A Comparison of the Use of Phrasal Verbs in English and Arabic

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Abstract:

This paper is intended to discuss the syntactic and semantic feature of the phrasal verbs in Arabic and English. A phrasal verbs can be defined as a verb and a preposition coming together resulting new possibilities of idiomatic meaning throws up interesting problems at the level of the interaction of morphology and syntax and it behaves as a syntactic and semantic unit .

The phrasal verb consists of a verb, usually a monosyllabic verb of action or movement such as 'go', "put" in English and ataa "come" in Arabic plus one more particle . The particle may be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can act as either adverb or preposition often the meaning of these combination is idiomatic and cannot be determined by knowing their individual parts .Because of this, phrasal verbs are often difficult to master for students of Arabic and English as a second language. This thesis concerned with phrasal verbs in English and Arabic and the study consist of four chapters.

Chapter one introduces the topic, problems, the main objectives and justification. It also tackles the method and methodology and value. Chapter two deals with the syntactic and semantic features of English phrasal verbs in the review of literature. Chapter three studies the syntactic structure of Arabic phrasal verbs. It starts with

the introduction to Arabic syntactic structure, then components of phrasal verbs, finally the frame and the structure of Arabic phrasal verbs. Chapter three explains the materials and the method and also the methodology of the study. Chapter three indicates the comparison between Arabic and English multi-word items, it contains the conclusion and recommendation.

Key words: English phrasal verbs, Arabic verbal phrases

Introduction

The study of the usage of phrasal verbs and it English and it comparison to Arabic Language is an approach to study the usage of words and improve the communication skill. Therefore, the present study is a diagnostic study of the use of phrasal verb in both the languages- in English and in Arabic. Admittedly, not much work has been done in this field. Since this concept is recently developed, one might take little more time to get popularity of this study.

The researcher made a humble attempt to begin with the study selecting some sample of phrasal verbs to examine with the counterpart Arabic language. This study deals with phrasal verbs in English and Arabic. Phrasal verbs are a common combination of verb and preposition , a verb and an adverb or a verb with both an adverb and preposition ." non-native speaker of English avoid using phrasal verbs constructions, especially those which are not frequently used, simply because they find them difficult to handle. This point has been emphasized by Cowie and Mackin (1978:6)and Seidle and McMordie (1978:114).

Many verbs in English can be combined with an adverb or a preposition. A phrasal verb used in a literal sense with a preposition is easy to understand.

(1) "He walked across the square".

Verb and adverb construction are also to be understood when used literally.

Alexander argues that verbs that indicate movement and combine freely with particles and prepositions are not considered phrasal verbs. For example, the verb' went' in he down the' hill' can be replaced with 'hurried',' ran', or' walked'; and according to Alexander; 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". They should be avoided in academic writing.

The Arabic phrasal verb is the typical a sentence – order subject –verb –object. Arabic is the classified as VSO language. A simple sentence in Arabic like (1) has the structure displayed in (2)

> (4) ŝtaraa   Zeyd-un   bayt-an
> Translition(t1) bought   Zeyd-Nom.   house.
> Translition(t2)   'Zeyd bought a house'
> (5) S: V   N1   N2

Literature Review

Definitions of English Phrasal Verbs:

A Phrasal verb is a type of verb in English that operates more or less like a phrase than that of a word in a given sentence. Initially, the concept in Broukal and Woods (1990:189) is mentioned as "the combination of a verb + an adverb particle and sometimes the particle may be followed by a preposition. It may be said that "most of the particles look like preposition but act adverbs , and usually change the meaning of the verb they are connected" [1].

Kollin (1982:12) when she states that "phrasal verbs are common structures in English. They consist of a verb combined with a preposition like word, known as particle"[2]. She goes on

to say that "phrasal verbs include both two-and three- word strings"[3.] Examples of such phrasal verbs are 'give up', 'look after', and 'hand in' which include two strings while 'put up with', 'give in to', and 'put up for' include three strings.

