

Analysis of Students' Difficulties in Comprehending Meaning of Phrasal Verb Used in Creative Writing in English

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Abstract

This survey research aims to uncover the challenges faced by L2 learners at the secondary level, particularly focusing on their difficulties in comprehending the meaning of phrasal verbs in English creative writing. The study seeks to identify these obstacles and propose new teaching methods and techniques to overcome them effectively. By analyzing data collected from 95 students across ten selected secondary schools in District Bahawalpur, the research sheds light on the nature of these difficulties and offers recommendations for educators to enhance their teaching approaches. Chapter 1 introduces the background, problem statement, and objectives of the research. Chapter 2 delves into a review of relevant literature, including discussions on individual differences and theoretical frameworks. Chapter 3 outlines the research methodology, including population, sampling, and data collection procedures. Chapter 4 presents the data analysis, while Chapter 5 offers findings, discussions, and conclusions. Overall, this study contributes to understanding and addressing the challenges students face in comprehending phrasal verbs in creative writing, emphasizing the importance of adaptive teaching techniques and ongoing teacher training to meet students' needs effectively.

Keywords: Comprehending Meaning, Phrasal Verb, Creative Writing, Techniques

Introduction

According to Cornell (1985), understanding and using phrasal verbs is crucial for effectively communicating with native speakers, as they are frequently employed in spoken and informal writing language. Fletcher (2005) emphasizes that phrasal verbs can be utilized in various sorts of text, including formal texts, where they are the most suitable means of conveying the meaning. Based on prior study and existing literature, it is well

acknowledged that phrasal verbs pose challenges for ESL/EFL learners. These learners tend to avoid using phrasal verbs and instead choose to use single-word verbs as an alternative.

Extensive study and a wide range of literature exist in the field of phrasal verbs, particularly in the domains of English as a Second Language (ESL) and English as a Foreign Language (EFL). The definition of the word "a phrasal verb" is a subject of debate among grammarians and scholars. A combination of a verb and a particle that functions as a single entity is frequently referred to as a "phrasal verb". These combinations are referred to as "multi-word verbs" by certain linguists (Schmitt & Siyanova, 2007) and "verb-particle combinations" by Fraser (1976).

Fraser (1976) defines a verb-particle combination as a single constituent or sequence of constituents whose semantic meaning is not dependent on the formatives that make it up. In other words, the interpretation of a verb-particle combination cannot be determined by simply combining the meanings of the individual verb and particle. Bolinger (1971) proposes that phrasal verbs should be regarded as "novel stereotypes" rather than "novel words". He defines the phrasal verb as a lexical unit that is a non-additive compound or derivation, meaning that its meaning is not just the combination of the meanings of its individual parts. Darwin and Gray (1999) define phrasal verbs as combinations of verbs and particles that function as a single unit both lexically and syntactically, such as "bring about," "take on," and "give up."

According to Driven (2001), phrasal verbs are characterized by the presence of idiomaticity in the combination of a verb with a preposition (e.g., cry over something), a verb with a separable particle (e.g., run up the flag, run the flag up), a verb with an inseparable particle (e.g., run up a debt), or a combination of a verb with both a particle and a preposition (e.g., face up to problems). According to Fletcher and Patrick (2004), a phrasal verb is a specific type of combination of a verb and a particle, where the verb is a single word and the particle can be a preposition or an adverb. They also adhere to Dixon's (1987) definition of a phrasal verb, which characterizes it as a non-decomposable construction where the meaning resides in the entirety of the phrase rather than its individual components.

In their study, Schmitt and Siyanova (2007) argue that multi-word verbs are composed of two or more orthographic words that function as a single lexical unit. They suggest that the meanings of some multi-word verbs can be easily deduced from their individual parts, such as "get back from a trip" meaning "return". However, they also note that the meanings of other multi-word verbs, like "brush up on your French" meaning "revise", cannot be reliably predicted based on their constituent parts.

Although there have been various suggested definitions for the term "phrasal verb," it is evident that a phrasal verb is comprised of two components: a syntactic component and a lexical component. Therefore, this article will

adopt the definition put forward by Bolinger (1971) that considers the phrasal verb (PV) as a fusion of a verb and a particle, which can be either an adverb or a preposition, working in tandem as a distinct lexical entity. Several researchers have conducted studies in this field and have produced theoretical knowledge in this context. The objective of this research was to analyze the challenges that students face in understanding the meaning of phrasal verbs employed in creative writing in English at the secondary level. To address this issue, the researcher employed an experimental research approach. The learner's inability to comprehend the meaning of phrasal verbs and properly incorporate them into creative writing is attributed to several challenges encountered in understanding their usage. In order to address these issues, it is necessary to develop a training facility where both teachers and students can engage in practical exercises and gain familiarity with the most up-to-date methods, tactics, strategies, approaches, vocabulary, grammar, and its application.

