Properties of Verbs Which Constitute Phrasal Verbs

Éva Kovács

Phrasal verbs are an important feature of the English language. Their importance lies in the fact that they form such a key part of everyday English. Not only are they used in spoken and informal English, but they are also a common aspect of written and even formal English. Understanding and learning to use phrasal verbs, however, is often problematic as the meaning of a phrasal often bears no relation to the meaning of either the verb or the particle which is used with it. The primary purpose of this paper is to examine the properties of verbs which constitute phrasal verbs, and it also raises the question whether we can predict which verbs combine with which particle and in which relationship.

Phrasal verbs are often a particular problem for learners of English. One reason is that in most cases, even though students may be familiar with both the verb in the phrasal verb and with the particle, they may not understand the meaning of the combination since it can differ greatly from the meanings of the two words independently. The co-occurrence of two quite common little words creates a fairly subtle new meaning that does not seem to be systematically related to either or both of the original words. No wonder many learners avoid them. Instead of using them, they rely on rare and clumsier words which make their language sound stilted and awkward. Native speakers, however, manage phrasal verbs with aplomb. Here the question arises whether the semantic disposition of the words involved, and their syntax, are really governed by unpredictable rules and whether they are as arbitrary as they are often regarded to be.

1 Classification of Verbs with Relation to Particles

According to Potter (1965:286), there are 24 kernel verbs and 16 adverbs (or adverbial particles) which collocate to make up the functionally most loaded phrasal verbs. These verbs are: *to back, to blow, to break, to bring, to call, to lay, to let, to look, to make, to put, to run, to send, to set, to stand, to take, to turn, to work.* The adverbs (or adverbial particles) are: *about, above, across, at, by, down, for, in, off, on, out, over, round, through, to, up.* There are other verbs and adverbs (or adverbial particles) too, but these are the ones most

frequently in use, and they produce "no fewer than 384 possible combinations".

As Live (1965:430) points out, the verbs most active in this kind of combination are of the old, common monosyllabic or trochaic "basic English" variety (many of them of "irregular" conjugation in modern English): *bring, send, take, set, go, come, look,* and many others, each occurring in combination with a considerable number of the particles, whereas many of the "more learned"(often polysyllabic) verbs of classic or French borrowing occur with none.

The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (1995:vi) gives thirty-eight common verbs which occur in a large number of combinations with different particles, and which have many non-transparent meanings. As pointed out, phrasal verbs which have literal meanings are not included. The thirty-eight verbs are:

break	fall	kick	make	put	stay
bring	get	knock	move	run	stick
call	give	lay	pass	send	take
cast	go	lie	play	set	talk
come	hang	live	pull	sit	throw
cut	hold	look	push	stand	turn
do	keep				

In all three of the above lists of verbs constituting phrasal verbs we can find the monosyllabic *set.* Sinclair (1991:67) assumes that *set* is a fairly common, rather dull little word that was comparatively neglected in description and in teaching. Phrasal verbs with *set* are also very common, and it is particularly rich in making combinations with words like *about, in, up, out, on, off,* and these words are themselves very common. Sinclair (1991:68), however, emphasises the importance of the environment of *set* in determining the meaning since in most of its usage, it contributes to meaning in combination with other words, i.e. the above-mentioned particles.

Strangely enough, none of the above lists contains the verb *be* constituting phrasal verbs. It is, however, relatively frequent according to the authors of the Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (1993), in which *be* combines with the following particles: *about, around, above, after, against, along, around, at, away, back, behind, below, beneath, beyond, down, in, off, on, out,*

over, through, up, within. Most of them have literal meaning, this can be the reason for their missing from the verbs listed in the Collins Cobuild Dictionary.

In accordance with Bolinger (1971:xii) and Lipka (1972:165), Live also notes that in polysyllabic combinations of foreign origin there is a notable tendency to redundancy, in that the associated particle in many cases reiterates or approximates the original connotation of the prefix.

de- 'from'	co(n)/syn- 'with'	in- 'in'/'on'	a(d)- 'to'
derive from	coalesce with	imbed in	allude to
desist from	condole with	involve in	adhere to
deter from	comply with	indulge in	admit to
detract from	synchronize with	infringe on	attribute to
deflect from	sympathize with	intrude on	aspire to

Similarly, *provide for, alienate from, refer back,* even *exhale out, reply back, include (me) in* also occur. This tendency to attach a 'superfluous' particle suggests that expansion of a verb constitutes a pattern-habit in English.