Phrasal verbs are considered by Graver (1963: 261) as "semicompounds", whereas Palmer (1965:180) regards them as "single units in the grammar." He elaborates the reasons for naming them like that by saying that "there are severe collocations restriction"[4]. We can give up but not give down. We can look after someone but not look before him. Crystal in the *Cambridge Encyclopedia of the English Language* calls "this linguistic phenomenon a "Multi-word verb" that is best described as a lexeme, a unit of meaning that may be greater than a single word" [5]. Palmer (1965) concerning" the treatment of phrasal verbs as single units is quite true and has a solid basis simply because we have to place certain prepositions or adverbs after certain verbs in order to convey certain meanings or concepts" [6] .

The term phrasal verbs is preferred because it seems to be the least controversial and the most comprehensive. That other terms are not enough. For example, two –word verbs will exclude do away with whereas verb-Particle combination cannot include "take after" because after is not a Particle (intransitive preposition) but an object take preposition. Phrasal verbs serves well because it succinctly indicates that it contains a Verb and some other elements which altogether make up a phrase. "up with', 'call off', 'drink up', 'take down', 'come to', 'look up'; here The particle may be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can act as either adverb or preposition.

Origin of Phrasal verbs

It is interesting to note that   Prepositions and adverbs can have a literal meaning which is spatial or "orientational" and

then as happens with all words metaphorical meanings develop that are systematic extensions from the original core meaning. Many verbs in English can interact with an adverb or a preposition, and the verb + preposition/adverb complex is readily understood when used in its literal sense.

(8)He walked across the square.

(9)She opened the shutters and looked outside.

(10)When he heard the crash, he looked up.

The function of prepositional phrase particle in such clauses is to show the relationship between the action (*walked*, *opened*, *looked*) and the relative positioning, action or state of the subject. Even when such prepositions appear alone and are hence adverbs/particles, they have a retrievable prepositional object.

Thus, *He walked across* clearly shows that the "walking" is "across" a given area. In the case of *He walked across the square*, *across the square* is a prepositional phrase (with *across* as its head word). In both cases, the single -word /multi-words expression (*across* and *across the square*)is independent of the verb. The action of the subject (*walking*) is being portrayed as having

The General Characteristics of the Particles in Phrasal Verb Combinations:

The term particle is used to denote the second component of the phrasal verb which can be either an adverb or a preposition. Jowett (1964:53) states that" the function of the particle is of a great value to this construction because the particle is used to change the meaning of the verb and sometimes, it adds another meaning to the verb, therefore, these particles have the

function of forming new verbs; the meaning of the lexical verbs 'make' or 'take' is different from the meaning of the phrasalized verbs 'make up' and 'take off " [12]. He adds that the particles have four functions which are:

1-The particles make the phrasalized verbs have new meanings which differ from the meaning of the original lexical verbs as in the lexical verbs 'carry' when combined with the particle 'on' to give the meaning of 'continuity'.

2-Some particles do not change the meaning of the lexical verb, yet, they add new meaning to the lexical verbs when they are combined with them to form the phrasal verbs as in 'speak' and 'speak out'. The particle here adds the meaning of 'loudly' to the original verb.

3-Some particles add sense of completion to the meaning lexical verb as in 'carry out' and 'gather up'.

4-Some particles help to form collocations. These particles function as adverbs. The collocation consists of both the verb and the particle (adverb). The particle retains the meaning of both elements as in 'go out'.

III

The Syntactic Structure of Arabic Phrasal Verb

Introduction to Arabic sentence structure.

The typical Arabic sentence - order is verb –subject- object. A is thus classified as a VSO language Let us assume that a simple sentence in Arabic like (a) has the structure displayed in (b)

    (21)   Wulida I –walad fi   misr.
  Translation (t1) - Born   the boy   in   Egypt.
  Translation (t2)-   The boy was born in Egypt.

Arabic sentences are classified as:
(1)Equational sentence.
(2)Verbal sentence.

Equational sentence (ES)

The equational sentence is made up of two parts which are known as the subject and predicate. It does not have a verb.

> (24) .   AL-walad   misri.
> Translation (t1)- The boy   Egyptian.
> Translation(t2)-   The boy is Egyptian.

Although this sentence contains a verb in English, it doesn't in Arabic. Remember that since Arabic doesn't use a present-tense form of "to be," this is a verbless sentence consisting only of a noun and adjective. It literally translates as "The boy Egyptian"; the "is" is understood.

