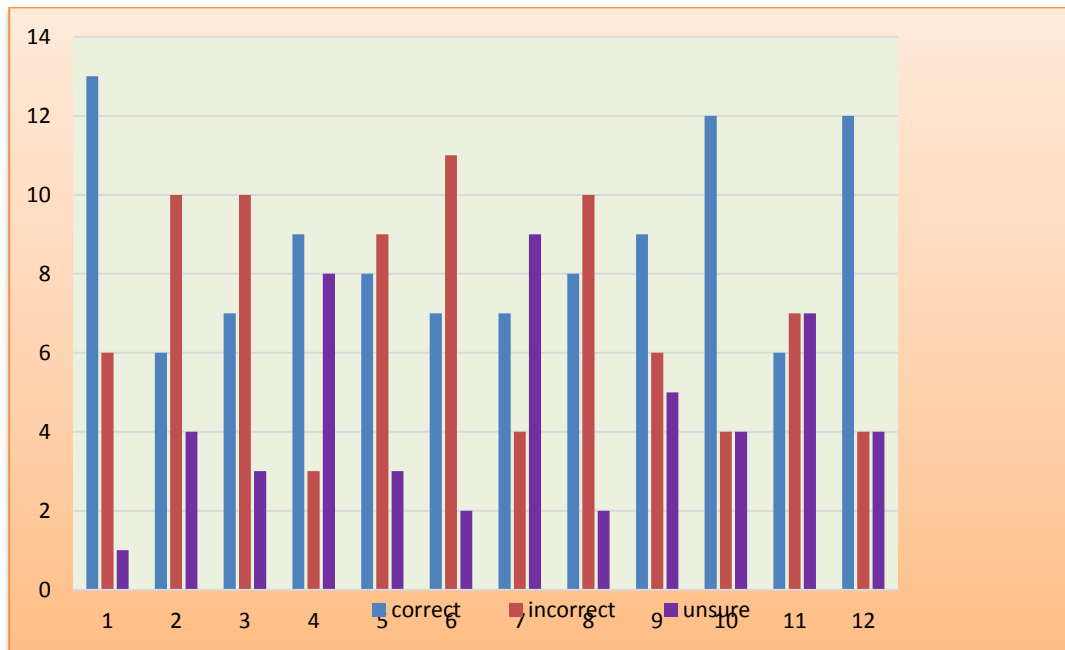
Statement	7) When you back to England you must brush up your French by enrolling in an evening class	9) The children promised to come over , but they never do.	10) Rita turned down the new job in Iraq for security reasons.
Type	Idiomatic	Literal	Idiomatic
Answers	learn/practice/speak/ improve	travel/ study/ visit/ call	accepted/refused/changed/ applied for
Number of Students	1/8/1/10	2/13/5/0	1/16/3/0

The item 7 was not really difficult as others, however only 8 students pointed out the correct item. In the case of the item 9, just 5 students had the correct answer and the rest checked others and finally in the last item students got a good result: 16 correct and 4 incorrect answers.

These results showed that 18 students have problems with idiomatic phrasal verbs, which only 2 students got 7 correct points of 10 statements and 5 students got 5 of 10 items and the last 7 students got less than 5. As I mentioned before, 8 items were idiomatic phrasal verbs, taking into account that the phrasal verbs were in a context, in other words, the phrasal verbs were written in statements. On the other hand, there were only two literal ones and the students had problems with them too, but not too much as idiomatic ones. Thus, there seem to be troubles in both types of phrasal verbs.

The second exercise of this test was about separable and non-separable phrasal verbs and the main objective was to know if students could identify these two kinds of verbs and for this, the exercise had 12 items and some of them are correct and others are not; therefore the students had to check if those were written correctly or not, but also there was a third option “unsure”. The following graph shows the results obtained in each of the items in general terms.

Figure 4: Separable & non-Separable Phrasal Verbs



In this graph, the blue color represents the correct items, the red color the incorrect items and the purple one represents the unsure answers. As we can see in the graph, there are 5 statements that got the correct answers and there are 5 statements with incorrect answers that most of participants got and one item is tied with an incorrect and unsure answer and the last one is an unsure answer.

Now, a more detailed description of each of the items of the second exercise is provided.

Table 4: Item 1, 2, 3

Item	1) <i>You're feeling low, so we've come to cheer you up.</i>	2) <i>John called Mary on, but she wasn't home</i>	3) <i>The terrorist blew up it</i>
Type	Separable	Inseparable	Separable
Students' answers	Correct: 13 Incorrect: 6 Unsure: 1	Correct: 6 Incorrect: 10 Unsure: 4	Correct: 7 Incorrect: 10 Unsure: 3

The first item was correct; it was a separable phrasal verb and 13 students answered it correctly and 6 students were wrong and just one was unsure of his answer. Thus, the majority of participants did not have problems with the distinction between separable and inseparable phrasal verbs in this item.

In contrast, in the second item students got unsatisfactory results, 6 students answered correctly and 10 incorrectly and the last 4 students were not sure of their answer. In this sentence, the phrasal verb “call on” is inseparable, so the sentence is wrong, the correct one is “John called on Mary, but she wasn’t home”, but most of the students got confused with it. Thus, I can conclude that students have difficulties identifying when a phrasal verb can be separated or not.

In the third statement, from 20 students, 7 of them chose the right option and 10 students did not answer correctly and the rest was not sure of their answer. In this case, when the phrasal verb has an object pronoun it must be between the verb and the particle. This item contained a separable phrasal verb, and the correct sentence is “the terrorist blew it up”. According with the results, it could be noticed that students do not seem to know clearly how the object pronouns work in phrasal verbs.

The next items in the exercise show these results.

Table 5: Item 4, 5, 6

Item	4) <i>let's ask them for a meal</i>	5) <i>the bills often add money to up than she earns</i>	6) <i>Joe asked out Mary last night, and they went to see a movie</i>
Type	Separable	Inseparable	Separable
Students' answers	Correct: 9 Incorrect: 3 Unsure: 8	Correct: 8 Incorrect: 9 Unsure: 3	Correct: 7 Incorrect: 11 Unsure: 2

In the fourth item, students did not get really good results, 9 students were correct, 3 were incorrect and 8 students did not know the correct answer. With this result, it is reinforced the

assumption that most of the students had problems identifying the separable phrasal verbs. This item was written correctly, but just few students realized about it.