Lipka (1972:165) notes that certain verbs are said never, or very rarely to occur, without a particle, as, e.g.; those in *auction off, jot down, peter out.* Live (1965:432) gives some more to this list: *tide over, cave in, dole out, balk at, cope with, trifle with, cater to, delve into, dote on.* Fraser (1976:9) also mentions that "we find a number of very surprising changes in meaning and co-occurrence restrictions with quite a number of verb-particle combinations whose verb never functions as a verb without the associated particle." Fraser's examples are as follows:

> ante up, auction off, balloon up, bandy about, barge in, button down, bed down, belly in, bib up, board up, bolster up, booze up, bruit about, buff up, bum up, bung up, bunk up, buttress up, cave in, chicken out, chuck up, clam up, dole out, doll up, drum up, eke out, fend off, ferret out, fork over, gum up, gun down, hollow out, horse around, jot down, keel over, knuckle under, leech out, limber up, lot out, mete out, mull over, parcel out, pension off, pep up, perk up, peter out, pine away, plank down, rev up, soup up, spice up, spout off, team up, tone down, tool up, true up, trundle off, tucker out, wad up, ward off, well up, while away, wolf down, yoke up.

We can observe that not all verbs occur with a particle and while some verbs may occur with only one particle and no others, others form a verb-particle combination with almost every particle. In the COBUILD Dictionary I have found the following verb-particle combinations which occur only with one particle:

balls up, beaver away, belly out, bliss out, bottom out, brazen out, cave in, cheese off, chicken out, clam up, club together, cobble together, cone off, conk out, cook up, coop up, cork up, cotton up, crate up, cream off, curtain off, dam up, damp down, divvy up, dob in, dole out, doll up, duff up, dummy up, earth up, egg on, fag out, flesh out, fob off, fritter away, fur up, ham up, hare off, hash over, hive off, hoke off, hot up, hunker down, ink in, jazz up, jolly away, keel over, limber up, liven up, lop off, louse up, luck out, lump together, magic away, mete out, moulder away, muss up, naff off, palm off, pension off, pep up, perk up, peter out, portion out, pretty up, ruck up, shack up, shore up, sick up, silt up, size up, slag off, sober up, soldier on, sop up, soup up, space out, spruce up, squirrel away, staff up, sum up, tart up, team up, tide over, tool up, turf out, vamp up, ward off, weed out, while away, wimp out, wise up

The examples mentioned above plus the following ones occur only with one particular particle and no other:

bail up, bandage up, bandy about, batter down, bowl out, beef up, beg off, bitch up, blurt out, bolster up, bolt down, boom out, boot out, botch up, brave out, brew up, brighten up, brim over, broaden out, brown off, buck up, bucket down, budge up, bung up, buoy up, butter up, cart off, cash in, chain up, chalk up, chat up, clamp down, clap out, clog up, cloud over, clutter up, cock up, coil up, collect up, comb out, cone off, conjure up, cop out, cough up, crank up, crease up, crop up, crouch down, crumple up, cuddle up, cure up, dampen down, dash off, deck out, dope up, dose up, doss down, doze off, dredge up, drone on, duck out, ebb away, edit out, eke out, empty out, end up, erode away, explain away, eye up, fan out, farm out, fathom out, fatten up, ferret out, fetch up, file away, film over, filter out, firm up, fizzle out, flag down, flash back, flatten out, float around,

flop down, flunk out, flush out, fog up, forge ahead, fork out, form up, foul up, freak out, freshen up, fry up, glaze over, gouge out, gulp down, gum up, hatch out, heat up, heel over, hike up, hire out, hitch up, hollow out, hop off, hound out, howl down, hush up, hype up, iron out, jabber away, jog along, jot down, jumble up, jut out, kill off, kip down, kiss away, kneel down, lace up, ladle out, lag behind, lap up, last out, laze about, leak out, lend out, line up, linger on, link up, loan out, loosen up, mash up, mask out, mind out, miss out, mop up, mount up, mouth off, mow down, muffle up, mug up, mull over, multiply out, muster up, narrow down, nestle up, nod off, notch up, note down, offer up, ooze out, own up, pad out, pan out, partition off, paste up, pave over, peal out, pelt down, pencil in, plant out, plonk down, port up, prise out, prop up, queue up, quicken up, quiet down, quieten down, rap out, ration out, rave up, render down, rent out, report back, rev up, rinse out, rot away, rout out, rumble on, rustle up, salt away, sand down, save up, scour away, screen off, scrunch up, search out, seek out, select out, shape up, share out, sharpen up, shave off, shear off, shell out, shoo away, shop around, shrivel up, shrug off, shuffle off, sidle up, simmer down, single out, siphon off, skive off, slacken off, slave away, slope off, slough off, smarten up, smoke out, snarl up, sniff out, sob out, spark off, speed up, spell out, spice up, spit out, spout out, sprawl out, spur on, spurt out, square up, stack up, stammer out, stash away, stitch up, stock up, stoke up, stow away, struggle on, stub out, stump up, summon up, surge up, suss out, sweeten up, swell up, swill down, swoop down, swot up, tamp down, tape up, taper off, tease out, tense up, thaw out, thrash out, thump out, tighten up, toil away, topple over, toughen up, tow away, trace out, trigger off, truss up, use up, veer off, waste away, water down, well up, whisk away, whoop up, wire up, wither away, wolf down, wrap up, wring out, yell out, zip up

