

Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs in Learner English: A Study of Iranian Students

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Abstract

This study investigated the avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Iranian learners. It also investigated the role of phrasal verb types, types of measurement and level of English proficiency in any possible avoidance of phrasal verbs performed by Iranian learners of English. Two groups of Iranian learners (intermediate and advanced, a total of 85) took part in this study. The advanced learners were 35 MA students and Intermediate learners were 50 BA students of English at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad. Both advanced and intermediate learners were randomly divided into three groups and three types of tests (multiple-choice, translation and recall) were taken to them which included phrasal verbs in two types (figurative and literal). Findings showed that test type and phrasal verb type had an effect on learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs, but proficiency level did not affect learners' performance. Therefore, it was concluded that the difference between L1 and L2 structure and semantic complexity of phrasal verbs might cause the learners' avoidance.

Keywords: Avoidance, phrasal verb, proficiency, literal, figurative, intermediate, advanced.

1. Introduction

1.1 Background

The complexity of phrasal verb learning and using among second language learners can be investigated through Contrastive Analysis (CA). The main assumptions of CA are: "a. the main difficulties in learning a new language are caused by interference from the first language. b. these difficulties can be predicted by contrastive analysis. c. teaching materials can make use of contrastive analysis to reduce the effects of interference" (Contrastive analysis, 2002). This theory by comparing and contrasting two linguistic systems, those of the first language (L1) and second language (L2), predicts and describes the scope of difficulty in learning a linguistic item, here phrasal verb.

Phrasal verb plays an important role in communication especially in everyday language, from casual conversation to the more formal texts. Considering recent studies (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989; Laufer & Ellison, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004), it can be inferred that some second language learners of particular languages, avoid using phrasal verb in their conversations. The results showed some reasons for this avoidance including effect of context, learning condition, first language structure, as well as proficiency level of the learners as an effective factor.

1.2 Statement of the problem

This study investigated, first the possibility of avoidance by Iranian English students, second the effect of phrasal verb type (figurative vs. literal) and different ways of measuring (translation, Recall test, multiple-choice) on their performance in using or avoiding this kind of verbs. In all of these three cases the proficiency level was considered in order to determine any possible relationship between students' level of knowledge and ability to use phrasal verbs.

1.3 Research questions

Based on the previous studies and especially Liao and Fukuya (2004) inquiry in this field, the present study investigated these three research questions.

1. Do Iranian learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs?
2. Does semantic nature of different types of phrasal verb (figurative verbs and literal) affect their performance to avoid this structure?
3. Does the way of measurement affect their avoidance (if any)?
4. Does proficiency level play an important role in all the three questions above?
(In first three questions the influence of proficiency was examined).

1.4 Hypotheses

To answer these four research questions, these four hypotheses were created.

- Hypothesis 1: Iranian learners of English avoid using phrasal verb in compared with native speakers.
- Hypothesis 2: Iranian learners of English avoid using figurative phrasal verbs more than literal ones in compared with native speakers.
- Hypothesis 3: There will be an effect of test types on Iranian learners' use of phrasal verbs and figurative and literal phrasal verbs use.
- Hypothesis 4: There will be a difference between the advanced learners of English and the intermediate learners of English in using phrasal verbs as a whole and figurative and literal phrasal verbs in particular.

1.5 Phrasal verb

Phrasal verbs are frequently used by native speakers (NSs) of English in everyday conversation and one-word verbs (OWVs) are generally reserved for more formal occasions. Phrasal verb in English generally defined as a structure consisting of a verb unit and a particle that functions as a single verb. This structure is somehow problematic especially for English as a Second Language (ESL) learner with non-Germanic first language. Because many of them do not have transparent meanings, that is, the whole meaning is not always achieved by combining the meaning of the components. "Such idiomatic meanings make learners feel that they are difficult to learn and to use, although learners of English recognize their importance" (Cheon, 2002, p.1).

Liao and fukuya (2004) divided phrasal verbs in their study into two groups:

1. Literal- phrasal verbs whose meanings are known from the meaning of the components: get up, come in, go away.
2. Figurative phrasal verbs whose meanings are idiomatic and cannot be known from the combination of their semantic components: brush upon, go off, give up.