The following result for this item 5 was regular because 8 students answered that the sentence was right, so they answered well, and 9 answered incorrectly and the rest were not sure. This item was written incorrectly; the correct way is “the bills often add up to money than she earns” the phrasal verb “add up to” is a verb with two particles and it is a non-separable phrasal verb. Hence, as it can be seen, students are not familiarized with phrasal verbs which have more than one particle.

In the following statement, most students failed it, 7 students answered correctly, but 11 students answered incorrectly and 2 were unsure. The sentence was not correctly written, but the majority of the class did not identify the mistake, the phrasal verb is separable. This item showed us once again that students did not have a clear idea between separable and non-separable phrasal verbs.

Now, regarding the following items, these results were obtained.

Table 6: Item 7, 8, 11

Item	7) I have always counted my brother on, when I'm in trouble	8) Will you pick up me from the station?	11) Someone ran a little cat over
Type	Inseparable	Separable	Separable

Students' answers	Correct: 7 Incorrect:4 Unsure: 9	Correct: 8 Incorrect:10 Unsure: 2	Correct: 6 Incorrect:7 Unsure:7
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As observed, the item 7 had a non-separable phrasal verb and 7 students were right and 4 students answered wrong and the rest were not sure, so most of the students failed the item. As I mentioned some lines up, the problem that also this item implies is to identify both types of phrasal verbs, separable and non-separable.

The next item was a separable phrasal verb and students got bad results. Only few students knew the correct answer; just 8 were right and 10 students were incorrect and 2 were unsure.

In the case of the item 11, 6 participants had the correct answer, 7 were not right and also 7 did not have a clear answer. The phrasal verb was separable.

The next table shows us the results obtained.

Table 7: Item 9, 10, 12

Item	9) Keep the noise down.	10) Paid him back.	12) Let me think this over before I give you a final answer.
Type	separable	separable	separable

Students' answers	Correct: 9	Correct: 12	Correct: 12
	Incorrect: 6	Incorrect: 4	Incorrect: 4
	Unsure: 5	Unsure: 4	Unsure: 4

In the following item students got better results than the previous one. So, In the case of the item 9, 9 participants got the correct one and 6 chose incorrect answers and the last 5 were unsure of their answer;

The result for the item 10 showed us that 12 from 20 students answered correctly and 4 students were wrong and the last 4 were not sure of their answer.

As well as in the item 10, the results for the last item showed us that 12 from 20 students answer correctly and 4 students were wrong and the last 4 were not sure of their answer.

Taking into account these results, I can conclude that from the 12 items for this exercise most of them were failed for the students and they were separable phrasal verbs. Furthermore, students showed more problems with separable phrasal verbs, they did not know how to identify them. When the separable verb has an object, it must be between the verb and the particle, but if the verb has a pronoun it must come after the particle. On the other side, students did not show enough problems with non-separable phrasal verbs as separable.

4.2 Questionnaire

The second instrument which was part of this research was a questionnaire and it had opened and closed questions. The first question was opened and it was general, which was: *What are the problems that you face when you are learning a new word?*

The results are showed below.

Table 8: Problems

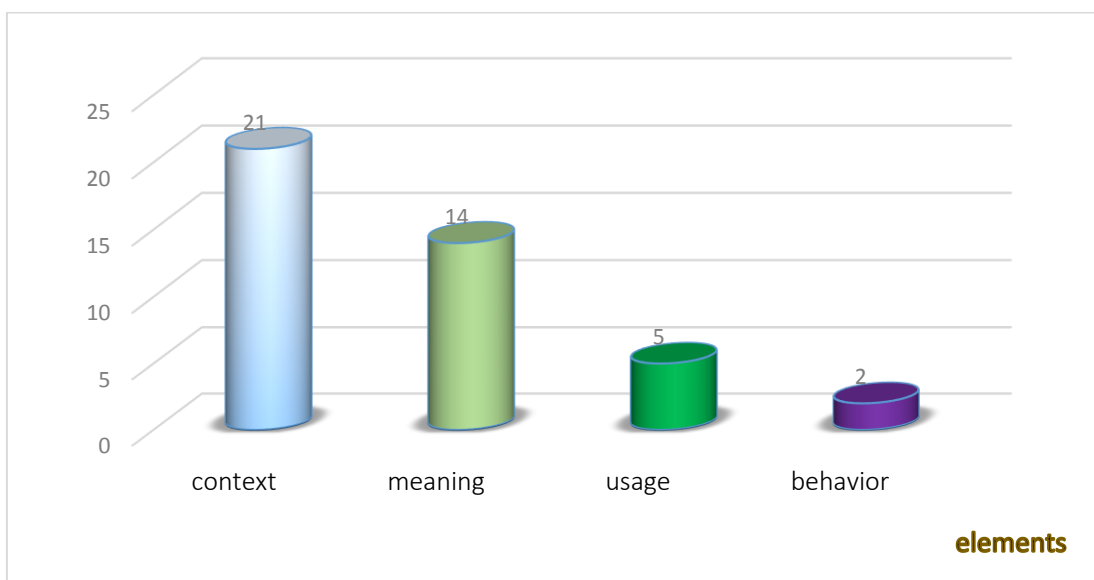
Problem	Context	Meaning	Usage	Behavior
Student's answer	20	13	4	2

As seen, 20 students said that when they have a new word to learn, they find problems to use it correctly, which implies in the correct context. In addition, 13 students mentioned to have problems with the “meaning”. These two points are related; if students know the meaning or the meanings of a word, they will use it appropriately. Furthermore, 4 students said that they had problems with the usage of the word; if it is a noun, verb, adjective and so on and only 2 students said that they faced problems with the word’s spelling, because when they listened to a word was easy, but when they wrote it, they got confused.

The next question was: *What are the main elements to understand a new a word?* For this item, students had to choose two options out of 4, they were context, meaning, usage and

syntactic behavior and for this question it is presented a graph to have a better idea of what students said.