It is also pointed out in the dictionary that in some cases the verb means the same as the verb-particle combination. E.g.:

bail up – bail; clutter up – clutter; coil up – coil; conjure up – conjure; crouch down – crouch; curl up – curl; drone on – drone; fathom out – fathom; fatten up – fatten; fog up – fog;

freak out − freak; hatch out − hatch; jumble out − jumble;
prop up − prop; rev up − rev; rinse out − rinse; sand down −
sand; scrunch up − scrunch; shrivel up − shrivel; wolf down
− wolf; wrap up − wrap

On the other hand, some verbs form a verb-particle combination
with almost every particle. The most productive of these are: *put* (23), *go*
(23), *come* (22), *get* (21), *push* (19), *pull* (16), *take* (15), *bring* (14), *turn* (14),
look (12) and *fall* (11). There are other less productive verbs like *lay* (10),
play (10), *stand* (10), *run* (10), *set* (10), *call* (10), *keep* (9), *sit* (9), *break* (8),
and *give* (7).

The most productive ones occur with the following adverbial
particles in the COBUILD Dictionary:

PUT: about, above, across, around, aside, away, back,
         behind, by, down, forth, forward, in, off, on, out,
         over, past, round, through, together, towards, up

GO: about, after, ahead, along, around, away, back,
         below, by, down, forth, forward, in, off, on, out,
         over, overboard, round, together, towards, under,
         up

COME: about, across, after, along, apart, around, away,
         back, by, down, forth, forward, in, off, on, out,
         over, round, through, to, up

GET: about, above, across, ahead, along, around, away,
         back, behind, beyond, by, down, in, off, on, out,
         over, round, through, together, up

PUSH: about, ahead, along, around, aside, back, by,
         forward, in, off, on, out, over, past, round,
         through, to, towards, up

PULL: about, ahead, apart, around, aside, away, back,
         down, in, off, on, out, over, round, through, to

TAKE: aback, along, apart, around, aside, away, back,
         down, in, off, on, out, over, round, up

BRING: about, along, back, down, forth, forward, in, off,
on, out, over, round, together, up

LOOK: ahead, around, away, back, down, in, on, out, over,
round, through, up

FALL: about, apart, away, back, behind, down, in, off,
out, over, through

We can raise the question whether or not we can predict which verbs combine with which particle(s) and in which relationship. As Fraser (1976:13) points out, "we have no way of determining from any syntactic or semantic properties associated with a verb whether or not it will combine with a particle in one way or another".

2 Syntactic Properties

With respect to syntactic properties, we have almost no basis for specifying which verbs can co-occur with a particle or which cannot. Both transitive and intransitive verbs combine with particles both literally and figuratively, e.g., **get off** *the bus,* **put off** *an appointment (postpone);* **come back, go for** *someone or something (attack).* In the literature, Kennedy (1920:26), Lipka (1972:165) and Fraser (1976:12) note that changes with regard to transitivity are noted as the most conspicuous difference. There are cases where verbs which are normally transitive become intransitive when a particle is added. E.g.: *The pilot* **took off** *smoothly. I resolved not to* **give in.** There are also verbs which are intransitive and become transitive when a particle is added. E.g.: *The technician will* **run** *that bit of tape* **through** *again. The government will* **see** *the thing* **through.** We can observe, however, that stative verbs such as *know, want, see, hear, hope, resemble, like, hate, remember, understand,* etc. practically never combine with a particle. **Hear** *someone* **out** (listen without interrupting until they have finished speaking), **see about** *something* (arrange for it to be done), **see** *someone* **off** *at the station,* **see** *a task, plan, or project* **through** (continue to do it until it is successfully completed) appear to be exceptions to this generalization, but note that these combinations have become nonstative. Fraser (1976:8) also mentions some verbs which are usually intransitive and do not usually co-occur

with a direct object noun phrase when a particle is not present. (E.g.: *He slept off the effects of the drinking. The student laughed off the failure.*)

