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Phrasal Verbs as a Means of Students' Language Competence Development

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Abstract—**Phrasal verbs have a high communicative value and provide unlimited possibilities for expressing almost any concept. The fluency in the use of these linguistic units shows a high level of language proficiency. That is why phrasal verbs are an essential component of the English language learning process and, therefore, can be considered a key element in the formation of students' language competence. At the same time, insufficient attention is paid to the consideration of phrasal verbs in textbooks and training manuals recommended for teaching English to students of non-linguistic specialties. The role of phrasal verbs in the development of students' communication skills in English for specific purposes is also not taken into account. The research considers phrasal verbs as a means of language competence development of students of non-linguistic specialties in the process of learning the English language in a higher education institution. The frequency of use and communicative value of these units determines the relevance of the study. Structural and semantic relations between the components of the phrasal verb are analyzed. The article describes the phased approach to work on phrasal verbs. Some possible ways and recommendations of working on phrasal verbs as well as essential types of exercises are proposed in the article.**

Keywords—the English Language; communication; phrasal verbs; students of non-linguistic specialties

I. INTRODUCTION

Methods and techniques of teaching a foreign language in the light of the learners' language competence formation are described in numerous works of Russian researchers. They are interested in the problems of competence-based and cultural approaches in general [1], foreign language teaching to linguistically gifted students [2], the organization of independent work in learning foreign languages [3], the combination of modern and classical approaches in teaching the language [4], the development of linguistic guess [5] and many others. This article examines phrasal verbs and their role in the language competence formation of students of non-linguistic specialties. Being one of the most common and highly informative units of the language, phrasal verbs are an essential part of learning the language and language competence development.

II. METHODS

In order to investigate the problem the methods of empirical and theoretical researches are used, for instance analysis, synthesis, comparison, generalization as well as comparative methods of investigation.

III. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Replenishment of the vocabulary of the English language with phrasal verbs occurs continuously, starting from the Middle English period (although the process of their formation is already observed in the Old English). The earliest cases of the use of a verb with a post-verbal element belong to the 12-14th centuries (to give up in the meaning "to stop" - 12th century; to take off in the meaning "to remove clothes" - 14th century; to get up in the meaning "to stand up, rise" - 14th century). The combination "a phrasal verb" was first used by Logan Smith, a renowned essayist and critic, in his book Words and Idioms (1925). The monograph of Kennedy (Arthur Garfield Kennedy "The Modern English verb-adverb combination"), published in 1920, is considered to be the first significant work in foreign linguistics devoted to the consideration of phrasal verbs in a combination of synchronic and diachronic aspects. Since that time, phrasal verbs have become the object of study in numerous studies devoted to this issue (D.Bolinger, R.Hiltunen, K.Sroka, J.Povey).

Even though such verbs have existed in the English language for centuries, in linguistics there is still no agreement on the definition of the term, classification, the grammatical affiliation of the post-verbal element. In works where set verb combinations are analyzed, the following definitions can be found: "verb-adverb combination", "particle verb", "verb-particle combination", "verb-particle construction", "discontinuous verb", "merged verb", "separable verb", "two-word verb", "separable compound", "poly-word verb", etc.

The close attention to phrasal verbs by both linguists and teaching methods specialists is primarily due to the high communicative value of these linguistic units, which provide unlimited possibilities for expressing almost any concept. Moreover, the fluency of the use of phrasal verbs shows a high level of language proficiency.

From our point of view, in order to get a complete understanding of a particular phrasal verb, it is necessary to take into account the structure, grammatical properties, and semantic relations between components. These three elements (verb structure, grammatical properties, and semantics) will largely determine the development of methods for working with these linguistic units.

The structure of the verb is involved primarily in the definition of a given linguistic phenomenon. Two approaches can be distinguished. A broad approach considers phrasal verbs as verbs including a combination of a verb and an adverbial or prepositional particle (sometimes both adverbial and prepositional). As a result, a new syntactically formalized lexical unit is formed with a partially or completely changed meaning. For example, 'look after' = take care of (a combination of a verb and a prepositional particle); 'give up' = stop doing (a combination of a verb and an adverbial particle); 'put up with' = tolerate (a combination of a verb with two particles, the first of which is adverbial, the second one is prepositional). A narrow approach considers phrasal verbs as combinations consisting of a verb and an adverbial particle. The term "multi-word lexical units" (lexical units comprising of more than one words) denotes the entire set of stable verb combinations with various particles [6]. Depending on which part of speech the particle belongs to, four main types are distinguished:

1) phrasal verbs, which are a combination of a verb and an adverbial particle ('break down' – stop working; to separate, or to separate something, into smaller parts; 'bring up' – to care for a child until it is an adult; 'cut down' – to do or use less of something; 'drive away' – to work hard on something, etc.);