Literature Review

Akbari (2009) investigated the utilization of phrasal verbs by Malaysian ESL learners in narrative writings extracted from the EMAS, a learner corpus of Malaysian ESL School Students established by University Putra Malaysia. While the data indicated that the learners frequently used phrasal verbs with errors in both syntax and meaning, and had limited usage of idiomatic combinations, it is important to make a few remarks. The poor utilization of phrasal verbs by Malaysian learners can be ascribed to the lack of representativeness in the study's corpus. In order to provide a clearer understanding, the researcher utilized a limited sample of the EMAS, specifically the narrative pieces. However, this approach raises doubts about the overall representativeness of the corpus. Furthermore, the parameters used to determine the levels of compositionality in phrasal

The verbs are ambiguous. It is unclear why the term "break out" was categorized as aspectual, whereas "break off" was deemed idiomatic.

Phrasal verbs are a distinct component of the English language, as we are already aware. In addition, the majority of ESL (English as a Second Language) and EFL students perceive them as highly challenging, since it implies that the learning process is marked by the students' "confusion and dissatisfaction" (Kovács, 2011). Both EFL and ESL students find phrasal verbs challenging, intricate, and demanding to memorize or master (Büyükkarci, 2010). Consequently, the majority of pupils circumvent this issue by utilizing verbs derived from Latin origin (Riguel, 2014). In light of this context, it is necessary to examine the challenges that ESL and EFL students have when acquiring phrasal verbs. According to Thornbury (2002), English learners face difficulties with multi-part verbs due to their complex grammatical structure and idiomatic meaning, which cannot be deduced by

evaluating the individual parts. Students may perceive phrasal verbs as being arbitrarily created and believe that they must be learned and memorized thoroughly (Kovács, 2011). In addition, Brown (2004) (cited in Büyükkarci, 2010) highlights that EFL students refrain from utilizing multi-word verbs due to the following factors: 1. The vast quantity of phrasal verbs, disregarding the many combinations of verbs and particles. 2. The meanings of phrasal verbs are typically idiomatic, as the meaning of a phrasal verb might change significantly from the meanings of its individual components. In addition to the fact that most phrasal verbs are polysemous, meaning they can have multiple meanings. 3. These constructs are unpredictable, as their components can sometimes be detached, as seen before.

Research Questions

1. What are the difficulties faced by learners in comprehending the meaning of phrasal verb?
2. What is the role of phrasal verb in creative writing skills?
3. How can the creative writing skills of learners can be improved?

Objectives of the Study

1. To identify difficulties faced by learners in comprehending the meaning of phrasal verb
2. To discover the role of phrasal verb in creative writing skills
3. To find out the creative writing skills of learners can be improved.

Significance of Study

Teachers and students at the secondary level encounter numerous challenges when analyzing students' difficulties in understanding the meaning of phrasal verbs used in creative writing in English. These difficulties arise due to a lack of awareness of effective strategies, insufficient knowledge in the subject area, a tendency to rely on outdated methods, and inadequate understanding of grammar. Consequently, students struggle to compose a single sentence with accurate spelling and grammar. This research will benefit both teachers and students by addressing these limitations.

Research Methodology

A survey was conducted to analyze the challenges that students face in understanding the meaning of phrasal verbs employed in creative writing in English at the secondary level in the Bahawalpur area of Pakistan. The study was conducted within the theoretical framework of social organization. It served as a central position for the gathering, analysis, and examination of data. Research conception is necessary as it facilitates the seamless execution of various research procedures, making the research as efficient as

possible in generating maximum knowledge while minimizing the investment of time, effort, and money. This study utilized a survey research design, which includes the examination, classification, exploration, assessment, and understanding of several dimensions. Best and Kahn (2006) state that survey research typically focuses on the perspectives and experiences of participants. Oyedele (2011) provides a concise definition of research design as the systematic framework, strategy, and methodology employed in investigating and resolving research inquiries.

Population

The population is crucial for conducting research. The research focused on selecting the target group from secondary level pupils, namely in Bahawalpur, located in Southern Punjab. According to Cohen et al (2007), the target population refers to the complete set of items or figures that a researcher uses to make conclusions. The target population in this study consisted of 1000 regular students from various schools including Govt. High School Theri Peru Wali, Govt. High School Chaki Faik, Govt. High School Fidai Shah, Govt. High School Minchinabad, Govt. High School Mecload Gunj, Prime Shaheen, Science School, allied school, Young Scholar, and Govt. High School Bareeki.

Sampling

Sampling is a crucial aspect of research as it allows for the collection of information from those participating in the study. According to Leedy (2010), a sample is a subset of the entire population that one intends to represent. Consequently, a subset of individuals is selected from a larger group to serve as a representative sample of the entire population. A stochastic sampling strategy was employed. According to Palys (2008), random sampling is a method used to select participants based on certain characteristics that are relevant to a particular research issue.