As another syntactic effect, it is often pointed out e.g. by Kennedy that "the object of the combination is of a very different character from that of the simple verb" e.g.: in *buy a house / buy out a person, lock a door/ lock out a person, mop a floor / mop up the water on it, clean a room / clean out its contents.* It is also pointed out by Live (1965:437) that many verbs which "remain transitive, co-occur with a different set of objects", e.g.: *carry (package) / carry out (threat), test (candidate) / test out (theory).* Lipka (1972:176) notes that "when the selection restrictions and the meaning of the VPCs (verb particle constructions) differ considerably from the simplex verb, as in *carry out (threat)* vs. *carry (package),* the two are unrelated and the VPC must be regarded as an idiomatic discontinuous verb." One might assume that the two also differ with regard to figurative usage. In some cases the VPCs seem to be confined to a figurative use, while the corresponding simplex verb occurs only in literal use: E.g.: *blossom out* (sb/business firm), *freeze out* (sb), *smell out* (secret/plot), *bottle up* (emotion, anger), *thrash out* (problem, truth).

Sinclair's (1991:69–77) discussion of the combination of *set + particle* justifies some of the observations I made about the syntactic properties of phrasal verbs. The phrasal verb *set off* can have a noun group inside it. E.g.: It was the hedge which *set* the garden *off. Set in* seems to occur typically in a small and/or minor part of a sentence, i.e. the clauses in which *set in* is chosen are in general rather short, a number of clauses are subordinate and *set in* shows a clear tendency to end structures. E.g.: … where the rot *set in.* The phrasal verb *set about* is also interesting in that it is regularly followed by an *-ing* form of another verb and the second verb is normally transitive. Besides, in front of the phrasal verb, there are a number of structures concerning uncertainty: negatives and *how;* phrases like *little idea, the faintest idea, I'm not sure, evidently not knowing.* E.g.: She had not the faintest idea of how to *set about* earning any. The combination *set off* can be intransitive or transitive. When intransitive, it is followed by a prepositional phrase (very often the preposition is *on, for, in, into*) E.g.: We *set off in* his car *on* the five-thousand-mile journey. When *set off* is transitive, the object is usually abstract: 'a new *round* of', a whole *series* of', 'a *reaction*'. E.g.: In Austria the broadcast was to *set off a train* of thought and actions.

The above discussion clearly showed that even the combination of *set + particle* has a syntactic complexity. Their semantic properties, the discussion of which is our next concern, however, seem to be even more bewildering.

3 Semantic Properties

As far as the semantic properties are concerned, Fraser (1976:11) notes that there are some natural classes of verb-particle combinations characterized by some common semantic feature(s) where the difference in meaning between the verb and verb-particle combination can be characterized in a straight-forward and systematic way. Fraser (1976:5) calls verb-particle combinations in which a consistent alteration of meaning results from the presence of the particle *systematic combinations (drink down, hang up, give over)* and the ones in which the particle changes the meaning completely *figurative combinations (figure out, look up, auction off)*.

In a number of phrasal verbs, the particle functions as an adverb and it has kept its original literal, spatial meaning. **ABOUT** and **AROUND** used in literal combinations indicate movement in many directions over a period of time, often without any specific aim or purpose. E.g. *drift about, hurl things about, run around, push something around.* **AWAY** indicates movement in a direction farther from you, or movement from the place where you are or were E.g. *run away, pull something away.* **BACK** is used with verbs of movement to say that someone or something returns to a place that they were before. E.g. *blow back, get something back.* **DOWN** indicates movement from a higher position or place to a lower one. E.g. *come down, put down.* The basic meaning of **OFF** is to do with movement away from something or separation from it and that of **ON** is to do with position, indicating that one thing is above another, touching it and supported by it, or with movement into that position. E.g. *get on/ off.* The literal meaning of **OUT** is movement from the inside of an enclosed space or container to the outside of it. You use **THROUGH** in literal combinations with the meaning of passing from one side of something to the other. E.g. *poke through, see through.* The basic meaning of **UP** is movement from a lower position or place to a higher one. E.g. *jump up, pick up.* Fraser (1976:7) notes, however, that the systematic cases amount to only a small part of the total number of verb-particle combinations, and the unsystematic figurative cases are much more frequent. Even within the group of systematic verb-particle combinations, Fraser

distinguishes combinations where the particle appears to have retained an adverbial force (E.g.: *hang up* a picture, *hide away* the piece of paper) and the ones in which the particle, rather than serving as an adverbial, appears to modify the meaning of the verb, giving it a completive sense (E.g.: *beat up, wind up, fade out, die out*).