This figurative type causes mastering phrasal verb as a hard task for ESL learners. Thus, as Dagut and Laufer (1985), Laufer and Eliasson (1993) and later Liao and fukuya (2004), in their studies of Hebrew ESL students, Swedish and Chinese learners respectively showed to have problems in interpreting received messages and to avoid using this kind of construction by using instead OWVs, such as rise, surrender, burs. Therefore, phrasal verb appears to be worthy of notice in Foreign language learning studies.

1.6 Avoidance

CA examines fields of difficulty for learners of a second language. These areas can show themselves in errors done by learners of this language. But errors are not the only source of learners' difficulty in second language learning since some learners avoid using some special structure because he or she do not know or is not sure of the correct usage of that structure in target language, so the absence of an error does not always means that learner does not have difficulty in using particular linguistic element (Gluth, 2008).

The idea of avoidance behavior first was posed by Schachter (1974). She studied syntactic behavior by comparing the errors in relative clauses made by her subjects, some native speakers of Chinese, Japanese, Arabian and Persian learners of English. The result of investigation found that difficulty of relative clauses for Chinese and Japanese learners predicted by contrastive analysis manifest itself not in the number of errors made by these two groups, but in the number of the relative clauses produced. This number was remarkably smaller than what produced by Persian and Arabian students. The conclusion was that "if a student finds a particular construction in the target language difficult to comprehend it is very likely that he will try to avoid producing it" (p.213). Schachter (1974) used error analysis which

means “contrastive analysis can be used as one way of identifying causes for errors “. She claimed that errors showed difficulty in learning a language and error recurring in a particular form is because of difficulty in learning that particular form. Kleinmann (1977, 1978) assumed avoidance as a strategy which L2 learners may resort, with the knowledge of a target language word or structure, when they perceived it difficult to produce. To investigate more in avoidance phenomenon Kleinmann (1977, 1978) observed four English grammatical structures (passive, present progress, infinitive complement, and direct object pronoun) produced by two intermediate groups of learners of English, Arabic speakers, and Spanish and Portuguese speakers. He first administered a pretest to examine the presence knowledge of four structures in question. The findings identified that there was an avoidance pattern in accordance with difficulty as predicted by contrastive analysis and supported Schachter’s (1974) idea that the avoidance can be predicted by the structural differences between first and second language (Liao and Fukuya, 2004).

Some other researchers (Tarone, Frauenfelder, and Selinker, 1975), on the other hand, found several cases of semantic avoidance. Ickenroth (1975) reported some cases of semantic avoidance and various “escape routes” (Ickenroth, 1975) which learners chose a synonym or subordinate term, paraphrasing, and others (Kleinmann, 1977, 1978), (Gluth, 2008). Hence identifying the importance of avoidance behavior can make clear hidden uncertainty in the learners’ minds.

1.7 Proficiency

“Avoidance, as a communicative strategy, can occur at any level of linguistics.” (Gluth, 2008, p.10). It was investigated first by Liao and Fukuya (2004) the possibility of proficiency influence in decreasing avoidance of phrasal verb. They studied two groups of Chinese with different proficiency levels and marked them as advanced and intermediate to examine whether higher proficiency decrease the avoidance. In both Dagut and Laufer(1985) and Laufer and Eliasson (1993) studies, participants were only on one proficiency level (advanced). Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), and Liao and fukuya (2004) studies included two proficiency levels (intermediate and advanced). Although Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) claimed their learners did not avoid phrasal verbs, “However, the intermediate Dutch learners actually demonstrated a tendency to avoid using the English phrasal verb on multiple-choice test”(Liao and fukuya, 2004, p.201).

Regarding the findings of Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) and what reported by Liao and fukuya “intermediate learners avoided using phrasal verb and preferred one word verbs” (p.209-210). The present study also included two proficiency levels, intermediate and advanced university students of English.

2. Literature Review

The first study of the avoidance of phrasal verb was done by Dagut and Laufer (1985). They examined phrasal verbs used by advanced Hebrew- speaking students of English who didn’t have any formal equivalent for this linguistic element in their native language. 15 phrasal verbs preferred by native speaker were used in three different tests (multiple-choice, translation and memorization test) to identify the frequency of avoidance of three types of phrasal verb (literal, figurative and complete). The aim was whether these 15 phrasal verbs would also be preferred by Hebrew learners of English. The results showed that a majority of Hebrew learners avoided using the phrasal verbs mostly figurative ones and preferred OWVs. Dagut and Laufer reached to this conclusion that phrasal verbs present a difficulty for these learners as a result of structural differences between L1 and L2. Thus, lack of corresponding feature in Hebrew language prevented production of phrasal verbs by learners.

Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) was the next study with this claim that learner with “non-Germanic mother tongue” tend to avoid phrasal verbs because of absence of this structure in their language. Thus, they supposed that Dutch learners of English would not avoid phrasal verbs since “phrasal verbs are a peculiarity of the Germanic languages” (Waibel, 2007, p.23). Nonetheless, their hypothesis was that Dutch learners would still avoid phrasal verbs not for structural reasons as Hebrew learners did, but for semantic reasons. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) tested two groups of Dutch learners (intermediate and advanced) with those test formats in Dagut and Laufer research (Multiple-choice, memorization and translation), but with different phrasal verbs to identify the role of proficiency in decreasing avoidance behavior. Hulstijn and Marchena reported that Dutch learners’ avoidance behavior was not categorical in both groups (intermediate or advanced). It means “although intermediate Dutch learners used fewer phrasal verbs than advanced learners, both intermediate and advanced Dutch learners still used more phrasal verbs than Hebrew learners” (Waibel, 2007, p.23). Therefore, these results supported indirectly Dagut and Laufer (1985). However, from Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) findings it can be inferred that although Dutch learners did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically, their tendency to avoid could be explained due to semantic difficulties. They avoided “those idiomatic phrasal verbs that they perceived as too Dutch like” (Liao & Fukuya, 2004). They considered it as a word by word translation and therefore not appropriate. This finding showed that avoidance was not as a result of structural differences between first and second language alone, but it can be due to semantic difficulties and similarities between the two languages. Therefore, similarity of L1 and L2 can be an obstacle to learning rather than be a facilitator. Furthermore, Dutch learners preferred one –word verbs with a

general meaning over phrasal verbs with a more complicated, idiomatic meaning.

The third investigation of the avoidance of phrasal verbs was performed by Laufer and Eliasson (1993). In the line of previous studies Laufer and Eliasson(1993) considered three possible causes of avoidance as follows: (1) L1, L2 differences (Dagut and Laufer, 1985) (2) L1-L2 similarity (Hulstijn and Marchena, 1989) (3) L2 complexity. They administered two types of test (multiple-choice and translation test). The participants “were advanced Swedish learners of English whose native language had the phrasal verb structure” (Liao and Fukuya, 2004). Results revealed that Swedish learners do not tend to avoid phrasal verbs categorically. This indirectly provided a support for Dugut and Laufer’s (1985) claim that L1 and L2 structural difference is an obstacle to the learning of phrasal verbs. Those whose native language lacked such a linguistic element (Hebrew learners) avoided phrasal verb but those who had this grammatical item in their L1 (Swedish learners) did not avoid it. Furthermore Swedish learners used literal verbs as well as figurative ones equally. This implied that semantic complexity was not a determining factor for L2 avoidance. In contrast to the Hebrew learners, Swedish learners did not avoid figurative phrasal verbs. So similarity between L1 and L2 did not caused students’ avoidance. Laufer and Eliasson concluded that L1 and L2 difference can be identified as the most important factor of the avoidance.

Based on previous studies mentioned so far, Liao and Fukuya (2004) tested intermediate and advanced Chinese English learners. They examined three issues in both groups of learners through three types of test (multiple-choice, translation and recall). Liao and Fukuya investigated the possibility of the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Chinese learners as well as the role of phrasal verb type and the role of first language. They also investigated the influence of test type which was not observed in previous studies. The results showed that intermediate learners used fewer phrasal verbs than advanced learners. Liao and Fukuya reported the avoidance of intermediate learners as a result of structural difference between first and second language where first language had no equivalent structure for phrasal verbs. The findings also supported the proficiency level of learners, phrasal verb type and test type influence on avoidance behavior of learners. This study provided further evidence to Dagut and Laufer’s (1985) claim stating that L1 and L2 difference caused avoidance. Both groups of Chinese learners in all three tests used literal phrasal verbs more than figurative ones. Intermediate learners, however, used fewer figurative phrasal verbs than advanced learners.

3. Method

3.1 Participants

Three groups participated in this study: Native speakers of English, advanced Iranian learners of English and intermediate Iranian learners of English.

For the native speakers the result reported by Liao and Fukuya (2004) was used here who “were fifteen undergraduate students at the university of Hawaii at Manoa” (Liao and Fukuya, 2004, p.202)

Eighty five Iranian learners of English participated in this research. The advanced learners were 35 MA students of English at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad who studied English for at least 11 years (six years in secondary school and five years in college). 15 of these students were at their second year of studying English as a M.A student and 20 were at their first year.