2) prepositional verbs, which are a combination of a verb and a prepositional particle ('be on' – to occur, to take place, to go (about the performance); 'be off' – to leave; 'look at' – carefully research something; 'look for' – to hope to get something that you want or need; to search for someone or something, etc.);

3) phrasal-prepositional verbs, which include both adverbial and prepositional particles ('fall in with' – to become friends after a casual acquaintance; 'get away with' – to get rid of something; 'get back with' – to get together again with someone, 'put up with someone / something' – to be willing to accept someone or something that is unpleasant or not desirable, etc.);

4) all other structural types of compound verbs like ('have a look of' – to be like someone (or something), vaguely resemble someone (or something); 'make fun of' – to be unkind to someone and laugh at or cause others to laugh at the person; 'take into account' – to consider or remember something when judging a situation; 'keep in touch with' – to continue to talk to or write to someone, etc.).

A number of Russian linguists follow a narrow approach to phrasal verbs considering them as "numerous lexical units consisting of verbs expressing vital concepts and having a high frequency of use and adverbs." [7]. A broad approach, as a rule, is more common in the works of a practical orientation (manuals, dictionaries), both foreign and domestic. The authors explain this by the fact that these structures have so much in common that this allows them to be combined for further study. In this case, the post-verbal derivational element is often called a "particle" (particle). This denotation is regarded to be justifying due to the absence of a universally accepted designation [8].

The structure of a phrasal verb, determining its grammatical properties, can cause some embarrassment when communicating for non-native speakers. First of all, the difficulties are connected with the transitivity-intransitivity of the English verbs. As it is known, English phrasal verbs can be [9] transitive ('bring up' – to educate, 'carry out' – to do or complete something, 'find out' – to obtain knowledge of something, 'turn on somebody' – to attack or criticize someone suddenly and unexpectedly) and intransitive ('break down' – to stop working, 'come along' – to accompany someone, go with someone, 'come on' – to advance, shut up – to stop talking or making a noise, to imprison).

Transitive verbs, in turn, are divided into separable verbs (composed of a lexical core and a separable particle) and inseparable (composed of a lexical core and an inseparable particle). Separable verbs form two vast groups: 1) verbs, in which the object can be put both before the post-verbal element, and after it: E.g. I chewed over the problem for a few days / I chewed the problem over for a few days; 2) verbs in which the object must be placed before the post-verbal element: E.g. If I miss the meeting, I'll feel I've let everybody down. Inseparable verbs include those in which the post-verbal element cannot be separated from the verb by an object: E.g. Could you see to this customer while I answer the phone? ('see to somebody' – to deal with a person or task that needs to be dealt with or is waiting to be dealt with).

For non-native speakers it is difficult to determine which group the phrasal verb belongs to. Therefore, in order to understand and use phrasal verbs properly, D. Povey considers them, paying attention to the following points: a) transitivity-intransitivity of the verb; b) the number of attached particles – one or two; c) the nature of the attached particles – adverbial or prepositional [10]. This approach allows the researcher to identify six main models. Povey's classification takes into account both the structure and grammatical properties of the verb. Semantic relations between the components of the phrasal verb remain out of sight.

When classifying phrasal verbs by their semantics, the initial meaning of the components and the derived meaning arising after the combination of the verb and the particle are regarded [11]. It is common to divide phrasal verbs into compositional and non-compositional or idiomatic.

Compositional verbs are verbs, the meaning of which can be derived from the meaning of their constituent components. In this group, the following types of combinations depending on the particle can be distinguished: 1) verbs with a directional particle: a particle specifies the direction of motion (the particle in these combinations retains its spatial meaning: 'come in' – to enter, 'come out' – to become known, 'go away' – to move or travel away from a person or place, 'go out' – to leave a room or buildingt, 'run off' – to suddenly leave a place or person); 2) verbs with an aspectual particle: a particle changes the verbal aspect, giving the verb the meaning of completeness of the action ('eat up' – to eat to the end; to use something so that little or nothing is left; 'cry out' – to shout or make a loud noise because you are frightened, hurt, etc., 'finish up' – same as finish; to finish (studies, career, life); to get the result at the end.)

Non-compositional (idiomatic constructions) are phrasal verbs in which the meaning of both the verb and the post-verbal element changes completely or partially, and therefore the meaning of the new unit cannot be derived from the meaning of its constituent components: 'fall out' – to quarrel; 'take on' – to fight or compete against someone; 'break in' – to interfere (in the conversation); enter a building by force, especially in order to steal things.