Lipka (1972:188) also points out that there are very few collocations in which the particle has the same meaning as the adverb. In some cases, the function of the adverb is isolated. In a small group of VPCs with **OUT,** the particle has the meaning 'into society', or 'into public knowledge': *ask out* (sb), *invite out* (sb). In another group, **OUT** has the meaning 'aloud', as in *cry out, read out* (letter), *speak out* (words). In other functions, the particle is apparently isolated, as in *help out* (sb), 'temporarily', *ride out* (racehorse), 'to the limit', *strike out,* 'vigorously'.

UP has the meaning 'not thoroughly' in a few VPCs, such as *practise up* (piece for concert), *press up* (suit), *scrub up* (children). **UP** can have the meaning 'again, a second time', as in *fry up* (yesterday's dinner), *heat up* (cold meat), *warm up* (milk). The meaning 'awake' is found in a number of VPCs with UP, such as in *keep up, stay up, wait up.*

Discussing the combinations *set + particle,* Sinclair (1991:67–79) observes that *set* is a difficult word to isolate semantically, but in most of its usage it contributes to meaning in combination with other words, i.e. *about, aside, in, up, out, on,* and *off*. E.g.: **Set in** means that something begins, and seems likely to continue and develop. **Set off,** in the same way of **set out,** are usually used to refer to the start of a journey. The meaning of **set about** doing something is that you start to do it in an energetic or purposeful way.

As pointed out by Sinclair, the most striking feature of these phrasal verbs is the nature of the subjects and objects used with them. E.g.: The subjects used with *set in* usually refer to unpleasant states of affair: e.g.: *rot, decay, despair, infection, bitterness, anarchy, disillusion* etc., only a few refer to the weather or are neutral. The object of the phrasal verb *set off* (with the meaning: starting anything from an explosion to a train of thought) nearly always refers to something new. E.g.: The spark which *set off* explosion … and so *set off* the charge for the black revolution.

From Sinclair's discussion, it also becomes apparent that some phrasal verbs e.g.: **set apart** and **set aside** are similar in meaning, but not in usage. In the case of *set apart* the emphasis is on the state of apartness and the status and quality of what has been selected from apartness,

whereas *set aside* is more concerned with the activity of separating, or the separation itself. Thus there are hardly any instances where *set apart* and *set aside* can be interchanged, even though their meaning is so similar.

Kennedy (1920:24), Poutsma (1926:296), Curme (1931:379), Jowett (1950/51:156), Potter (1965:297–8), Fairclough (1965:73), Live (1965:436), Bolinger (1971:96–110), Lipka (1972:182–184 and Fraser (1976:6) have noted the aspectual cast of phrasal verbs. The adverb (or adverbial particle) is said to contribute to the expression of aspect and mode of action ("Aktionsart"), which is used for the distinction of several phases of the action or process, such as inchoative, ingressive, continuative, progressive, egressive, conclusive, resultative, terminative, iterative, frequentive vs. durative, punctual vs. linear, and also intensive, or intensifying. The two most common particles in Modern English, **UP** and **OUT** have the following aspectual meanings in the interpretation of different scholars:

UP

Kennedy (1920:24–5)	'locative idea' and perfective value' combined e.g. *cage up, board up, lace up* 'perfective value' meaning 'bringing to or out of a condition' e.g. *heat up, clean up, light up*
Poutsma (1926:296, 300–1)	'ingressive aspect' e.g. *look up (to), stand up, sit up* 'terminative aspect' e.g. *finish up, drink up, dry up*
Curme (1931:379, 381)	'ingressive aspect' e.g. *hurry up, stand up, show up* 'effective aspect' e.g. *set up* 'durative effective aspect' e.g. *keep up*
Jowett (1950/51:156)	intensive force and the thoroughness and completeness of the process'

	e.g. *shoot up, slip up, beat up*
Potter (1965:287–8)	'intensive adverb' e.g. *smash up, break up, wash up* 'instantaneous aspect' e.g. *cheer up, hurry up, wake up*
Live (1965:436)	'intensity or totality' e.g. *dry up, heal up, grind up*
Bolinger (1971:99–100)	'perfective meaning as manifested in resultant condition' e.g. *shrivel up, break up, close up* 'perfective in the sense of completion or inception' e.g. *let up, give up, take up* 'perfective in the sense of attaining high intensity' e.g. *hurry up, brighten up, speed up*
Lipka (1972:182, 183–4)	'ingressive' mode of action e.g. *take up, put up, sit up*
Fraser (1976:6)	'completive sense' e.g. *mix up, stir up, wind up*
Mitchell (1979:109)	'terminative points of processes' e.g. *tear up*