Figure 5: Main elements to understand a word

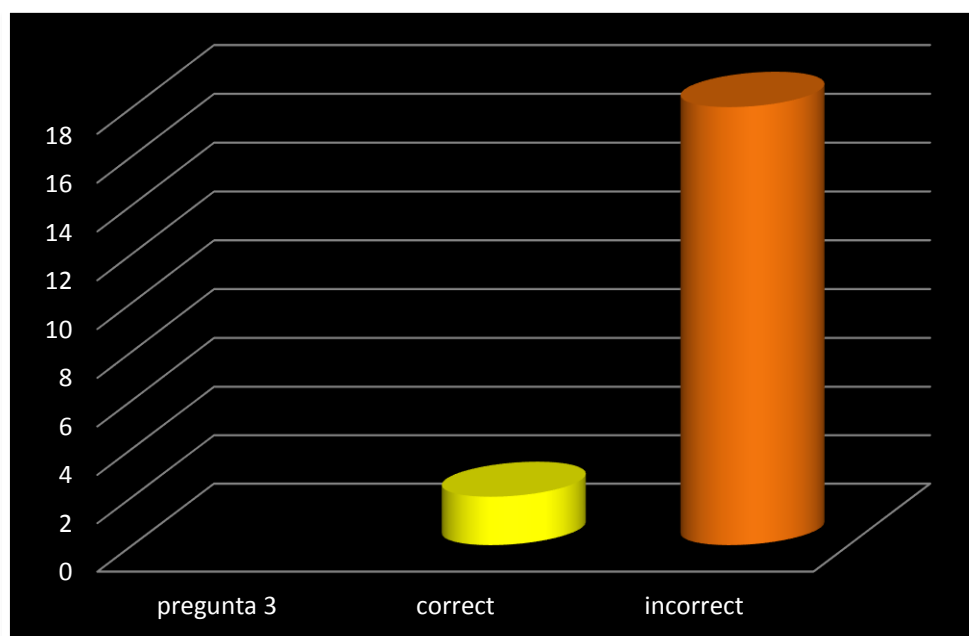


We can see in the graph that 20 students said that the main element to understand a new word is “the context”. McCarthy (1990) suggested that it is important to have knowledge of the words, it means, their features or in which semantic field are located to have information of them. In the second place, 14 students said that “the meaning” of a word is important to understand the words and according with Gairns and Redman (1986, p. 13) “to understand a word fully, a student must know not only what it refers to, but also where the boundaries are that separate it from words of related meaning”. Besides, 5 students said that the usage is one of the elements that students should take into account when they are learning vocabulary and just 2 students said that the syntactic behavior should be considered.

The students' opinion shows that the two most important elements to understand new vocabulary are context and meaning and according with the authors McCarthy (1990) and Gairns and Redman (1986), it is important to work new vocabulary in context, in that way students could understand what role is playing that word.

The following item was a multiple choice question “*What is a phrasal verb?*” and to know what students answered a graph is presented. This graph shows a big different between the correct and the incorrect answer, and as I mentioned before it was a multiple choice question, so, it had 4 different answers: a) it is a common phrase in the informal English, b) it is a phrase that it is formed for more than two verbs, c) it is a verb formed by two sometimes three parts; a verb, an adverb or preposition, d) it is a verb always by a preposition.

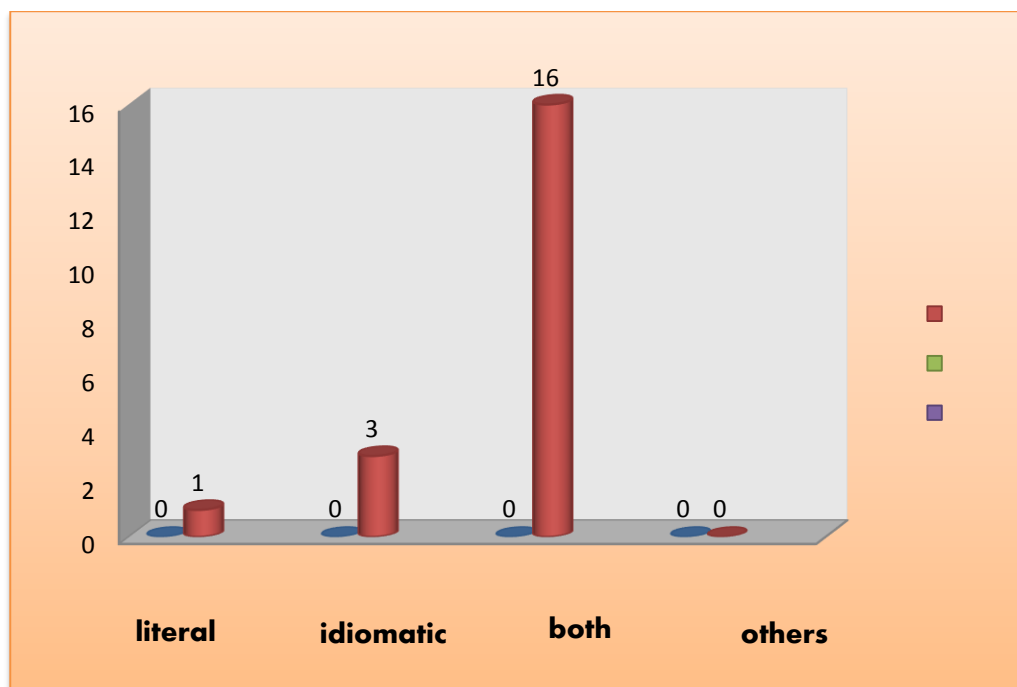
Figure 6: What is a Phrasal Verb?



The correct answer is letter (C) but just 2 students answered correctly and the other 18 students thought that the correct answer was letter (D), but they were wrong. As a result of this, it is noticed that students do not have a clear idea of what a phrasal verb implies, and the problem starts here, in this point; students should know what the phrasal verb is; moreover, students may identify this kind of verb. A phrasal verb is not a verb always followed by a preposition. According with Walter (2008, p. 235) “a phrasal verb is a verb followed by an adverb or preposition”

The following item is an opened question. It was: *Which kinds of phrasal verbs cause you more problems?* In order to have a clearer idea a graph is presented.