The study included 95 students in grades 9-10 from secondary schools in Bahawalpur, with ages ranging from 14 to 16 years. The majority of students possess Punjabi as their mother tongue and have been exposed to English as a second language for the past nine years. Some participants were fluent in Urdu. The children were deliberately chosen because they had just completed elementary school and were likely to encounter comparable difficulties in understanding the meaning of phrasal verbs employed in creative writing in English. The individuals were categorized into three distinct groups based on their proficiency in the English language: advanced, intermediate, and novice. The participants in this study were selected based on several criteria: 1) they had approximately eight years of English learning experience with a similar background; 2) they had previously taken a course in English writing; and 3) they had experience in L2 composition related to

the English writing course.

Research Tools

Test was used for students as an instrument of this research. The test included (1) structure of phrasal verb (2) transitive phrasal verb (3) intransitive phrasal verb (4) separable phrasal verb (5) inseparable phrasal verb (6) variation in meaning of phrasalverb. The number of each constituent was assigned equal (one marks). The students were asked to choose proper word in fill in the blanks. All the participants were required to complete it.

Reliability and Validity

Hungler and Polit (1993) defined dependability as the degree of consistency with which an instrument assesses the quality of characteristics. The purpose of this tool is to assess the students' usage of phrasal verbs by recording their responses with tick marks. Reliability can also ensure the minimization of measurement errors by addressing factors such as the form of phrasal verbs, biases in data collecting, and creating a comfortable psychological and physical environment for data collection through measures like providing privacy, general physical ease, and secrecy.

Assessing the validity of a test is crucial in determining its reliability. Various forms of validity exist, but this research specifically employed content validity. According to Hungler and Polit (1993), validity is the degree to which an instrument accurately measures what it is intended to assess. Content validity specifically refers to how well an instrument captures the relevant aspects of the subject being studied. Polit & Hungler (1993) have provided a more precise definition of the correct usage of phrasal verbs. They based this definition on the information gathered during a literature review. The purpose was to ensure that the definition accurately reflects what students should understand about the challenges they face in analyzing the meaning of phrasal verbs used in creative writing in English at the secondary level, as well as the strategies they employ.

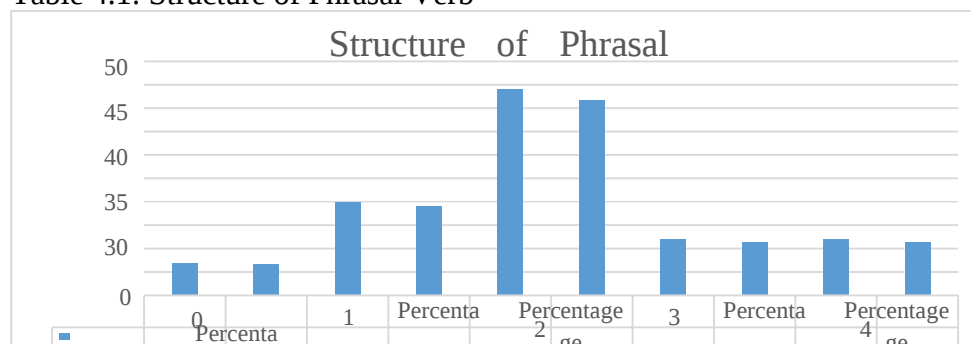
Content validity was enhanced through the consistent administration of tests to assess students' understanding of the meaning of phrasal verbs, along with the provision of relevant information by the researcher prior to collecting data from the participants. The researcher personally developed the material using a straightforward and uncomplicated language to ensure simplicity and ease of understanding. All the students successfully completed their examination under the guidance of the researcher within a duration of two hours.

Data Collection

Approval was requested from the School authorities to administer the test. The research's rationale was explicitly elucidated to the participants. The participants were informed that their involvement in the research was optional and they had the freedom to withdraw at any time. Furthermore, they were guaranteed that their identities would remain anonymous. The participants were advised that the research would be beneficial to them as it would provide them with appropriate feedback on the composition they would create in this study. The community as a whole consists predominantly of individuals from the lower middle class. Approximately 10% of the population are employed by the government, while rest work in the private sector or are involved in agriculture. Urdu medium or public schools serve as a prime example of language immersion institutions that facilitate ESL learners in acquiring a proficient command of the English language. The school enrolls students between the ages of 14 and 16. English language instruction begins at the age of 4, meaning that kids in the 10th grade have been studying English for around 11 to 12 years. The researchers conducted a concise workshop for the participants, focusing on the elements and conventions of phrasal verbs. They received detailed information about each component of the phrasal verb, including what should be included in each part. Finally, the participants were instructed to take a test consisting of twenty items to be completed within a one-hour time frame.