OUT

Kennedy (1920:24)	'completeness or finality' e.g. *feather out, carry out, map out* 'openness or publicity which does not necessarily imply completeness' e.g. *hatch out, blossom out, call out* 'exhaustion or extinction' e.g. *blot out, die out, wear out*

Poutsma (1926:300)

'terminative aspect'
e.g. *wait out, starve out, search out*

Curme (1931:379, 381)

'ingressive aspect'
e.g. *come out*
'effective aspect'
e.g. *turn out, give out, find out*
'durative effective aspect'
e.g. *fight out, stand out, hold out*

Live (1965:436)

'thoroughness and culmination'
e.g. *work out , think out, seek out*

Potter (1965:288)

'intensive adverb'
e.g. *find out*

Bolinger (1971:104–5)

'resultant condition' or more opaque aspectual meaning
e.g. *lose out, help out, work out,*
or 'exhaustion'
e.g. *talk out, play out*

Lipka (1972:182, 183–4)

'ingressive' mode of action
e.g. *set out*
'completive'
e.g. *die out, write out, puzzle out*
'terminativeness', 'to an end', or 'until finished'
e.g. *burn out, live out, wait out*

Fraser (1976:6)

'completive sense'
e.g. *die out , fade out, spread out*

Mitchell (1979:169)

'terminative'
e.g. *sell out, pass out, peg out, peter out, give out, last out*
'inceptive'
e.g. *set out, break out (in a rash), burst out (laughing)*

'extensive'
e.g. *stretch out, spread out, string out, roll out (carpet),*
'distributive'
e.g. *mete out, deal out, hand out, give out*
'abessive'
e.g. *cast out, ferret out, pop out, pour out*
'discriminative'
e.g. *stand out, make out, point out, find out, stick out*

The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs (1995:487–491) gives 12 different meanings of **UP.**

1) Movement and position
   He *jumped up.*
   He *ran up* a hill.

2) Increasing and improving
   The fire *blazed up.*
   She *tidied up* the flat.

3) Preparing and beginning
   The children *line up* under the shade of a thatched roof.
   Things were *heating up* so fast that I did not want to make any rush predictions.

4) Fastening and restricting
   He *bandaged up* the wound.
   He bent and *laced up* his shoes.

5) Approaching
   Most leaders were obsessed with *catching up* with the West.
   He was aware of something dangerous *creeping up* on them under cover of the bush.

6) Disrupting and damaging
   He *messed up* the tidy kitchen.
   He really *botched up* the last job he did for us.

7) Completing and finishing.
   He *tore up* the letter.

Drink your milk *up* and then you can go out to play.

8) Rejecting and surrendering.

    She never *passed up* a chance to eat in a restaurant.

    As soon as the money arrived I was able to *settle up* with him.

9) Happening and creating

    He informed me of a new financial agreement he had *thought up*.

    I can come now, unless any other problems *crop up*.

10) Collecting and togetherness

    We saw garbage *heaped up* almost to the top.

    Conservatives *teamed up* with Opposition Peers.

11) Revealing and discovering

    Journalists had *dug up* some hair-raising facts about the company.

    No-one *owned up* to taking the money.

12) Separating

    He spent all day *sawing up* the dead wood.

    The proceeds had to *be divided up* among about four hundred people.

The meanings of **OUT** in the COBUILD Dictionary (1995:477–481) are as follows:

1) Leaving

    It's time to *clock out*.

    We *set out* along the beach.

2) Removing, excluding, preventing

    Squeeze the surplus water *out*.

    They can't *rule out* the possibility that he was kidnapped.

3) Searching, finding, obtaining

    Could you *dig out* the infant mortality rate for 1957?

    He might *worm* the story *out* of her by emotional pressure.

4) Appearing

    Suddenly she *popped out* from behind a bush.

    … a home that would not *stick out* on a European estate

5) Locations outside and away from home
  There were all kinds of reasons why they *slept out*.
  He *invited* her *out* for a meal.

6) Producing and creating
  … a searchlight that could *send out* a flashing beam.
  I hadn't intended to *blurt* it *out*.