Intermediate learners were 50 Iranian learners of English who studied English as B.A students. They studied English for at least 6 years in high school. 40 of them were at their last year of study as a B.A students and the reminding were of the first or second year.

The advanced learners were randomly divided into three groups on the three test formats. 15 were assigned multiple-choice and 20 translation and recall, each test 10 learners. For 50 intermediate learners, 20 took the multiple-choice test and 15 took translation test and the remaining 15 were assigned recall test.

3.2 Materials

Questions were arranged in fifteen pairs of phrasal verbs and OWVs (Appendix B) in the context of the dialogues. All three tests included these 15 dialogues.

Multiple-choice test: This test consisted of 15 dialogues (Appendix C), each with four verb choices below to choose in order to fill in the blank in dialogue above. Two of the verbs were correct answers but one was phrasal verb and the other its OW equivalent and the two remaining were distracters. Participants had 15 minutes to complete the test. The necessary instruction delivered to the learners to choose the most suitable answer that best completed the dialogue.

Translation test: This test included the some 15 dialogues used in multiple-choice with the verb left out. The Persian equivalent of each verb was presented at the end of each dialogue. The participants had 15 minutes to complete the test by translating the missing verbs.

Recall test: For the recall test, the same 15 dialogues in multiple-choice and translation were given to participants fully with phrasal verbs written. Five OWVs were used as distracters. Learners had 10 minutes to read the text carefully in order to remember the main concept of dialogues. After an hour, they received a new text with verbs left out and they were asked to fill in the blanks with the verbs they can remember from what they had read before.

3.3 Research design

As Liao and Fukuya (2004) reported in their study fifteen native speakers took multiple-choice to identify their preference in using phrasal verb instead of OWV in a short dialogue. Of 35 advanced learners, 15 took the multiple-choice, 10 the translation and 10 the recall test. Of 50 intermediate learners, 20 took the multiple-choice, 15 the translation and 15 the recall test.

This study tried to find out the possibility of the avoid of phrasal verb by Iranian learners by monitoring their performances in three elicitation tests in which two types of phrasal verb (figurative phrasal verbs and literal phrasal verbs) were being measured in the context of short casual dialogues used by Liao and Fukuya (2004) to study the avoidance behavior of Chinese English learners.

4. Results

In Liao and Fukuya's study fifteen native speakers took multiple-choice test. This test included 15 phrasal verbs, 11 figurative and 4 literal phrasal verbs. 225 verbs were possible for this group (15 participants \times 15 phrasal verbs) which 165 were figurative (15 participants \times 11 figurative phrasal verbs) and 60 items were literal (15 participants \times 4 literal phrasal verbs). As Liao and Fukuya reported in their study "among the 189 phrasal verbs the native speakers chose in multiple-choice test, 136 were figurative and 53 were literal". The raw score for two groups of Iranian learners were calculated in the same way. Table 1 represents descriptive statistics and the raw scores of all three groups are presented in Appendix A.

<Table 1 about here>

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the three groups (the native speaker, the advanced learners, and the intermediate learners) performances on the multiple-choice. The results showed that the group was significant $F(2,47)=10.0$, $p=0.00<0.05$. Post hoc (Tukey) comparisons revealed that the mean score for native speakers ($M = 12.68$, $SD = 4.28$) was significantly different from the advanced learners ($M = 9.33$, $SD = 2.84$). The difference between native speakers and the intermediate learners ($M = 7.85$, $SD = 2.34$) was also statistically significant. However, advanced students did not significantly differ from intermediate students. Figure 1 shows a plot of interaction between groups and use of phrasal verbs on multiple-choice test.

<Figure 1 about here>

The performance of advanced and intermediate on translation and recall tests were also conducted through t-test to investigate the possibility of any difference between intermediate and advanced learners in avoiding phrasal verbs on these two tests. Translation t-test revealed no significant difference, $t(14.4) = 0.98$, $p=0.33>0.05$. In recall test the same result was also achieved, $t(17.7) = -1.57$, $p=0.13>0.05$.