Data Analysis

Table 4.1: Structure of Phrasal Verb



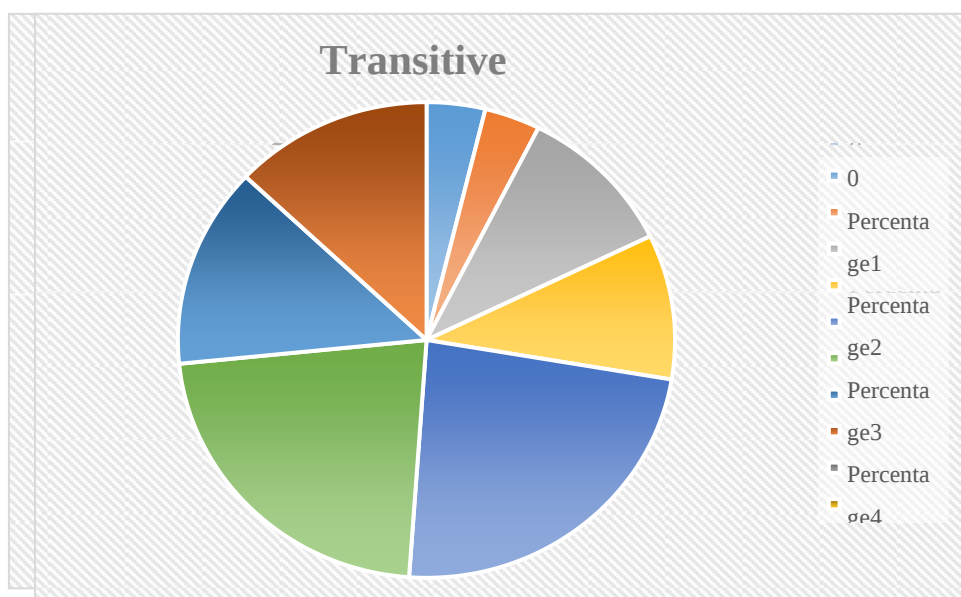


Figure 4.1: Structure of Phrasal Verb

Table 4.1 shows that in structure of phrasal verb, seven were rated 0 (6.65%), twenty were rated 1 (19%), forty four were rated 2 (41.8%), twelve were rated 3 (11.4%), and twelve were rated 4 (11.4%). This means that 40% of the students were not able to know about structure of phrasal verb or it was unacceptable. This suggests that structure of phrasal verb is an area where students have the opportunity to demonstrate their ideas clearly about the structure of phrasal verb

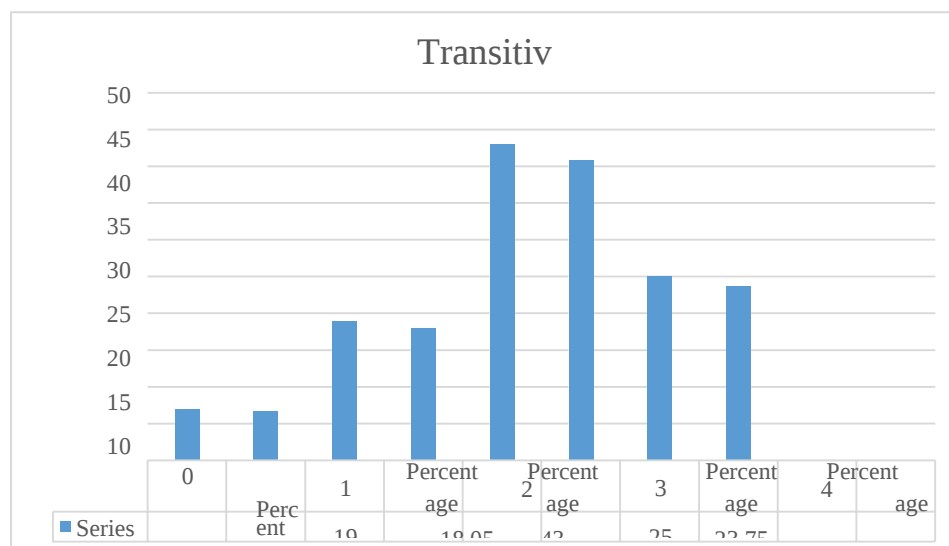


Figure 4.2: Transitive Phrasal Verb

Table 4.2 shows that in transitive phrasal verb, seven were rated 0 (6.65%), nineteen were rated 1 (18.05%), forty three were rated 2 (40.85%), and twenty five were rated 3 (23.75%). This means that 53% of the students were not able to know about transitive phrasal verb or it was objectionable. This suggests that transitive phrasal verb is a main type of phrasal verb where students have the opportunity to learn about it and demonstrate their ideas clearly about the transitive phrasal verb.