The experience of teaching English shows that the biggest difficulties for students of non-linguistic specialties present the verbs of the last group due to interlingual and intralingual interference caused by the discrepancy between the content plan and the expression plan of these units. The semantic integrity inherent in verbs is not composed of the meanings of its components. Despite the difficulties that arise in the process of mastering phrasal verbs, this vast layer of vocabulary cannot be overlooked, since it expresses life concepts necessary for intensive communication. Consequently, the process of mastering such linguistic units contributes to the development of linguistic communicative competence, which, in turn, is the main aim of studying the discipline "Foreign Language" included in the section "Humanitarian, social and economic disciplines" of the core educational program in a higher education institution.

Due to the fact that the vocabulary of students is enlarged with phrasal verbs throughout the study of this discipline, the teacher needs to organise training in such a way that it is possible to solve the following tasks: 1) to systematize the students' theoretical ideas about the phenomenon under study; 2) to improve active vocabulary with new phrasal verbs; 3) to focus on conscious use in connection with a specific communication situation.

Since teaching a foreign language to students of non-linguistic specialties implies, first of all, its practical use, in our opinion, it is preferable to focus on the broad approach proposed by foreign linguists [12] and compilers of dictionaries (Longman, [13]). According to them phrasal verbs include a combination of a verb and a particle (adverbial or prepositional) characterized by idiomatic meaning. A broad approach allows the teacher to give basic theoretical ideas about the phenomenon under study and then to cover a wide range of verbs. Besides, this approach takes into account such

grammatical properties of phrasal verbs as transitivity-intransitivity, separability-inseparability, on which the correctness of speech depends.

The language proficiency level is also very important. That is why the study of phrasal verbs in class varies with the low and high level of language proficiency.

The following features of work on phrasal verbs can be noted in the case of a low level of language proficiency:

- The leading role belongs to the teacher. It is the teacher who leads to the final semantization of the phrasal verb (in some cases with visualisation).

At the initial stage of learning, the accumulation of the active vocabulary is just beginning and the students are not good at speaking, reading, pronunciation, and graphics of the English language. It is difficult for them to recognise the words in the process of conversation and listening in connected speech. Therefore, at this stage, the methods of revealing the meaning in which the central role belongs to the teacher prevail.

- Using schematic images of phrases. A verb 'look' combines with such particles as 'after', 'around', 'for', 'through', etc. Possible combinations can be shown schematically. The graphic representation of words and even phrases also contributes to the memorization of the material.

- Introducing context.

At this stage, the recognition of a phrasal verb through the context is considered to be the most difficult for a teacher and the most important for practical mastering of the language. The character of the illustrative material is also essential. The teacher's task is to choose the language material that matches the student's level.

- Reliance on the native language and the student's sense of the native language, through which recognition of a lexical unit takes place.

The student, recalling his experience of learning his native language and relying on the feeling of his native language, attempts to assimilate a lexical unit.

The following features of work on phrasal verbs can be noted in the case of a sufficient/high level of language proficiency:

- The perception of a word is based on the knowledge of the language and studied phenomenon.

- The introduction of a new phrasal occurs through the consideration of its components.

The perception of phrasal verbs in the case of proper language proficiency should be more profound, based on the knowledge of word formation. Therefore, whenever the nature of the word itself makes it possible to explain it with the help of word formation, the consideration should begin with the word's constituent parts.

- Identifying the word's meaning through the context.

- Reliance on a foreign language.

It involves the use of definitions for interpreting the meaning of a word, words with similar word-formation elements, as well as synonyms and antonyms.

The process of studying phrasal verbs in the course of the "Foreign Language" discipline study is based on two interrelated components: theoretical comprehension and practical assimilation. Theoretical comprehension implies comprehension of the structure, grammatical characteristics and semantic relations between the components of the phrasal verb. For this purpose, students can be offered research assignments using the English corpus. Students learn to recognize and isolate phrasal verbs in the text, analyze their structure and semantics.

So, for example, the sentence "Father was looking through the newspaper" allows the teacher to highlight the phrasal verb "look through". The student's knowledge may not be enough for an adequate translation. Referring to the dictionary will help a) to clarify the translation ('view'); b) to reveal grammatical properties (transitive, inseparable). At the same time, visualization of a concept (a picture or a story illustrating the meaning of a verb) contributes to memorization. In particular, for this purpose, humorous pictures, extensively presented in the collection of test exercises "Test your phrasal verbs" published by Longman can be used [14].