Figure7: Problems with Phrasal Verb



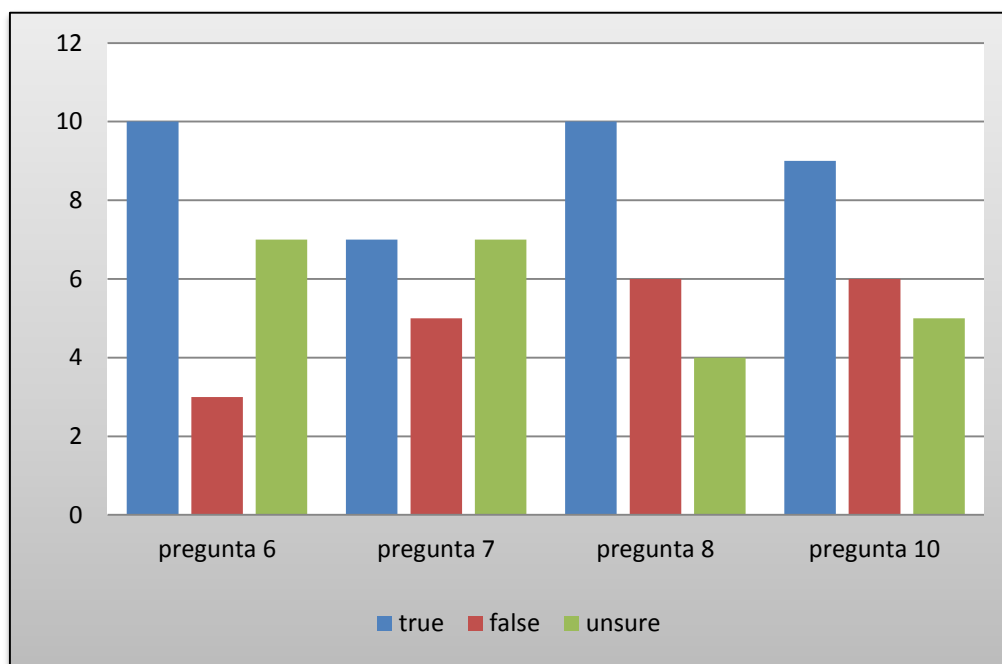
This question was divided into 4 possible problems that students may have with phrasal verbs (literal, idiomatic, both and others). According with the results showed in the graph, 16 students said that they have problems with both kinds of phrasal verbs: literal and idiomatic, 3 students expressed that they have problems with idiomatic verbs and just one person said that he had some difficulties with literal verbs and another person suggested another problem which is not in the list; it is separable and non-separable phrasal verbs.

Taking into account the highest result that students pointed out, they cannot say that one kind of phrasal verb is easier than the other, both are important for them, because phrasal verbs have some difficulties. Maybe it is not the verb the big problem, but the particle may have for this sort of vocabulary. I can say that I agree with the students, we should focus on working with these two kinds of phrasal verbs and if not just to identify or learn what verbs are literal or idiomatic, they have other features as if the verbs are separable or not as one student suggested or how many times the verb could be combined with other particles.

The next item was designed with some statements that have different kinds of phrasal verbs, some sentences are right and others are wrong and the objective of this exercise was to know if students can identify the correct ones or not.

The results are shown in the following graph.

Figure 8: Kind of Phrasal Verb



The exercise had 4 statements and students had to answer with true, false or unsure; the first one was *phrasal verbs do not have to have an object, e.g. slow down*, this is a correct sentence, because the verb is an intransitive verb, in other words, it cannot be separable. From 20 students, 10 answered correctly, 3 students were wrong and 7 were not sure of their answer. Half of students could identify the verb *slow down* as a non-separable and the other half did not know if the verb could come with an object or not. Although the verb that was chosen for this item was a common verb, not all students knew if it is a transitive or intransitive phrasal verb.

The second item was *I'll put my jacket on*. It is a phrase with a transitive phrasal verb and this is a correct sentence, because the phrasal verb “put on” is a transitive verb, it means, it can be separable and this verb can have an object and it must be between the verb and the particle,

and this was a little short explanation. Taking into account this grammatical point, 7 students answered well, 5 of them were wrong and the rest did not know how to answer it, they were unsure. Accordingly, 13 students of 20 did not know what the transitive phrasal verbs were and how they worked and few students could identify the verb.

The third item was “*look my dog after*”; it is a separable phrasal verb and this sentence is wrong because the verb “look after” is a non-separable phrasal verb, so the object must be after the preposition and the result was regular, 10 students of 20 answered correctly and the other half was wrong, 6 participants said that the sentence was right and 4 were unsure of it. It could be said that some students can identify intransitive phrasal verbs, but others cannot yet. Thus, probably more practice is required at this point.

The last item for this exercise was *some phrasal verbs are made up of more than one preposition* and the item is wrong, because phrasal verbs do not have more than one preposition, they have a preposition or an adverb after the verb, this sort of phrasal verbs have more than two particles, for example: “look forward to” it has a verb, adverb and a preposition, and we can find more examples like this. However, only 9 students had the correct answer, 6 answered incorrectly and the last 5 students were not sure.

It can be concluded with this small exercise that more than half of the students face problems with some transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs, not with all. We are in touch with some of them because we find them in readings, at the time when we speak or listen to something, but on the other side there are many phrasal verbs that we do not know and when we see them, we do not know how they work and we are in some trouble.

Up to now problems focused on phrasal verbs have been discussed, but now in this part I turn the page because the following three questions are based on strategies that a teacher and students implement or use to learn this kind of lexicon. In the first question, students mentioned at least two strategies that *their teacher used to teach phrasal verb*. The findings are shown in the following table.

Table 9: Strategies

Strategy	Number of students
Context	2
Dictionary	2
Readings	7
Examples	5
Practicing	4
Synonyms	4

As it can be seen, students mentioned 6 different strategies, they were **context, dictionary, readings, examples, practicing and synonyms**, but the most selected strategy for the students was reading and they mentioned that their teacher gives them different kind of reading where they can find examples of phrasal verbs and they have to look up their meanings. Besides, another students said that they like to work with strategies, because it is

easier to guess the meaning of a phrasal verb by the context. We know that this vocabulary is informal and is commonly part of the spoken English, but we also find this vocabulary in the books and working phrasal verbs with readings is great for students. A reading is almost the same as context, but it has a plus because the student has a whole context.