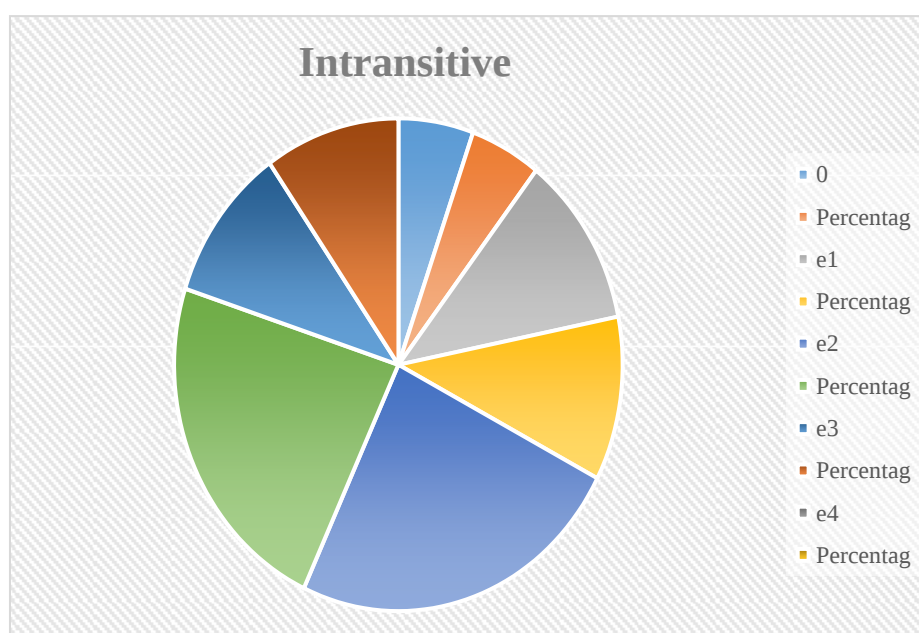
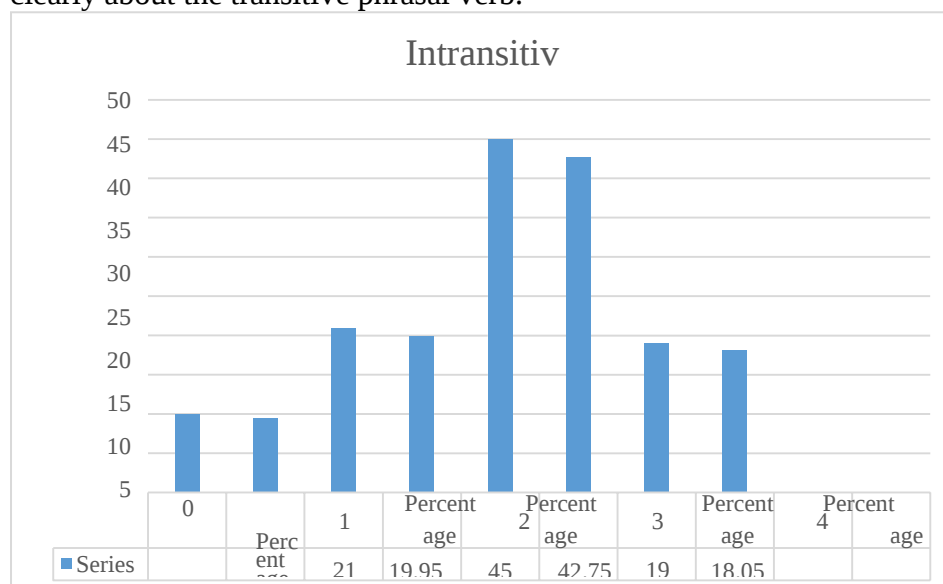


Figure 4.3: Intransitive Phrasal Verb

Table 4.3 shows that in intransitive phrasal verb, ten were rated 0 (9.5%), twenty one were rated 1 (19.95%), forty five were rated 2 (42.75%), and nineteen were rated 3 (18.05%). This means that 60% of the students were not able to know about intransitive phrasal verb or it was unpleasant. This suggests that intransitive phrasal verb is a second main type of phrasal verb where students have the opportunity to learn about it and demonstrate their ideas clearly about the intransitive phrasal verb.