7) Increasing size, shape or extent
  I turned around at the top of the hill. The farmland *spread out* below me.
  We did not know how to prevent them from *dragging out* the talks.

8) Thoroughness and completeness
  The soil gets as hard as brick when it *dries out*.
  He's moody because things aren't *working out* at home.

9) Duration and resisting
  How long will our coal reserves *last out*?
  They could either surrender or *hold out*.

10) Ending or disappearing
  The fire *burnt out*.
  Many species *died out*.

11) Arranging, dividing, selecting and distributing
  It took quite a while to *sort out* all our luggage.
  … to *single out* the key problems for each continent …

12) Paying attention and awareness
  If you don't *watch out*, he might stick a knife into you.
  She *pointed out* that he was wrong.

13) Supporting and helping
  Their sole mission in Vietnam was to *bail out* Marines in trouble.
  I was asked to come in for a few days to *help* them *out*.

14) Attacking, criticizing, and protesting
  I *lashed out* at Kurt, calling him every name under the sun.
  The decisions were *fought out* between the contending groups.

DOWN: has the following aspect/Aktionsart meanings: 'a diminution or complete cessation of a state or action' (Kennedy 1920), 'ingressive aspect' (Poutsma 1926, Curme 1931), 'effective aspect' (Curme 1931), 'intensive adverb' (Potter 1965).

OFF: 'orderliness or completion', 'riddance or extermination' (Kennedy 1920), 'ingressive aspect' (Curme 1931, Poutsma 1926), 'effective aspect' (Curme 1931), 'terminative slant' (Live 1965), 'intensive adverb' (Potter 1961, Mitchell 1979) 'terminative''.

AWAY: 'ingressive aspect' (Poutsma 1926; Curme 1931), 'effective aspect', 'durative effective aspect' (Curme 1931), 'iterative or the durative', 'inchoative in imperatives' (Live 1965), 'without let or hindrance', either iterative or inceptive' (Bolinger 1971).

THROUGH: 'terminative aspect' (Poutsma 1926), 'effective aspect', 'durative effective aspect' (Curme 1931).

ON: 'continuative aspect' with durative verbs' (Poutsma 1926), 'durative aspect' (Curme 1931; Bolinger 1971, Mitchell 1979) 'progressive-continuative'.

From the above comments concerning the aspectual/Aktionsart nature of the particles we can see that the particles give the ingressive mode of action and completive sense to the phrasal verbs.The ingressive mode of action plays a great role in phrasal verbs with AWAY, BACK, DOWN, OFF, while UP and OUT are mainly assigned completive, perfective force.

According to the COBUILD dictionary, **UP** is the commonest of the particles used in combinations occurring in 482 phrasal verbs and is followed by **OUT** in 410 phrasal verbs. Fraser (1976: 12), however, points out that "while we find *bake up, cook up, fry up, broil up* and *brew up* we do not find *roast up* or *braise up,* although these latter two verb-particle combinations are perfectly understandable and acceptable." In the same way, while *dish out, feed out (the line), give out, hand out, lend out, pass out, pay out, pour out, serve out, throw out, toss out* denoting the conveying of something to someone or some place exist, combinations like **grant out, *offer out,* and **show out* do not occur.

From all this it can be concluded that the semantic complexity of phrasal verbs seems to be really perplexing. Sometimes the phrasal verb fits into more than one category of particle meaning, as the meanings may overlap, or one may be the metaphorical extension of the literal meaning, and sometimes it is difficult to say exactly what meaning is contributed by the particle to the phrasal verb. In addition, many phrasal verbs have more than one sense. Often the particle has the same meaning in all these senses, but sometimes it has different meanings.

The above discussion also leads, in accordance with Sinclair (1991:68), to another very important conclusion: the semantics of phrasal verbs, however, is not as arbitrary as it is often held to be.

The discussion so far has been restricted to the syntactic and semantic properties of phrasal verbs. A final point of this paper is to consider their phonological properties.

4 Phonological Properties

The phonological shape of a verb can also determine whether or not it can combine with a particle. Kennedy (1920:56) and Fraser (1976:14) have noted that the majority of verbs occurring with particles are monosyllabic and that the remainder are made up primarily of disyllabic words which are initially stressed. Kennedy found in 988 cases (not all of which are phrasal verbs as defined here) only one trisyllabic case, this being *partition* as in *partition off* and *partition up*. Fraser also mentions *apportion out, separate (out), summarize (up)* and *telephone in,* which I have not found in any up-to-date dictionaries.