Verbal Sentence (VS)

A verbal sentence is one that contains a verb .It may consist of a verb alone.

Symbolized V as in:

> (27)saqatat
> 'he fell silent'

Or verb + subject+ object, V S O as in (2)

> (28) yaqra   al-walad   kitaab   h(u)
> Translation (t1)- Read   the boy   the book of him.
> Tanslation (t2)- 'the boy read his book'.

Verbal sentences contain a reference to an agent (usually the subject) and an action (the verb).If the verb in the perfect tense, the verb normally precedes the subject; and sentence tells us what happened- that is its function is narration of completed events.

Arabic Prepositional Verbs

English. Similarly, Arabic includes a linguistic item that shares some features of phrasal   verbs   is called prepositional verbs. Like the English phrasal verbs, the Arabic   counterpart includes a verb which can either be intransitive or transitive; the former does   not govern a noun as in nām al-tifl which means' the baby slept'.

On the other hand, the transitive, as Heliel (1995: 144) states," governs either the accusative of a noun, which means that transitive verbs "pass on their objects through themselves, like English transitive verbs", or a preposition with a noun in the genitive case and not the accusative, which means that these verbs "pass on their objects through a preposition". [2]

For example,

(33)- Raji'a ilāa sawābihi means 'he returned to his senses', rajia ilāa.

IV

Comparison between Arabic And English Multi-Word Items (Idioms And Phrasal Verbs)

When we learn a language we must learn its vocabulary. However, the common view that the vocabulary of any given language is a combination of single words is erroneous. Vocabulary, as Schmitt and Carter (2000: 6) state, "includes many units which are larger than individual orthographic words." [1] .Indeed, these units are called multi-word items and are important in understanding language. Multi-word items have certain characteristics that distinguish them from single words and sometimes from each other as well.

English Idioms

The first multi-word item covered in this research is idioms. Idioms are defined by Cacciari and Tabossi (1988: 668) as "strings of words whose semantic interpretation cannot be derived compositionally from the interpretation of their parts".[2] Glucksberg (2001: 68) notes that" the non-logical nature of idioms is what sets them apart from single words because of the "absence" of the relations between their literal meanings and their idiomatic meanings" [3]. A fine example is kick the bucket,

in which he stresses that syntactic and semantic analysis of this item would never produce the meaning of to die.

Arabic Idioms

The origin of Arabic idioms, as Shivtiel (2007: 629) reveals, can be traced back to various sources:

(a) The Qur‟an, e.g. *alā qāb qawsayn* „very close‟. (b) The Bible, e.g. *kabš fidā* „scapegoat‟. (c) Poetry, e.g. *lā nāqa lahu wa-lā jamal* „he has nothing to do with it‟. (d) Folklore, e.g. *watad Juh□ā* „foothold‟. (e) .(f)Technical terms, e.g. *hunā marbat□ al-faras* „there lies the rub‟. (g) Calque,e.g. *ḏarra al-ramād fī al-□uyūn* „to throw dust in someone‟s eyes‟.

The significance of Shivtiel‟s examples is that they indicate the sources of the Arabic idioms, which are religious, literary, historical, and linguistic. These key findings allow the translator to identify not only the source of the idiom, but also the meaning behind it.

For instance, the idiom is based on the folktale of *Juh□ā*, who is a famous person in the Arabic folktales, who was attached to a peg in his old house and kept visiting the house frequently to see the peg. Consequently, a translator who knows the story behind this idiom will be aware of the figurative meaning of this idiom.

The structure of Arabic Idioms.

Most importantly, Arabic idioms are similar to their English counterparts in structure. Siini et al. (1996) state that the structure of idioms in Arabic has the following three classifications based on Arabic sentence structure:

-Verbal idioms: are simply idioms that begin with a verb.
(43)- *aṭlaqa sāqayhi li'l-rīh□i* 'he ran away' as in
xaṭafa al-liṣṣu ḥaqībatahā wa aṭlaqa sāqayhi li'l-rīh□i 'the thief stole her purse and *ran away*'.