Table 4.5: Inseparable Phrasal Verb

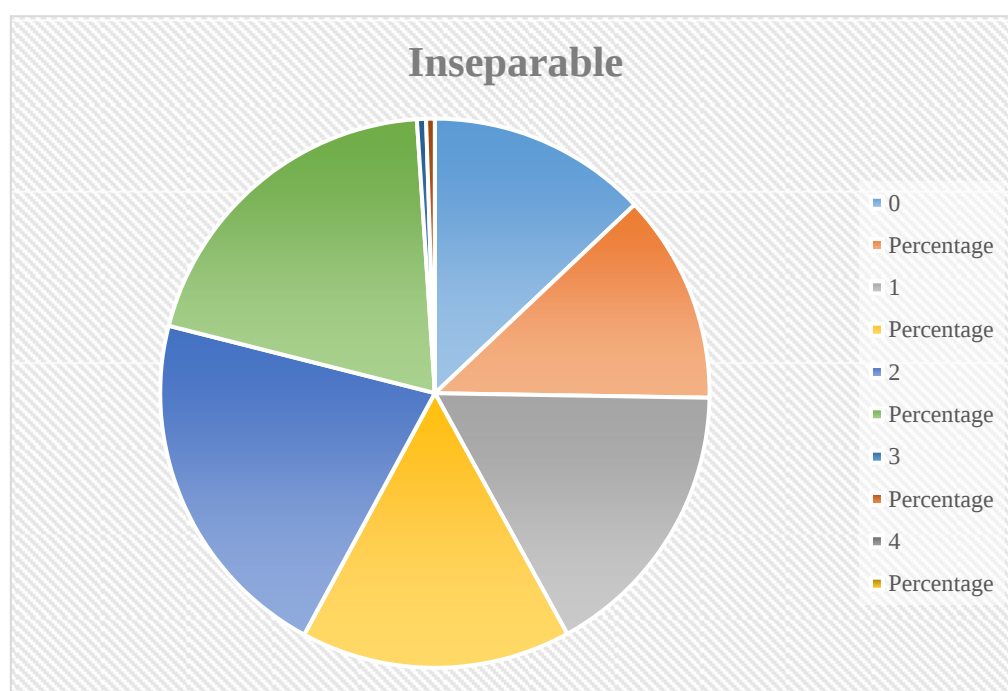
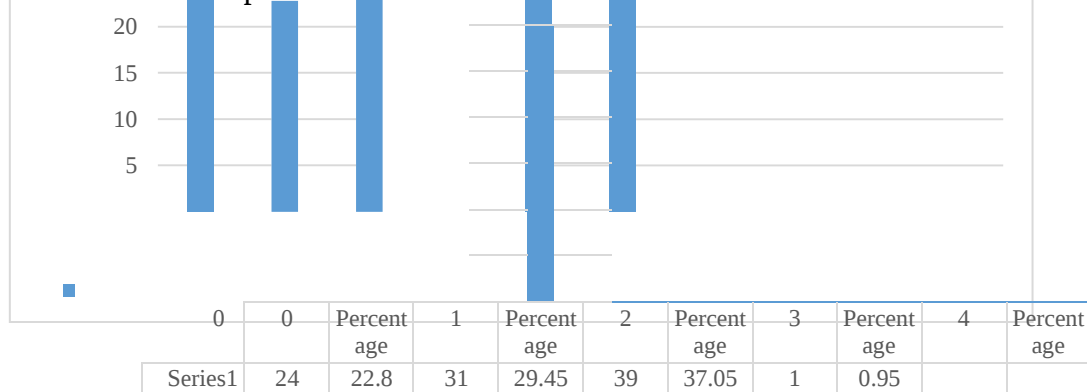
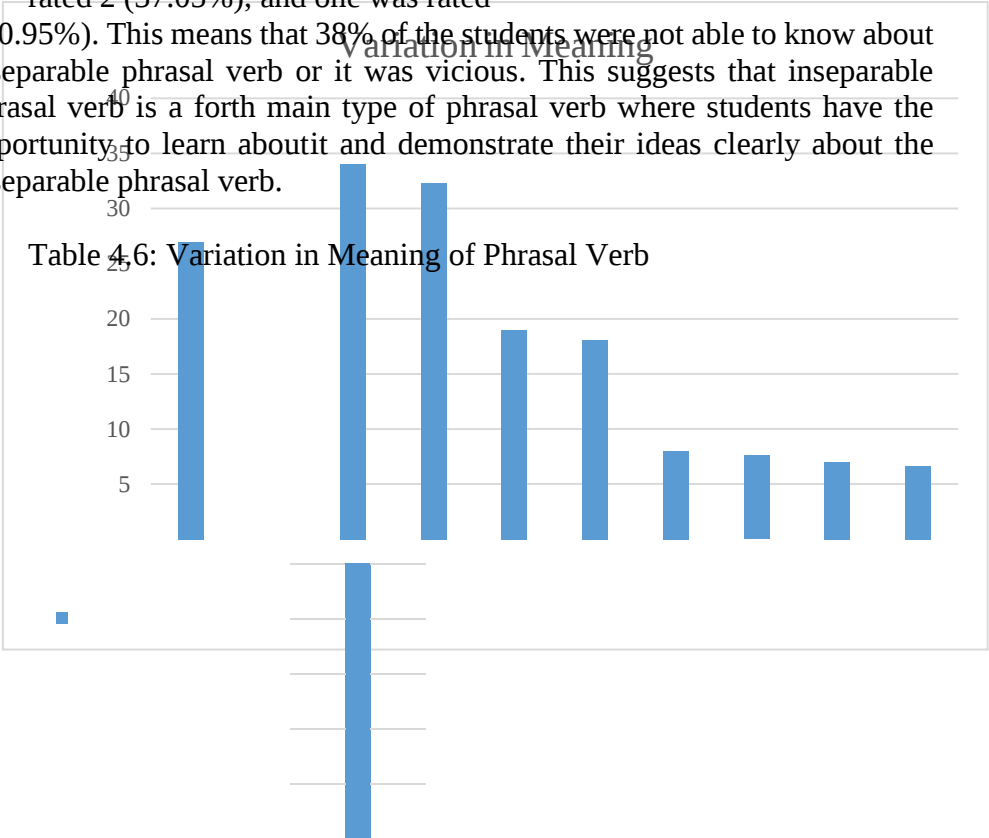


Figure 4.5: Inseparable Phrasal Verb

Table 4.5 shows that in inseparable phrasal verb, twenty four were rated 0 (22.8%), thirty one were rated 1 (29.45%), thirty nine were

rated 2 (37.05%), and one was rated 3 (0.95%). This means that 38% of the students were not able to know about inseparable phrasal verb or it was vicious. This suggests that inseparable phrasal verb is a forth main type of phrasal verb where students have the opportunity to learn about it and demonstrate their ideas clearly about the inseparable phrasal verb.