Furthermore, another one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the three groups (the native speaker, the advanced learners, and the intermediate learners) performance on the multiple-choice in order to identify any dissimilation in phrasal verb type (figurative vs. literal) between groups. The results showed that the group was significant $F(2,47)=8.96$, $p=0.001<0.05$. Post hoc (Tukey) comparisons revealed that the mean score for native speakers ($M = 9.20$, $SD = 3.29$) was significantly different from the advanced learners ($M = 6.00$, $SD = 2.64$). The difference between native speakers and the intermediate learners ($M = 5.55$, $SD = 2.08$) was also statistically significant. However, advanced students did not significantly differ from intermediate students.

The ANOVA results of group performance on phrasal verbs and phrasal verbs type are presented in table 2.

<Table 2 about here>

The result of t-test for translation and recall test revealed that these two groups (advanced and intermediate) showed no significant difference in their use of figurative verbs. This result was identified in translation with t value 1.37 $p=0.18>0.05$ and in recall test, $t(17.2) = -1.35$ $p=0.19>0.05$.

In order to investigate the possibility of test type influence on performance of Iranian learners, a one-way ANOVA was conducted to determine any significant difference in learners' performance in using phrasal verbs in their tests, $F(2,82)=21.26$, $p=0.00<0.05$.

Another ANOVA test was conducted to measure the significance of test type on phrasal verb type. The result found that test type had an influence on choosing specific phrasal verb, $F(2,82)=9.91$, $p=0.00<0.05$. Because of these findings, in

order to examine the interaction between phrasal verb type and test type a post hoc analysis was conducted. Post hoc comparisons using the Tukey test indicated that the mean score for the multiple-choice test ($M = 5.74$, $SD = 2.31$) was significantly different than the translation test ($M = 3.56$, $SD = 2.23$). The difference between the multiple-choice test and recall test ($M = 3.52$, $SD = 2.14$) was also statistically significant. However, the recall test did not significantly differ from translation test. Taken together, these results suggested that test type did have an effect on phrasal verb type. Specifically, results suggested that both groups of learners used figurative verbs less than literal in translation and recall test but the proportion of figurative verb and literal verb use was high in for multiple-choice test.

The ANOVA results were presented in table 3. This table demonstrated the difference between three tests in using phrasal verbs and figurative phrasal verbs.

<Table 3 about here>

5. Discussion

To see whether Iranian learners of English avoid using phrasal verbs, the results of all three tests were analyzed. The assumption of this study for research question one was that the performance of non-native speakers (Iranian learners) in using phrasal verbs is statistically lower than native speakers. ANOVA result for multiple-choice clarified that native speakers used phrasal verbs significantly more than Iranian learners, that is Iranian learners avoided using phrasal verbs. However, intermediate and advanced students produced phrasal verbs approximately in the same level. It means both groups did use phrasal verbs much less than native speakers and avoided this grammatical structure, but there was no remarkable difference in their avoidance. The reason of the avoidance of phrasal verbs by the Iranian learners might be because of the difference between L1 and L2 (Dagut & Laufer, 1985; Laufer & Eliasson, 1993; Liao & Fukuya, 2004⁷). As Dagut and Laufer (1985) mentioned, the phrasal verb structure is a characteristic of Germanic languages. Therefore, there is no parallel structure in Persian.

In Persian the structure of verb particle does not exist. One of verb structure in Persian is a verb preceded by a prefix such as *bargashtan* (get back), *bardashtan* (pick up), in which prefix *bar* precedes the verb *gashtan* and *dashtan*, unlike the phrasal verbs in English in which the verb is followed by a particle. Furthermore, this structure is different from phrasal verb in a way that prefixes are generally inseparable from the infinitive (*gashtan* and *dashtan*) and therefore are considered as a single unite. As a result of this structural difference between L1-L2, learners might prefer to use a more familiar structure OWV.

Research question two investigated whether difference in phrasal verb type (figurative vs. literal) affect the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Iranian learners. The ANOVA result found that phrasal verb type had statistically significant effect with mean score was higher for literal than figurative. Both intermediate and advanced learners preferred literal phrasal verbs over figurative ones in all three tests. Although native speakers did also favor literal verbs production more than figurative verbs (Liao & Fukuya, 2004), results made it clear that Iranian learners used figurative phrasal verbs remarkably less than native speakers, so they avoided using figurative phrasal verbs. In Dagut and Laufer (1985) study Hebrew speakers avoided using phrasal verbs more than literal ones and in Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) research Dutch learners avoided figurative phrasal verbs despite the L1 and L2 similarity. Liao and Fukuya (2004) in their study of Chinese speakers found that there was no interaction between groups (native speakers, Chinese advanced and intermediate learners) and phrasal verb type which means all three groups preferred literal more than figurative. The reason for Iranian learners' avoidance might be the semantic one since figurative phrasal verbs meaning is not derived from the meaning of its two parts and this idiomatic meaning made learners confused. On the other hand, finding the meaning for literal verbs is easier since it included the combining meanings of the two parts.