Fraser (1976:13) finds that while there are numerous phonologically disyllabic verbs occurring in verb-particle combinations, many of these may be analyzed as phonologically monosyllabic. In particular, these phonologically monosyllabic verbs contain a final syllabic liquid or nasal (l, r, m, or n):

i)   banter (about), batter (around), blister (up), peter (out), simmer (down), wither (away)

ii)   battle (out), bottle (up), buckle (down), diddle (away), parcel (out),

iii) batten (down), blacken (up), frozen (out), fasten (down),

iv)   blossom (out)

Relatively few initially stressed phonologically disyllabic verbs combine with particles. E.g.: *carry (out), auction (off), harness (up), finish (up), follow (up), balance (up)*.

There are some exceptions to the condition that a verb be monosyllabic or disyllabic and initially stressed. E.g.: *divide (up), separate (off)*.

There are also many instances in which a polysyllabic verb (e.g.: *surrender*) already embodies the notion contributed by the particle (e.g.: the *up* in *give up*) and thus the form *surrender up* would be semantically redundant. Moreover, many monosyllabic verbs do not co-occur with particles, either e.g.: *nod, rock, chide, dive, fast*. Thus, it is clear that phonological considerations alone will not determine the conditions for verb-particle combinations.

Interestingly enough, we usually cite phrasal verbs based on the verb element (*give up, give out, give over* etc.). Sinclair (1991:68), however, suggests that if, instead, we group them by particle (*give over, get over, tie over*), it is possible to make sense groupings. The Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal verbs (1995:448–492) also has a Particles index which is an extensive guide to the way in which particles are used in English phrasal verbs. Although the meanings of phrasal verbs are not always obvious, this Particles index also shows very clearly how phrasal verbs are not just arbitrary combinations of verbs and particles. Instead, they fit into the broad patterns of choice and selection in English. When a new combination occurs, it too fits into these patterns.

5 Conclusions

As the discussion above has shown, phrasal verbs have a syntactic, semantic and phonological complexity. With respect to their syntactic properties, we have almost no basis for specifying which verbs can co-occur with a particle or which cannot. Their semantic properties seem to be even more perplexing, and their phonological properties will not determine the conditions for verb-particle combinations either. Yet these combinations are not always made on a random basis, but from patterns which can to some extent be anticipated. Particles often have particular meanings which they contribute to a variety of combinations, and which are productive. In a number of phrasal verbs the particle functions as an adverb, and it has kept its original spatial meaning, while in others the adverbial particle is said to contribute to the expression of aspect and mode of action ("Aktionsart"). The literal meanings are usually to do

with physical position or direction of movements. In addition, the idiomatic meanings of phrasal verbs are very often the metaphorical extensions of the literal ones. Thus at least the semantics of phrasal verbs is not as arbitrary as it is often held to be.

References

Bolinger, Dwight. (1971). *The Phrasal Verb in English*. Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press.

Cowie, A. P. & R. Mackin. (1993). *Oxford Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*. Oxford University Press.

Curme, George O. (1931). *Syntax*. Boston: Heath and Company.

Fairclough, Norman L. (1965). Some English Phrasal Types: Studies in the Collocations of Lexical Items with Prepositions and Adverbs in a Corpus of Spoken and Written Present-day English. M.A. thesis, University College, London.

Fraser, Bruce. (1976). *The Verb-Particle Combination in English*. Academic Press.

Jowett, W. P. (1950/51). On phrasal verbs. *English Language Teaching.* 5:152–7.

Kennedy, Arthur G. (1920). *The Modern English Verb-Particle Combination*. Stanford: Stanford University Press.

Lipka, Leonard. (1972). *Semantic Structure and Word-Formation*. München: Wilhelm Fink Verlag.

Live, Anna H. (1965). The Discontinuous Verb in English. *Word* 21: 428–51.

Mitchell, T. F. (1958). Syntagmatic Relations in Linguistic Analysis. *Transactions of the Phililogical Society*. (Oxford). 101–18.

Potter, S. (1965). English Phrasal Verbs. *Philologia Pragensia*. 8: 258–90.

Poutsma, H. (1926). *A Grammar of Late Modern English. Part II. The parts of speech. Sec. II The verb and the particles*. Groningen: P. Noordhoff.

Sinclair, John. (ed). (1995). *Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs*. Harper Collins Publishers.

Sinclair, John. (1991). *Corpus Concordance Collocation*. Oxford University Press. 67–78.

Sroka, Kazimierz A. (1972). *The Syntax of English Phrasal Verbs*. Mouton.