The following strategy that students mentioned was to write examples. They write a small dialogue by integrating some phrasal verbs and then practicing it with their classmates. It is common to write examples for whatever topic that we are learning because this is one of the most common ways used to understand words and the examples may be sentences or small dialogs and when a teacher is teaching any topic the first thing that he or she does is to write an example. Also, the books are designed with a bunch of exercises and I this is also a way to practice the language.

Another strategy expressed by students was practicing, students thought that this is important, too because a way to learn something is practicing. Some students mentioned that when they learned a new phrasal verb their teacher asked them to practice it with a small dialog and practice it with a partner and in that way they could remember the phrasal verb.

As well as practicing the strategy of using “synonyms” got the same result. Hence, few students said that their teacher suggested writing a similar word for the phrasal verb that they were learning, because there are some phrasal verbs that are hard to remember, but if there are synonyms for them, we can relate those words and remember the phrasal verbs.

Also, there were two students who wrote context, said that a phrasal verb in context is one of the strategies that their teacher has implemented and it has been useful. They argued that when

they find an idiomatic phrasal verb, they can have some idea of what it means, but if they find this word alone, it is harder to know the meaning and on the other hand when they have literal phrasal verbs without a context they do not have too many problems because they are easier to guess. According to Gairns and Redman (1986), and McCarthy (1990), student should be involved in the context where the words are related, in that way, it will be easier for the student to have a better understanding of the words.

According to students, another strategy that the teacher uses when she teaches phrasal verbs was the use of the dictionary, students said that when they are working with this vocabulary, teacher asks them to look up the verbs in the dictionary to know the meaning or the meanings that a verb may have. Some verbs have different particles and furthermore they have more than one meaning and the dictionary gives some examples of it. Besides with the help of a dictionary a student can identify if the verb is separable or non-separable, because some dictionaries have this modality and it is useful for them. Another point that students said was that a dictionary helped them to know the correct pronunciation of the new words.

As a follow up, students were asked about the usefulness of the strategies that they used. Students agreed that all of the mentioned strategies were useful. For example, the context and reading strategies are useful to have a general idea in a passage about the meaning of phrasal verbs. Maybe the student does not really understand them, but the context is a big help to get the meaning.

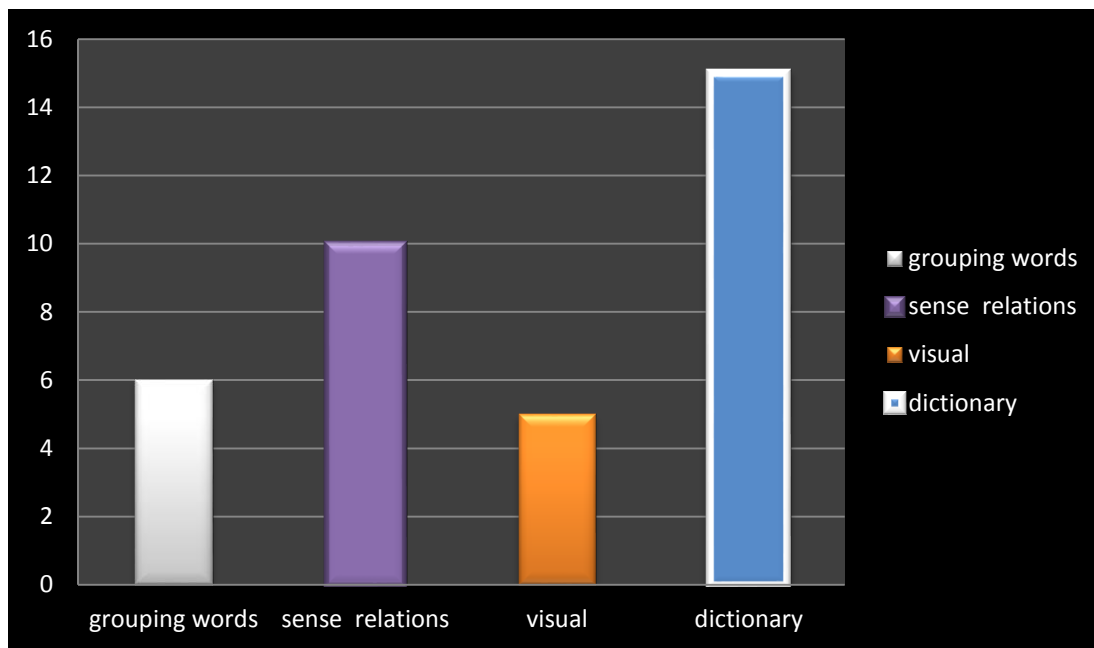
Some students agreed that practicing is a good strategy because their teacher said to them that phrasal verbs should be learned by heart and we know that this sort of vocabulary as others are taught with examples and exercises, but a way to learn this vocabulary is to practice them as much as possible and it is better when you practice with someone else.

Students pointed out that the use of a phrasal verb dictionary is rewarding because it provides helpful examples and a short explanation to make more understandable the phrasal verb and a special dictionary for this lexicon is better than a common one, so it is advisable to have one from students' point of view in order to improve specific words as phrasal verbs.

Finally, student commented that all these strategies are important to be implemented in the classroom and also few students said that not all the teachers are interested in this kind of vocabulary.

Besides the already stated ideas related to strategies, students were also asked about the *strategies they have implemented to learn phrasal verbs*. Here it is illustrated what students said on the basis of the provided options.

Figure 9: Strategies by Students



According to the results in the graph, the most popular strategy for the students was “the dictionary” with 15 votes and by taking into account the previous information, students said that using a dictionary is one of the strategies that their teacher used in the class and the students have adopted it, too. A dictionary is really helpful and it is great to know that in this moment of technological changes students look up information in a dictionary or a book.

In the second place was “sense relations” and 10 students voted for that strategy and this is based on two opposite groups and on one hand is the sameness and on the other hand is the oppositeness, in other words, students used synonyms and antonyms to relate words. In any language we must learn a word of words and a good strategy to achieve this objective is to use similar words, maybe you have to learn some phrasal verbs, but there are picky verbs to

remember, so you can use another way to learn them and that strategy may be to write a synonym or an antonym for that phrasal verb.

The third strategy was “grouping words” and 6 students agreed with this strategy. They argued that for this kind of vocabulary it is a good idea to work first with literal and then with idiomatic phrasal verbs. In that way, they may have a better understanding and it happens with other vocabulary. For example, when students have to learn fruits and vegetables, the teacher makes two groups she does not combine both and this is a good idea to work with phrasal verbs, students should separate verbs and make various groups.