Research question three examined the test type effect on learners' performance and their avoidance of phrasal verbs. The one way ANOVA found test type was statistically significant and this interaction was found on translation and recall test. This means that both groups of Iranian learners tended to use phrasal verbs less often in translation and recall test. Besides, on translation and recall test the Iranian learners (both advanced and intermediate) showed a tendency to use figurative phrasal verbs less often than literal ones. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) hypothesized that memorization test (recall test in this study) would be the strongest evidence for avoidance of phrasal verbs and multiple-choice less strong and translation test would be the least strong. They claimed that since recall test present only phrasal verbs, if the learners respond the test with OWVs then recall test would be the strongest evidence for this avoidance behavior. The multiple-choice was less strong evidence presenting both phrasal verbs and OWVs and translation the least with no explicit equivalent for both verbs. However, results showed that advanced Dutch speakers did not avoid phrasal verbs in all three tests and intermediate learners in spite of a tendency to avoid phrasal verbs did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically either (Hulstijn & Marchena, 1989, p.250). In their study, Liao and Fukuya (2004) used three elicitation tests (multiple-choice, translation and recall). They investigated the interaction between test type and using phrasal verbs

and “this interaction was found only on translation test”. It means that both groups of Chinese learners (intermediate and advanced) used less figurative phrasal verbs in translation test than literal ones. They reasoned that “semantic difficulty of figurative phrasal verbs may have aggravated the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Chinese learners when worked their way through the translation test” (Liao & Fukuya, 2004, p.216).

The last research question investigated the role of proficiency level in the avoidance of phrasal verbs as a whole and figurative and phrasal verbs in particular. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) investigated differences in proficiency levels in the avoidance of phrasal verbs and assumed that Dutch learners’ avoidance would decrease as proficiency increase. They concluded that there was no significant difference between advanced and intermediate learners in avoiding phrasal verbs. However, results in multiple-choice showed that intermediate learners performed differently from native speakers, produced much less phrasal verbs, and advanced learners performed more closer to native speakers. Liao and Fukuya (2004) also investigated the effect of proficiency on the avoidance of phrasal verbs. The result of their study showed that intermediate learners avoid using phrasal verbs and “although the advanced learners did not perform very differently from native speakers, they also showed a slight tendency to use phrasal verbs less than the native speakers ($d=-0.41$)” (p.210). In this study intermediate and advanced learners did not show difference in their performance. It means that although the mean score for advanced learner ($M=9.3$) was a little higher than intermediate ($M=7.8$), but it was not significant, $p=0.1>0.05$.

The role of proficiency has been observed in all three research questions above and the results were also explained. Since based on the results of intermediate group in all three tests, there was no significant difference between advanced and intermediate Iranian learners in using phrasal verbs and since it was found from the results that there was also no significant difference in their avoidance of figurative phrasal verbs, both groups avoid using phrasal verbs and avoid using figurative phrasal verbs in the same level, then it can be inferred that proficiency level had statistically no role in the avoidance of phrasal verbs by Iranian English learners. In other words, the L1 and L2 differences affected the performance of learners of both level of language proficiency.

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Table 1. Descriptive statistics of phrasal verb usage

| Test | Group | Phrasal verb type | Mean | Standard deviation |
|-----------------|-----------------------|-------------------|-------|--------------------|
| Multiple choice | Native speakers | Total | 12.67 | 4.28 |
| | | Figurative | 9.20 | 3.29 |
| | | Literal | 4.53 | 0.51 |
| | Advanced learners | Total | 9.33 | 2.84 |
| | | Figurative | 6.00 | 2.64 |
| | | Literal | 3.33 | 0.61 |
| | Intermediate learners | Total | 7.85 | 2.34 |
| | | Figurative | 5.55 | 2.08 |
| | | Literal | 2.3 | 0.73 |
| Translation | Advanced learners | Total | 6.3 | 3.62 |
| | | Figurative | 4.3 | 2.75 |
| | | Literal | 2 | 1.15 |
| | Intermediate learners | Total | 5 | 2.50 |
| | | Figurative | 3.06 | 1.75 |
| | | Literal | 1.93 | 0.88 |
| Recall | Advanced learners | Total | 3.1 | 2.56 |
| | | Figurative | 5.09 | 2.3 |
| | | Literal | 0.3 | 0.48 |
| | Intermediate learners | Total | 4.66 | 2.25 |
| | | Figurative | 4 | 1.96 |
| | | Literal | 0.66 | 0.72 |