Table 4.6: Variation in Meaning of Phrasal Verb



	0	Percent age	1	Percent age	2	Percent age	3	Percent age	4	Percent age
Series1	27	25.65	34	32.3	19	18.05	8	7.6	7	6.65

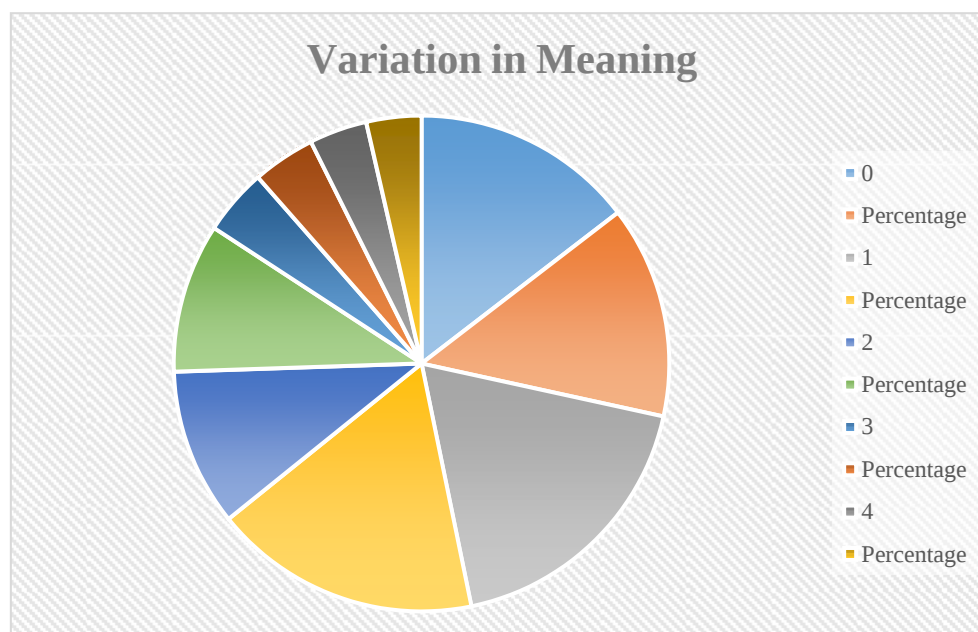


Figure 4.6: Variation in Meaning of Phrasal Verb

Table 4.6 shows that in variation in meaning of phrasal verb, twenty seven were rated 0 (25.65%), thirty four were rated 1 (32.3%), nineteen were rated 2 (18.05%), eight were rated 3 (7.6%) and seven were rated 4 (6.65%). This means that 34% of the students were not able to know about variation in meaning of phrasal verb or it was unpleasant. This suggests that variation in meaning of phrasal verb is a most important and main part of phrasal verb where students have the opportunity to learn about it and demonstrate their ideas clearly about the portion of phrasal verb.

Discussion

The researcher analyzed the questionnaire results using statistical analysis to compare the abilities of students in government and private schools. The main objective of the research was to examine the difficulties students face in understanding the meaning of phrasal verbs in creative writing in English at the secondary level. The results clearly demonstrate that secondary school students have a strong grasp of phrasal verbs. However, the results also reveal that high school students make numerous errors when expressing concepts in writing. These errors include spelling, preposition, helping verb, verb, capital letter, comma, article, apostrophe, and full stop errors. This study also emphasizes the students' need to understand the meaning of phrasal verbs employed in creative writing in English. A majority of the students concurred that acquiring the definitions of phrasal verbs poses a

challenge for L2 learners. Over 50% of the students expressed that a lack of prior knowledge significantly impacts the acquisition of phrasal verbs. The majority of students acknowledged that a deficiency in grammar competency could potentially hinder the acquisition of phrasal verbs. The majority of students acknowledged that a lack of vocabulary items poses a challenge in comprehending the meanings of phrasal verbs, making it difficult to learn them. Over fifty percent of students believe that their difficulties in learning tasks are caused by a lack of understanding in employing the correct form of phrasal verbs according to tense. Furthermore, a significant number of students acknowledged that learners struggle with accurately using phrasal verbs due to their lack of familiarity with the literal meaning. A significant proportion of students reported that the improper utilization of phrasal verbs in sentences had a detrimental impact on learners' academic performance. Over half of the students expressed support for the notion that various syntactic patterns can pose significant challenges in comprehending the meanings of phrasal verbs. A majority of the students expressed support for the idea that the existence of several meanings for a single phrasal verb can complicate the process of learning phrasal verbs. Over fifty percent of the students acknowledged that a lack of familiarity with verb forms poses challenges in this manner. A significant proportion of students reported that learners encounter difficulties in comprehending the meaning of phrasal verbs when they are unable to translate them into their native language. A majority of the students supported the idea that learners encounter difficulties in understanding phrasal verbs that do not have equivalent meanings in their mother language. The majority of students concurred that L2 learners face difficulty comprehending the meanings of phrasal verbs in the absence of knowledge regarding their specific contexts. The majority of students supported the notion that a learner's degree of interest plays a significant role in acquiring proficiency in phrasal verbs.