- Nominal idioms are idioms that begin with a noun.

(44) - *āliy al-ra□ si* 'confident' as in *wājaha axī almaṣā*

□ iba □ āliya al-ra□ si 'my brother faced life's hardships confidently'.

-Prepositional idioms: are idioms that begin with a preposition.

(45) *□ ala qadamin wa sāq* 'vigorously and ambitiously' as in

sāra al-□ amal □ ala qadamin wa sāq 'work was carried out vigorously and ambitiously'.

Translating Idioms

Based on the above discussion, idioms are not a group of words that can be understood by simply interpreting their individual words only. They are very complex, both syntactically and semantically. Indeed, idioms are one of the most crucial concepts that translators have to grasp because they are, as Cacciari and Tabossi (1988: 668) stress, problematic and frequent in language. On a similar note, Irujo (1986: 287) points out that " due to the difficulty of idioms; whether in understanding, acquiring or translating them, language learners tend to avoid them"[12].

Conclusion and Recommendation

My study has drawn some concrete investigations that phrasal verbs play an important part in English and Arabic languages, with specific applications in spoken English and Arabic. A few simple words are used to offer a large number of different meanings altogether by adding prepositions or adverbs. Arabic and English phrasal verbs refer to a combination consists of lexical verb plus a particle. The particle can be either a preposition or an adverb. Initially, the meaning of the phrasalised combination is not implied in the meaning of the individual units of the phrasal verb.

The presence of the verb-particle constructions in English is traced to English having intransitive preposition (particles), unlike Arabic which has only transitive preposition, for example:

Eg : Ali gets up early (intransitive preposition)

Eg : ?ata bi l-sahan (transitive preposition)

came-he with the –dish

"He brought the dish."

It may be seen that English and Arabic phrasal verbs consist of two basic components: a lexical verb and a particle. The particles have extended to different functions and it is used to change the entire meaning of the verb or add some other meanings.

Admittedly, an idiomatic phrasal verb is a part of sentences that articulate the function of conveying one"s idea. The meaning of an idiomatic phrasal verb depends on the context of the sentence itself, because some idiomatic phrasal verbs may have several meanings. The beauty of learning phrasal verb lies in the unpredictability of their idiomatic meaning and the rules describing how they are embedded into a sentence. The most important aspect of English and Arabic phrasal verb is the focus on the idiomatic usage since a single phrasal verb may carry different meanings.

The study recommends that those who are involved in process of learning and teaching English and Arabic have to fully acquaint themselves with as many phrasal verbs as possible, especially these are frequently used both in speaking and writing exercises .

English and Arabic multi-word items (idioms and phrasal/ prepositional verbs) provides a detailed overview of the syntactic form and semantic content of each type and included in a contrastive analysis of these items in their respective languages.

It was indicated in the overview that multi-word items have significant characteristics that distinguish them from a

single word such as the figurative meaning and fixed structure. The figurative meaning is what makes multi-word items difficult to understand because the literal meaning does not reveal the intended meaning of the item. For instance, „kick the bucket‟ which figuratively means „to die „ cannot be literally understood because it cannot be interpreted by its individual parts .However, there are certain cases in which the literal meaning may be understood, as in the case of „ beating a dead horse‟, which may happen in some cases, but the figurative meaning of „ wasting time discussing a matter‟, has no relation to the literal meaning. Regarding the fixed syntax, the overview indicated that some multi-word items may allow syntactic changes without affecting the metaphorical meaning, such as pull one‟s and bury the hatchet. The two relative idioms allow passsivisation and still keep the figurative meaning intact, but there are cases in which the syntax of multi-word items is frozen and does not allow passivization because it affects the intended meaning, such as shoot the ball and sit on pins and needles.

It is alarming to note that this idiom will puzzle the translator when he/she attempts to translate into Arabic, because it does not exist in the target language. However, there are occasions in which an idiom is shared in English and Arabic, like play with fire. Which is translated as „yal‟ bi l-naar‟. In this case, the idiom is not only shared in the two languages, but also in the applied form and the content. However, some idioms may share the content but different in form as in the apple of my eyes, which can be translated „qurat al-ain‟.

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