Few students said that they implemented the visual strategy, because they were visual people and when they saw a picture they could remember something instead of writing or listening something, therefore when they worked with phrasal verbs, they drew a meaningful image and they also added an example of it and this is an strategy that some students implemented to learn new vocabulary.

I can conclude with these results that all the participants’ strategies are different from each other and he or she has his or her own way to learn anything as specific vocabulary like phrasal verbs, but it is important to know what our best way is to achieve what we want and the case of phrasal verb there are some strategies as the most common ones like Pictionary or exemplifying as reading.

4.3 Interview

The last instrument was the interview for the teacher in charge of the English intermediate course. The interview with opened questions lasted 4 minutes and 21seconds. (See appendix 3) The first one was: *What are the main elements that students need to learn in a word?*

Teacher: *Yeah! Usually when I see the phrasal verb, students have to be aware that a phrasal verb is like new word, know first of all...Is a combined verb with adverb other linguistic resources has a different way exactly depending of the context of the word.*

Well, the teacher's answer was not the answer I waited, because she did not mention the elements that a student should take into account when he is learning new vocabulary. Nevertheless, she said that it is important to be aware that a phrasal verb is a new word because it is a combined word and it depends on some aspects like the context.

The second question was: *Could you give a short description about what is a phrasal verb?*

Teacher: *It's a combination of a verb with and adverbial phrase or a preposition which has a different meaning from the verb itself.*

The teacher gave me a clear and complete definition and it agrees with Wehmeier's (2000) definition: a **phrasal verb** or sometimes called multi-words verbs are verbs that consist of two or sometimes three words. The first word is a verb and it is followed by an adverb or a preposition. As the teacher and the author explained; phrasal verbs are complex because their meaning depends on the adverb or preposition that they have. However, there was an item, which I asked to the students; *what is a phrasal verb?* And 18 students answered incorrectly

and only 2 students knew the right answer, so the result is opposite about what the teacher said. She has told her students what a phrasal verb is, but according with this result they have not still understood it.

The following question was *we know that there are two different kinds of phrasal verbs, literal and idiomatic, how do you introduce this vocabulary to your students?*

Teacher: *Usually idiomatic phrasal verbs are introduced with cultural issues, no? Because they also depend on who uses them. The age of the person, for example there are young people who use certain phrasal verb that are not really used by old people or children... so it has to do cultural taking into account age of the speaker, gender of the speaker and that's something that you need to tell them.*

I have not thought before what the teacher said, we know that the context is an important piece in teaching phrasal verbs, but she argued that the most important is to know who is speaking, because it is different from a male or female person and whether that person is young or old and we take various roles and we do not express as when we are with friends or family or if we are in others places apart from our hometown So, the teacher's opinion seemed to me a useful point to take into account when a teacher applies any strategy for this vocabulary. In other words, it is not only to say a phrasal verb, students should know where, when and with whom to use this vocabulary as I mentioned. It is not the same to talk with a teenager or an adult, we must have in mind the cultural issues too.

Then, I asked her, *what is more difficult for the students literal or idiomatic?*

Teacher: Her answer was both *and it's not like they're difficult, but they're eh it's a complex issue teaching phrasal verb, but I think when they are having a background information like context, culture you cannot teach a language, any part of language by itself; you have to take into account everything, social rules, pragmatic, cultural issues.*

The teacher thinks that any language is difficult to learn when the student does not realize what a language implies, it means, the students have to be aware that a language has features and they have to be taken into account to understand some issues. In this case, the teacher explains that phrasal verbs are not really difficult to learn, but it has some important points that students should know to comprehend this sort of lexicon, some of them are the context and it is one of the most important elements. Another important point is culture and as the teacher mentioned before “who the speaker is”. Probably students are not quite conscious about these issues and that is why they probably think or have the idea that phrasal verbs are not easy to learn, but I agree with the teacher when she says “they are not difficult, they are complex”.

Continuing with the questions I also asked the teacher, *have you identified some problems that your students have?*

Teacher: *No, No really specifically I think they have problems when they are learning a second language like issues of social cultural things.*

According with the teacher's opinion, learning phrasal verbs is not a problem for the students. There are other issues in which students face problems. Although the instruments that were applied in the teacher's class got bad results and taking into account the questionnaire few

students mentioned something important; teachers do not consider some elements of a language as important as others. Students said that they have not checked or worked with this kind of vocabulary at all and they would like to know more about phrasal verbs. I think all the pieces of any language are important because if you lose one, you cannot complete the whole puzzle.

When learning or teaching something, teachers and students tend to use some strategies, so I asked the teacher the following question: *How do you introduce this vocabulary, in other words, which strategies do you use?*

Teacher: *Well, first I never tell them the word or the phrasal verb and the meaning, I usually write a sentence or give it in a dialog or in a conversation always in context, so, they can see how this is in an immersed context*

The teacher explained that she does not like to teach phrasal verbs without a context, in other words; she does not give the students a list of this vocabulary and its meaning. Although, she has observed that students prefer having copies full of new words and their meaning because students seem to be accustomed to working in that way with this sub skill. The teacher never uses single words, she introduces phrasal verbs in context or in a dialogue as she said before; phrasal verbs are complex vocabulary and it should be taught with cultural issues.

Besides that, I asked the teacher: *Do you want to give a strategy or something that it can help me to teach vocabulary?*

The teacher suggested: *concerning phrasal verb specifically, my only recommendation for any person is always try to put it in context always taking into account*

that the person that is saying it, where they are and also taking into account that many of these phrasal verbs have to do with informal language that is something that students have to learn.

According with the teacher's recommendation, teacher and students should teach and learn phrasal verbs always in context, never single words and the translation. In the previous chapters, it was explained that there are literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs; the first ones are not difficult to understand what they mean, but on the other side, the second ones need to be in context to get the idea, and if the phrasal verb is alone, student cannot identify if the verb is transitive or intransitive, but if students see it in a text they could identify this aspect and others.

The last point that the teacher mentioned: *it is really important, students should know that phrasal verbs are part of an informal language; this vocabulary is accepted in spoken language or in informal text or writings, but not for a formal language.* The teacher exemplified this situation by making reference to those students who have written their thesis, they wrote phrasal verbs and this vocabulary is not academically accepted in these kinds of works.