There are more than 12 thousand phrasal verbs in English. However, the reference and practice books such as "English Phrasal Verbs in Use" contain explanations and practice of approximately 1,000 phrasal verbs, written for advanced-level (C1 to C2) [15] and the same number for intermediate-level (B1 to B2) [16] considering this number enough for confident use in speaking and in written speech. When selecting material, the teacher needs to take into account the following points: the use of the verb (at the initial stage, attention is paid to common verbs) and its meaning (if the verb is polysemantic, as a rule, it is introduced in its basic meaning, and then the study gradually moves on to the rest). We propose to carry out further work with the original verb in the following directions: 1) to consider the combinations of the original verb with common particles (in our case, the verb "look" relatively freely combines with a large number of particles, such as after, around, back, for, and so on); 2) to consider the combinations of the original particle with other verbs (for example, the particle "through" is combined with the verbs be, get, put); 3) in the case of a polysemantic verb, to analyze the semantics of other possible meanings. At this stage, various kinds of tasks are used: to substitute an appropriate phrasal verb in a sentence, to correlate a phrasal verb with its meaning, to replace a phrasal verb with a single verb that is appropriate in this meaning or a synonymous phrasal verb. When assimilating lexical material, teaching methods specialists recommend using substitutional and transformational types of exercises. Differentiating exercises distinguish the structure, form, or meaning of phrasal verbs. Differentiating exercises are divided into the following groups:

- Exercises aimed at the distinction of the structure and form. Differentiation of the structure is done according to a pattern or on the basis of rules and for example includes choosing the correct option from the given patterns.

- Exercises aimed at differentiating the meanings of linguistic units. It implies a definition instead of translating an unfamiliar word and allows a student to switch to an actual English-language experience that can suggest an approximate meaning.

- Exercises aimed at distinguishing the use of linguistic phenomena in speech, which implies listening to audio and watching videos.

Sample exercise. Task: Complete these sentences using a phrasal verb from the opposite page. 1. Now who'd like to … the first question to our speaker? (put)2. In this essay I shall first outline three key issues. I shall then expand … each of these in turn. (on)3. Our discussion of modern education soon … into an argument about whether schools are better now than they used to be. (led) <…> [15, 95]

Transformational exercises provide an opportunity to form the skills of combining, replacing, reducing or expanding given structures. With their help, the students can learn how to vary the content of a message in given models depending on a changing situation, compare and contrast the studied structure with previously studied ones, and compose the statements with new content from separate previously learned components. The choice of the type of exercise depends on the specific situation.

Sample exercise. Task: Rewrite the underlined part of each sentence, using one of the phrasal Verbs in A. 1. It's so boring listening to Uncle Ed lecturing us about the problem with the youth of today. (It's so boring listening to Uncle Ed holding forth / going on at us about the problem with the youth of today.) 2. I'll try to get into a conversation with your father so he won't notice your leaving (I'll try to engage your father in conversation so he won't notice your leaving). [15, 95]

These types of exercises are extensively featured in the "English Phrasal Verbs in Use" by Cambridge University Press.

Practical learning, as a rule, is due to the linguistic material to be considered at this stage.

IV. CONCLUSION

The general practical recommendations developed by us for working with phrasal verbs with students of non-linguistic specialties can be summarized as follows:

1. To focus on the list of the most common phrasal verbs, proposed by the educational-methodological complex, which is the basis for the discipline; introduce a phrasal verb from the passive into the active use of the student.

2. To determine the meaning of the verb and the possibilities of its compatibility with other words. If the verb is compositional, it is necessary to indicate the general meaning conveyed by the particle, which will further ensure the recognition of other similar verbs.

3. To designate grammatical properties: transitional-intransitive, separable-inseparable.

4. To ensure the frequency of use. The implementation of the last point is facilitated by the program of the discipline "Foreign language", intended for non-linguistic specialties, which is developed taking into account the thematic principle of planning. This planning makes it possible to include phrasal verbs representing an extensive group of units with various meanings in the study of almost any topic provided by the program. Russian linguists and teaching methods specialists have developed exercise complexes and systematized verbs according to thematic criteria. For example, V.V. Ilchenko singles out 23 thematic groups (Food, Travel, Health, Keeping Fit, Time, etc.) and offers a number of exercises for mastering and consolidating the verbs of each topic [17].

The program of the discipline "Foreign Language" consists of two blocks - basic and professionally oriented. Taking into account this fact it is advisable in the first block to introduce phrasal verbs concerning the everyday sphere, and in the second - professional, which has a terminological character. So, for example, the verbs 'turn out', 'shut off' in the first block are entered with the following meanings: 'turn out' - to happen or become known to happen in a particular way (intransitive in this meaning, inseparable), 'shut off' - to turn off the water, power supply (transient, separable , combines with a wide range of nouns). In the second block, the verb 'turn out' is introduced with the meaning 'to produce'. At the same time, its grammatical characteristics change. In this meaning, it is used as a transitive, separable, accepting the object expressed by a noun or pronoun. The verb 'shut off' is used, for example, to describe the process of supplying oil and means 'to stop supplying'.

Thus, the thematic consideration of phrasal verbs combining the theoretical comprehension and practical assimilation is optimal for students of non-linguistic specialties. It implies level-by-level training in accordance with international standards approved by the Council of Europe (A1+, A2, B1, B2) and promotes the goal set by the program "Foreign Language" for non-linguistic specialties - the development of the linguistic communicative competence of students both at the general and at the professional level.

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