TRANSITIVITY AND INTRANSITIVITY OF ENGLISH PHRASAL VERBS

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ABSTRACT

This article deals with the syntactic and semantic features of English phrasal verbs. It shows whether these phrasal verbs are transitive or intransitive and separable or inseparable, as well as it focuses on the differences between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs. Each of these explanations is supported with examples.

Keywords: phrasal verb, translation, language, creative

INTRODUCTION

A phrasal verb can be defined as an English verb followed by one or more particles where the combination behaves as a syntactic and semantic unit. For example; ‘Make up’, ‘give in’, ‘look after’, ‘carry on’, ‘blow out’, ‘put off’, ‘put up with’, ‘call off’, ‘drink up’, ‘take down’, ‘come to’, ‘look up’, ‘pass out’, and ‘turn into’. They are just a few examples of the many English phrasal verbs, which constitute one of the most distinctive and creative features of the English language. The phrasal verb consists of a verb, usually a monosyllabic verb of action or movement such as ‘go’, ‘put’, ‘take’, and one or more particles. The particle may be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can act as either adverb or preposition. Often the meaning of these verb phrases is idiomatic and cannot be determined by knowing the meaning of their individual parts. Some English phrasal verbs are transitive such as it is known ‘get over’, ‘hand in’, and ‘ pick out’ ; others are intransitive such as ‘get up’, ‘break down’, and ‘look out’; while some others are both transitive and intransitive such as ‘call up’ , ‘give up’, and ‘hang up’.

METHODOLOGY

According to Stageberg (1965:225), “The transitive verbadverbial composite has an object and is symbolized by (VAC+O)”. Examples of such phrasal verbs are ‘fill in’, ‘look for’, and ‘throw away’. Sometimes, the subject of a phrasal verb is a pronoun (it, them, me, you, him, her, and us). In such cases the pronouns go before (on, off, in, out, up, down….etc.) as stated by Murphy (1985:262). In order to show where the pronoun is placed, consider the following example:

-*They gave me a form and told me to* ***fill*** *it* ***in***.

*(not '**fill in** it')*

Murphy (ibid) refers to the use of a phrasal verb- preposition by saying that "the object always comes after the preposition".

Here are two examples:

-*You are walking too fast, I can't **keep with** you.*

-*Jack has **cut down** on smoking.*

Intransitive phrasal verbs, on the other hand, have "Three characteristics which tend to be common to intransitive VAC; and which can be used as VAC tests" as stated by Stageberg (1965:224). The first characteristic is that the meaning of a certain phrasal verb as a unit is different from that of individual meaning of the two parts added together. This can be shown by the following two examples:

-*She **turned up** late as usual (arrived).*

-*The plan **took off** at ten O'clock.(left the ground).*

The second characteristic is that the adverbial particle in an intransitive VAC is not moveable as one can not say:

*-*She **turned** late as usual **up.***

Or,

*-*The plane **took** at ten O'clock **off**.*

The third characteristic is that the verb and the adverbial particle are inseparable. Stageberg (ibid) states that "a modifier separating them results in a strange or non-English locution".

Here are two examples:

-*He **turned** suddenly **up** at seven O'clock.*

-*We **took** immediately **off** for Memphis.*

It is concluded that English phrasal verbs may be intransitive as in :

-*The party **broke up** when we turned in.*

Or transitive as in:

-*She **put** the heckler **down**.*

Or,

-*She **put down** the heckler*.

In the case of an object (noun) receiving the action of the verb, the object may come before or after the particle.

RESULTS

Because of the importance of phrasal verbs as it has been stated earlier ; one has to know the separability and inseparability of these structures. This is a very important

aspect to notice as a certain phrasal verbs can be separated and some others can not. Even if a certain phrasal verb can be separated

then the new sentence may carry a very different meaning as in the following examples:

*1-I **saw** the plan **through**.*

*2-I **saw through** the plan.*

In sentence (1), 'through' is a particle while in sentence (2) it is a preposition. When taking a look at these two constructions, one may think that the first and the second sentences carry the same meaning whereas their meanings are completely different. The first sentence means 'I preserve until the plan was satisfactory complete '; and the second means 'I recognized the deception of the plan'. Praninskas (1957:217) states that "separable two-word verbs permit the object between the two parts in a certain cases and require it there in others". To clarify what has been stated by Praninskas, it is possible to place the short noun object after the particle or before it without changing the meaning of the sentence.

Here are two examples:

*-She **gave in** her test.*

Or,

*-She **gave** her test **in**.*

In long noun objects, however, the verb and its particle are never separated and the noun stays at the end:

*-She **gave in** her test which was finished.*

If we put the particle of the phrasal verb in the above mentioned sentence at the end, then there is absence of word order and the sentence sounds illogical. On the other hand, in the case of pronoun objects, they are to be placed after the verb as in

the following example:

*-She **gave** it **in**.*

DISCUSSION

Moreover, there is a type of phrasal verbs where the object never comes between the two strings of the verb. Examples of such phrasal verbs are 'call on', 'get over', 'go over', 'keep into', 'run across', 'run into'…etc. This type called inseparable phrasal verb. If we give a look to the following sentences, we can imagine why these two-word verbs should be inseparable:

*-He **got over** a bad heart attack. (correct)*

-He **got a bad heart attack **over**. (incorrect)*

In addition to what has been written about some of the inseparable phrasal verbs, Broukal and Woods (1990:190) emphasize that "when the verb is followed by a preposition (not an adverb particle), the verb and the preposition are not separated and the pronoun is placed at the end". An example of such construction is given in the following sentences:

-*She **looked for** it.*

And

-*She **looked** it **for**.*

Thus, some particle can be separated from the verb so that a noun or pronoun can be inserted and some particles, on the other hand, can not be separated from the verb. Examine the following two examples:

-*She **added up** the total on her calculator.*

Separable

-*She added it up on her calculator*.

-*She always **gets around** the rules.(to evade)*

Inseparable

*-*She always **gets** the rules **around**.*

CONCLUSION

To sum up Phrasal verbs are combination between verb with adverb, adverb with preposition, and verb with preposition. Phrasal verb also is very common in spoken and written English, so we need them to understand and speak natural English. There are three types of phrasal verbs in this article, namely; transitive verbs, intransitive phrasal verb and separable phrasal verbs.

Both transitive and intransitive phrasal verbs can be used as phrasal verb but their state will be different, i.e., transitive lexical verbs turn to be intransitive when they are phrasalized and vice versa.

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