CHAPTER V: CONCLUSIONS

This chapter presents the conclusions, which were obtained with three different instruments and with the teacher's and students' participation in this research. In addition to this, the two research questions developed in the first chapter are stated and also the findings obtained in this work.

5.1 Findings

As it was mentioned before, the objective for this work is to identify the most common problems that students at intermediate level in an ELT face with phrasal verbs and the strategies that could be followed to overcome this learning situation that they face. In this project, 3 research questions were stated:

RQ1: What are the most common problems in learning phrasal verbs for the students at intermediate level?

RQ2: What are the strategies that students at intermediate level suggest to learn phrasal verbs?

RQ3: What are the strategies that a teacher suggests to learn phrasal verbs?

Answering the first research question and taking into account the results from chapter IV, it can be concluded that students have problems with phrasal verbs and they do not get this sort of vocabulary for various reasons. First of all, they do not clearly know what a phrasal verb is. The evidence of this assumption was found in the questionnaire in one of the items where just 2 students answered correctly and the other 18 students did not know it. I consider the

problem starts here; the definition of the phrasal verb is not clear at all. In this point and as the teacher mentioned in the interview students should know that phrasal verbs are new words, and students must be aware of who the speaker is, the cultural aspects and other issues implied in the learning of this lexicon.

Another problem found in the results is idiomatic and literal phrasal verbs and according with the results in the test, 16 students said that they have problems with both kinds of phrasal verbs. In the first exercise from the applied test, which had 10 items, the majority of students failed in 7 items and in the last 3 items students got better results, so I can infer, they did not identify the correct meanings from the majority of the items and the phrasal verbs were written with a context, but even so students got confused. Thus, it seems to be that more practice is required in the use of phrasal verbs.

Another important finding is that not only students have problems with idiomatic and literal phrasal verbs, they also faced problems with separable and non-separable exercises. The majority of students showed they did not know transitive or intransitive phrasal verbs and besides they did not how and where an object pronoun and an object noun have to be placed. Thus, this is an important issue that must be studied in detail with the guide of the teacher. The last point is phrasal verbs with more than one particle; it was noticed in the test students did not know what role they have in grammatical aspects so that more practice seems to be required in this regard.

According with the second research questions students argued that there are some strategies that they have implemented to learn phrasal verbs; the majority agreed that write examples has been a useful strategy as the usage of synonyms. Also, students mentioned the use of dictionary is an important tool; because, when the students look up a phrasal verb besides the meaning and an example the dictionary gives the type of phrasal verb (separable or non-separable).

On the contrary considering the strategies that the teacher said in the interview, teacher should introduce phrasal verbs always in context; it could be in a sentence or in a dialog. In addition, working with idiomatic phrasal verbs seems to be more difficult than literal on basis of the results obtained, so they should be introduced with a context to make the understanding of their meaning less complex. Another strategy besides context and that teacher mentioned is the importance of working with readings. This strategy is similar to context, because both strategies help students to have a clearer idea of what a phrasal verb may mean.

5.2 Pedagogical implications

First of all, I want to say that I decided to do this research because I am really interested in this kind of lexicon. I consider phrasal verbs an important part of the spoken English and we as learners and future teachers must communicate not only with academic vocabulary but also with informal language because of different situations.

Phrasal verbs are an important piece in spoken language and they are commonly used in an informal way; it is part of everyday English and students must be well prepared not only in an

academic or standard English but in both areas; teaching education needs qualified teachers, other words, teachers who know what the students and society's needs are.

5.3 Limitations of the study

This work faced few limitations: one of them was that the instruments were just applied in one group of intermediate level from a total of four groups, so this research was worked with just a small part of the whole students' population of the same level. Another limitation was the time; there was not enough time to develop this research as it had to be finished on a specific time.

5.4 Suggestions for further research

After having completed this research, some ideas have arisen to give a follow-up to this project, and they can provide more contributions to this research in order to help students in their learning of phrasal verbs.

First of all, some English classes, such as intermediate or upper intermediate levels because in those classes phrasal verbs are commonly taught, could be recorded in order to identify how frequently teachers and students use phrasal verb to communicate in the classroom so that we can identify to what extend the classroom context promotes the use of this lexicon and makes less complex its learning.

Another possible research is to observe an English class or classes, but when the teacher has a focus on phrasal verbs. The purpose for this idea will be to explore and identify the teachers' strategies used to introduce this kind of vocabulary to the students. In this way, with help of the teachers, we will be able to identify some of the most suitable and useful strategies for teaching and learning phrasal verbs.

Vocabulary is an important issue in learning English, in that way the student could communicate with people in different situations.

After identifying the problems, it is necessary to look for solutions taking into account some strategies mentioned in the chapter II by some authors and the teacher's suggestions in the interview and the students' opinions.

5.5 Reflective Account

I want to say many things about this research. At the beginning, I was a little worried because I did not know what to research about. Later, I decided about my topic and I noticed it would be complicated because there was not too much information in the books, but with the support of my thesis supervisor I knew how to look for the appropriate topics. Thus, the work started in that step and I began to get stressed, but at the same time I was learning things that I did not see before and it made feel that I needed to learn more about phrasal verbs. I just knew simple things and then I felt happy about having chosen that topic.

The first chapters were not too complicated, but the chapter IV was the hardest for me, because I had many doubts and how to interpret the whole information and after my research seminar teacher explained to me that it was a heavy work; my laptop and I only both.

Now my research is done and I think all the time that I spent doing it, many times I stayed at home working on it instead of going out with my friends or doing other activities. I feel so proud of myself now because this work is something that helped me to know that learning a language is learning all the time, I mean, you never stop learning; there is always something we must be a little curious about. Developing a thesis made me feel good and bad feelings, but I decided to stay with the best; it was a total satisfaction.

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Appendix 1

BENEMERITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA
FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

This questionnaire is part of a Project being carried out by Research Seminar II; the main objective for this instrument is to collect data to know the problems students of Target Language IV have with phrasal verbs. It would be appreciated if you could complete this questionnaire; it will take you a couple of minutes.