A significant proportion of students believed that the classroom environment has an impact on students' performance. Over fifty percent of the students supported the notion that a lack of confidence is one of the contributing factors in learning phrasal verbs. Many students expressed that they have apprehension about utilizing phrasal verbs in front of the class due to the fear of making mistakes. The majority of pupils concurred that teachers do not provide adequate motivation in this manner. The majority of students expressed their support for the notion that the teacher does not provide adequate practice for a thorough comprehension of phrasal verbs. A significant proportion of the pupils were found to be not utilizing phrasal verbs in their everyday activities. Researchers also discovered that a significant number of students concurred that the challenging nature of learning phrasal verbs stems from the inadequate teaching methods employed. A majority of pupils supported the teacher's severe behavior,

which also hinders the learners' ability to grasp phrasal verbs.

A significant majority of students expressed difficulty in learning phrasal verbs due to the conventional and unstimulating teaching techniques. Over half of the students reported that learners encounter challenges in acquiring phrasal verbs as a result of inadequate professors. Over 50% of the students expressed support for the notion that less interaction between teachers and students poses a challenge in acquiring phrasal verbs. The majority of students concurred that the implementation of novel instructional methodologies is necessary for the efficient instruction of phrasal verbs. The researcher also noted that a significant proportion of students expressed agreement with the notion that the instruction of phrasal verbs should be enhanced in response to evolving circumstances.

A majority of the students expressed support for the notion that the teacher's facilitative role can also be helpful in this manner. The majority of students concurred that proficient grammar training can serve as a catalyst for motivating learners to acquire phrasal verbs. Over 50% of the students were aware that one effective method to comprehend the meanings of phrasal verbs is simply to commit them to memory. A significant proportion of students concurred that the communicative method is the most effective approach for teaching phrasal verbs. Furthermore, it was noted that the majority of students expressed that focusing on spoken language can effectively enhance learners' interest. A significant number of students concurred that learners should be actively encouraged to include phrasal verbs into their daily routines. Additionally, it was discovered that the majority of students expressed support for the notion that translating phrasal verbs into their home language is an effective strategy for learning. Researchers also discovered that the majority of students felt that teaching phrasal verbs in order of increasing difficulty is a useful method for improving students' abilities.

There are four further noteworthy items to highlight. In academic writing, it is customary to use verb phrases like "tend to" and "take place" to describe the behavioral patterns of natural and social phenomena and occurrences. Furthermore, certain sorts of constructions appear to be closely associated with specific semantic roles. Most of the commonly used prepositional phrases in academic writing, such as "in terms of," "in the context of," "in this/that case," "in the form of," and "in general," can be categorized as either framing expressions (referring to physical or intangible things) or qualifying expressions (also known as hedges). Furthermore, it seems that certain renowned structures did not reach the list of most commonly utilized constructions, although their less famous equivalents came close to making it. Furthermore, although the majority of the constructions are formal terms that are not commonly used in speech, such as "the fact that" (which was even more popular than the use of), "in the case of," "by virtue of," "in an attempt to," "in light of," and "give rise to," there are really a few exceptions.

Several prevalent informal expressions, such as "look at," "NP say that," and "talk about (det + N)," were included in the list, with the first two being featured in tables.

Conclusions

This study has uncovered the inherent distinctions and parallels between native and nonnative learners in regards to the utilization of phrasal verbs in the context of creative writing. By conducting structural and functional comparisons, researchers have discovered that the utilization of lexical bundles in writing by non-native and native students is quite similar. Both of them exhibit a greater number of VP-based bundles and discourse organizers compared to native expert writing, indicating a lack of maturity in their writing. However, native professional writers demonstrate a broader variety of noun phrase (NP) constructions and marks that indicate references. Upon further qualitative analysis, it was discovered that native student writing does, in fact, exhibit certain characteristics that are unique to academic writing, such as the mastery of careful language in native professional writing.

Writing by non-native speakers, on the other hand, exhibits a distinct inclination that appears to be specific to second language (L2) writing, such as over-generalization and a preference for particular idiomatic expressions and connectors. The significance of word combinations collected from corpora as fundamental elements in producing discourse has been increasingly acknowledged with the advancement of corpus methodologies. Despite the increased interest in using corpus methods to find phraseology in the past ten years, there has been no noticeable increase in the focus on computer-retrieved formulaic language in the curriculum and materials of ELT publishers and practitioners. The present study examined three groups of academic writing and identified a disparity in the utilization of lexical bundles between native expert academic writing and university student writing, regardless of whether the students were native or non-native speakers. We contend that incorporating carefully chosen and edited frequency-driven formulaic expressions from proficient native writers will greatly assist learner writers in attaining a more authentic academic writing style. Therefore, these expressions should be introduced into ESL/EFL curriculum.

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