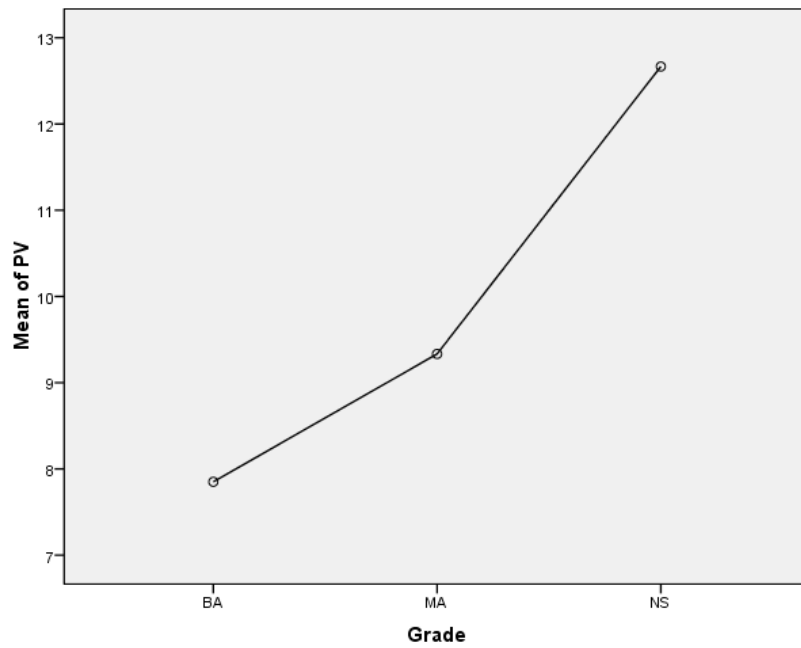


Figure 1. Means Plots

Table 2. One-way ANOVA results

| ANOVA | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| PV | | | | | |
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 202.403 | 2 | 101.202 | 10.009 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 475.217 | 47 | 10.111 | | |
| Total | 677.620 | 49 | | | |
| FP | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 127.230 | 2 | 63.615 | 8.969 | .001 |
| Within Groups | 333.350 | 47 | 7.093 | | |
| Total | 460.580 | 49 | | | |

Table3. One-way ANOVA results

| PV | | | | | |
|----------------|----------------|----|-------------|--------|------|
| | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 310.104 | 2 | 155.052 | 21.263 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 597.943 | 82 | 7.292 | | |
| Total | 908.047 | 84 | | | |
| FP | Sum of Squares | df | Mean Square | F | Sig. |
| Between Groups | 99.926 | 2 | 49.963 | 9.918 | .000 |
| Within Groups | 413.086 | 82 | 5.038 | | |
| Total | 513.012 | 84 | | | |

Appendix A: Raw Scores on the Three Tests

| Test | Group | N | PV Type | K | PV | OWV | Mistake | Blank |
|------|-------|----|---------|-----|-----|-----|---------|-------|
| M | NS | 15 | Total | 225 | 189 | 36 | 0 | 0 |
| | | | Fig | 165 | 136 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 60 | 53 | | | |
| | A | 15 | Total | 225 | 140 | 79 | 4 | 2 |
| | | | Fig | 165 | 90 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 60 | 50 | | | |
| | I | 20 | Total | 300 | 157 | 109 | 30 | 4 |
| | | | Fig | 220 | 111 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 80 | 46 | | | |
| R | A | 10 | Total | 150 | 31 | 27 | 82 | 10 |
| | | | Fig | 110 | 28 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 40 | 3 | | | |
| | I | 15 | Total | 225 | 42 | 70 | 80 | 33 |
| | | | Fig | 165 | 25 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 60 | 17 | | | |
| T | A | 10 | Total | 150 | 63 | 63 | 22 | 2 |
| | | | Fig | 110 | 42 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 40 | 21 | | | |
| | I | 15 | Total | 225 | 74 | 120 | 25 | 6 |
| | | | Fig | 165 | 51 | | | |
| | | | Lit | 60 | 23 | | | |

Note. M = Multiple choice; T = Translation; R = Recall; NS = Native speakers; A = Advanced learners; I = Intermediate learners; N = Number of participants; Fig = Figurative; Lit = Literal; K = Total number of verbs; PV = Phrasal verbs; OWV = One-Word verbs.