1. What are the problems that you face when you are learning a new word?

2. What are the main elements to understand a new word? (choose two)

- ☐ Context
- ☐ Meaning
- ☐ The usage
- ☐ Syntactic behavior

3. What is a phrasal verb?(Circle your answer)

- a) It is a common phrase in the informal English.
- b) It is a phrase that it is formed for more than two verbs.
- c) It is a verb formed by two sometimes three parts; a verb, an adverb or preposition.
- d) It is a verb always followed by a preposition.

4. Which kind of phrasal verbs cause you more problems? (tick your answer)

_____ Literal meaning

_____ Idiomatic meaning

_____ Both

_____ Others:

5. Different phrasal verbs have different grammatical aspects. (Read the statements and check with a True, False or Unsure

True False Unsure

6. Phrasal verbs do not have to have an object, e.g. slow down			
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7. I'll put my jacket on. It is a phrase with a transitive phrasal verb.			
8. "Look my dog after" it is a separable phrasal verb.			
9. Some phrasal verbs are made up of more than one preposition.			

10. Which strategies has your teacher used to teach phrasal verbs? (Mention at least two)

11. Were they useful? Yes/No(explain your answer)

12. Which strategies have you implemented to learn phrasal verbs?(check with a at least two and explain why)

- _____ grouping words
- _____ Sense relations (synonymy and antonym)

_____ Visual aids

_____ Dictionary word

_____ Others:

Why? _____

Appendix 2

BENEMERITA UNIVERSIDAD AUTONOMA DE PUEBLA

FACULTAD DE LENGUAS

Test: Phrasal Verbs

Target Language Level _____

Date: _____

Female: _____

Male: _____

Instructions: read the sentences and circle the definition for every phrasal verb

1. My boss **made out** a check for ten pounds. (**gave/ wrote/ used/ paid**)
2. I have **run out of** chalk; will you fetch some, Sarah? (**found/ took/ have not left / bought enough**)
3. When the grandma is seeing some old pictures, she **looks back** special events. (**get happy/ cry/ dream/ remember**)
4. When Bod and Sally got their house, it was in bad state, so they spent six months **doing it up**. (**buying/ repairing/ cleaning/ investing**)
5. My brother **takes after** my dad with his bad temper. (**resemble / follow/ get angry/ discuss**)
6. The teacher said he struggled to **make out** my handwriting. It's always terrible. (**read / decipher – correct/ grade**)
7. When you back to England you must **brush up** your French by enrolling in an evening class. (**learn/ practice/ speak/ improve**)

8. Joe's mother **brought him up** well. She loved and behaved him, too. (**appreciate/ nurture/ teach/ spoil**)
9. The children promised to **come over**, but they never do. (**travel/ study/ visit/ call**)
10. Rita **turned down** the new job in Iraq for security reasons. (**accepted/ refused/ changed/ applied for**)

Instructions: read the sentences and check with () if it is **correct, incorrect or unsure** according with the phrasal verb.

Separable and non-separable phrasal verb	Correct	incorrect	unsure
11. We here you're felling low, so we've come to cheer you up.			
12. John called Mary on, but she wasn't home.			
13. The terrorist blew up it.			
14. Let's ask them out for a meal.			
15. The bills often add money to up than she earns.			
16. Joe asked out Mary last night, and they went to see a movie.			
17. I have always counted my brother on, when I'm in trouble			
18. Will you pick up me from the station?			
19. Keep the noise down.			
20. Paid him back.			
21. Someone ran a little cat over.			
22. Let me think this over before I give you a final answer.			

Appendix 3

Interview

A- Hi teacher! The purpose for this interview is what problems students of target language IV face with some Phrasal Verbs.

The first question is: what are the main elements that students need to learn a word?

B- What do you mean elements?

A- Mmm for example: it is important the meaning, the context, if the word has some synonyms or antonyms, these kind of elements are important for the students

B- Yeah! Usually when I see the phrasal verb, students have to be aware that a phrasal verb is like new word, know first of all

A- Ok!

B- Is a combined verb with adverb other linguistic resources has a different meaning exactly depending of the context of the word.

A- Could you give a short description about what is a phrasal verb?

B- It's a combination of a verb with and adverbial phrase or a preposition which has a different meaning from the verb itself.

A- Ok, we know that there are two different kind of phrasal verb literal and idiomatic, how do you introduce this vocabulary to your students?

B- Usually idiomatic phrasal verbs are introduced with cultural issues, no? Because they also depend on who uses them. The age of the person, for example there are Jung people who use certain phrasal verb that are not really use by old people or children.,

so it has to do cultural taking into account age of the speaker, gender of the speaker and that's something that you need to tell them

A- Ehh, so, with this that you have already mentioned, what is more difficult for the students literal or idiomatic?

B- I think both

A- Yeah!!

B- Yeah! And it's not like they're difficult, but they're eh it's a complex issue teaching phrasal verb, but I think when they are having a background information like context, culture you cannot teach a language, any part of language by itself; you have to take into account everything, social rules, pragmatic, cultural issues.

A- Have you identified some problems that your students have?

B- Not really specifically

A- No

B- No, I think they have problems when they are learning a second language like issues of social cultural things

A- Ehh ok! Mmm... How do you introduce this vocabulary, it means, and which strategies do you use?

B- Well, first I never tell them the word or the phrasal verb and the meaning, I usually write a sentence or give it in a dialog or in a conversation always in context, so, they can see how this is amercing context

A- Mmm there is any specific strategy that you use or...o yeah! Introducing it in context never by itself, because I have seen that some students prefer having the list of phrasal verb and the translations, I never do that.

A- Oh! Single words ehh.. it's not easy to work

B- Yeah! Not to me!

A- Ok! Ehh!! Do you want to give a strategy or something that it can help me to teach vocabulary?

B- Well, concerning phrasal verb specifically, my only recommendation for any person is always try to put it in context always taking into account who the person that is saying it is, where they are and also taking into account that many of this phrasal verb have to do with informal language that is something with students have to learn, because sometimes in the thesis they write phrasal verbs, no?

A- Yeah!

B- This is not academically accepted, that's something that they need to know. I mean by culture they need to learn that these words have a specific context with certain speaker and in spoken language basically not in the written.

A- Ok! Thank you teacher for your recommendation.

B- Your welcome Adriana, hope you finish fast

A- Thanks