Appendix B: Phrasal and One-Word Verbs Used in the Study

| Phrasal Verbs | One-Word Equivalents | Persian Translation |
|----------------------|----------------------|---------------------|
| <u>A. Literal</u> | | |
| get up | rise | برخاستن |
| go away | leave | ترک کردن |
| take away | remove | برداشتن |
| come in | enter | وارد شدن |
| <u>B. Figurative</u> | | |
| show upon | appear | |
| brush upon | review | ظاهر شدن |
| let down | disappoint | مرور کردن |
| go off | explode | نامید کردن |
| hold on | wait | منفجر شدن |
| put out | extinguish | منتظر ماندن |
| make up | invent | خاموش کردن |
| give in | surrender | ساختن، سرهم کردن |
| turn down | refuse | تسلیم شدن |
| show off | boast | رد کردن |
| run into | meet | خودنمایی کردن |
| | | ملاقات کردن |

APPENDIX C: Test Items

1. –“When the weather is nice I love to ___ early.”
–“Me, too. It’s good to enjoy the morning air.”(برخاستن)
A. rise B. release C. get up D. look after
2. –“I didn’t expect to see Emily at the party. I thought she had gone on vacation.”
–“Me neither. I was also surprised when she ___.”(ظاهر شدن)
A. claimed B. appeared C. showed up D. looked up
3. –“I heard that the company is sending you to Germany again.”
–“Yes. It’s been a long time since I was there, so I guess it’s time to ___ my German.”(مرور کردن)
A. abolish B. improve C. brush up on D. calm down
4. –“How do you like John?”
–“He is one of those few people who never ___ their friends.”(نامید کردن)
A. solve B. disappoint C. let down D. carry on

5. –“Did you hear about the bombing of the embassy in Nairobi?”
 –“That was a disaster. Fortunately, there weren’t that many people in the building when the bomb ____.”(منفجر شدن)
 A. went off B. tuned in C. exploded D. replied
6. –“Hello, Jan!”
 –“Hi, Susan! How nice of you to call me!”
 –“I want to ask some advice from you.”
 –“No problem. Oh---, can you ____ a second? Someone is knocking at the door.”
 (منتظر ماندن)
 A. hold on B. capture C. wait D. fall down
7. –“Michelle always forgets to ____ the fire when she leaves!”
 –“That’s dangerous! You should talk to her about this.”(خاموش کردن)
 A. break into B. foresee C. put out D. extinguish
8. –“I was late for my date last night, so I ____ a story about a traffic jam.”
 –“But did your girlfriend believe it at all? Better be frank next time.”(سرهم کردن، ساختن)
 A. invented B. made up C. followed D. lay down
9. –“Robert and Paul were fighting on the street this morning.”
 –“So I heard. Was it serious?”
 –“They didn’t stop until Paul twisted his ankle and had to ____.”(تسلیم شدن)
 A. realize B. give in C. surrender D. look up to
10. –“How is your business going?”
 –“Pretty good. Though I have to ____ several good offers because I am just short of time.”(رد کردن)
 A. offend B. turn down C. cheer up D. refuse
11. –“When you think about it, most of your classmates will disappear forever from your life after you graduate.”
 –“Yeah, but every now and then you will ____ one of them on the street.”(ملاقات کردن)
 A. go over B. run into C. meet D. applaud
12. –“Do you notice that Marvin likes to ____?”
 –“Yes. But I don’t think that he has anything to be proud of.”(خودنمایی کردن)
 A. lie B. boast C. show off D. break out
13. –“I’m sorry I hurt you. I didn’t mean to say those things. I was just angry.”
 –“Just ____ . I don’t want to see you for a while.”(ترک کردن)
 A. leave B. sit C. go away D. move on
14. (in a restaurant)
 –“Miss, could I get a bit more coffee when you’ve got a chance?”
 –“Sure. Would you like me to ____ these plates first?”(برداشتن)
 A. remove B. take away C. mix D. drop in
15. –“How do you get in that bar?”
 –“You have to ____ the back door.”(وارد شدن)
 A. enter B. come in C. adopt D. put up