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Transfer and Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs in learner English: A Study of Serbian and German native speakers

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Katarina Milošević

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1 Introduction

Phrasal verbs (PVs) have been a subject of interest to linguists for the past three centuries, especially so in the first half of the 20th century. Although the initial focus of grammarians and lexicographers rested on their syntactic and semantic characterisation in English grammars (Thim 2012: 1), present-day linguists seem to have devoted their attention to their role in second language acquisition (SLA), especially with regard to learner difficulties.

Phrasal verbs are constructions composed of a main verb and a particle, which can either be adverbial or prepositional in nature. Such verb-particle constructions are, thus, short phrases that function as a unified whole (Merriam Webster Dictionary). An example of a phrasal verb would be *give back*, which is constituted of the verb *give* and the particle *back*. Their importance to the English language has been highlighted by various linguists. Gardner and Davies (2007: 339) consider them to be "crucial to English" in that "they add a definite richness to the language", while Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1992: 425) point out that "no one can speak or understand English […] without a knowledge of phrasal verbs", given their widespread occurrence in both, casual and spoken language (Liao & Fukuya 2004) as well as in more formal, written language Goodale (1993: iv).

Despite the initial belief that phrasal verbs are a unique peculiarity of English, studies have shown that there is an extraordinary syntactic and semantic overlap of the majority of characteristics of the PV structure in all present-day Germanic languages (Thim 2012: 247). This supposed exclusivity as well as their highly productive, polysemous and thus often unpredictable nature has been known to pose considerable difficulties to second language (L2) learners of English (Thim 2012: 11; Walková 2012: 169; Kovács 2014: 8). This has given rise to a number of investigations in the field of second language acquisition, especially with regard to cross-linguistic influence (CLI) as well as avoidance.

Research on avoidance behaviour has been heavily inspired by Schachter (1974)'s study on error analysis, in which she emphasises the importance of considering not only learner

errors as a sign of L2 difficulty, but also learner omissions, i.e. the L2 structures they deliberately chose not to use (Ellis 1994: 304). Various studies have been conducted to find explanations for the avoidance of phrasal verbs, whereby the general approach seems to have been an investigation of the extent of avoidance of learners whose native language (L1, or NL) lacks phrasal verbs, comparing them to those whose L1 shows some kind of parallel structure. The best-known studies on this topic appear to be those conducted by Dagut and Laufer (1985), Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), Laufer and Eliasson (1993) as well as Liao and Fukuya (2004) whose explanations on what causes avoidance behaviour are threefold. Some of those researchers claim that learners whose L1 lacks the target language structure are more likely to avoid that structure in the L2 than learners who are already familiar with it via their L1. Hence, the outcome of their studies suggests L1-L2 difference to have the greatest impact on avoidance behaviour (see Dagut & Laufer 1985; Laufer & Eliasson 1993; Liao & Fukuya 2004). However, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) strongly challenge this view, arguing that, if L1-L2 difference played the key role, this would carry the implication that second language learners of English whose L1 has constructions like phrasal verbs would, therefore, not tend to avoid them in the L2. This evoked a somewhat "counterintuitive" feeling as they assume that phrasal verbs would pose considerable difficulties to learners of English regardless of their native language due to semantic reasons, in particular idiomaticity. They provide an entirely different, in fact even contradictory, explanation by stating L1-L2 similarity seems to have the greatest influence; a view that does not seem to have gained widespread acceptance among the other researchers. The third frequently suggested reason in relation to phrasal verb avoidance is the inherent complexity of the target language structure. Hence, Liao and Fukuya (2004) argue that avoidance is an interlanguage strategy, diminishing with increased L2 proficiency.

The lack of consensus on whether or not the learners' native language or, more specifically, the presence or absence of the target language feature in the L1, plays the key role in the avoidance of English phrasal verbs points to the necessity of further studies in this area. Studies on this topic involving German native speakers appear to be rather limited and those on Serbian native speakers are, to my knowledge, entirely absent. Therefore, native speakers of German, a language that has parallel structures to English

phrasal verbs, as well as Serbian, a South Slavic language lacking the category in question, will be subject of the present study. In addition, an English native speaker group will be added, which will function as a control group in order to enable a comparison in native and learner English behaviour. This way, other factors aside from the three aforementioned can be taken into consideration, such as, for example, avoidance, or preference, due to personal perception of the suitability of the phrasal verb in the specific semantic contexts in which the test items are embedded.

The primary goal of the study is an investigation on the degree of avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Serbian learners of English as well as avoidance and transfer of German learners of English. The secondary goal of the thesis is a contribution towards the debate on the factors involving avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs by second language learners. The paper is divided into two major parts. The first part provides a theoretical framework for the second part of the paper, which is dedicated to the analysis and discussion of the empirical study. Chapter two of the thesis discusses the concept of cross-linguistic influence, especially with regard to transfer, avoidance, overuse and interlanguage. Chapters three, four and five deal with the semantic and syntactic characteristics of English phrasal verbs, German verb-particle constructions as well as the Serbian verbal prefix system, respectively. In chapter six, an overview of the previous studies on avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs is provided, which were the source of inspiration for the study of the present thesis. The subsequent two chapters constitute the second part of the thesis, whereby chapter seven shows the methodology of the study and chapter eight provides the results and the discussion of the same. The final chapter is dedicated to the conclusion and future inquiry.

2 Cross-linguistic influence in second language acquisition

2.1 Transfer

2.1.1 Historical development

Scholars have shown interest in the phenomenon of cross-linguistic influence (CLI) long before the discipline has been formally established (Jarvis & Pavlenko 2008: xi). Initial significant thoughts on CLI can be traced back to a controversial debate in the 19th century. At that time, the focus did not lie on the acquisition or teaching of a second language, but rather on language categorization and change (Odlin 1989: 6). Its manifestation goes beyond L1 influence as it can take the form of, for example, lexical borrowing, i.e. loanwords, and code-switching. Despite the challenges of classifying lexically borrowed words in grammars, scholars had the expectation of discovering "in grammar a linguistic subsystem unaffected by language contact and thus a key to distinguish any language" (Odlin 1989: 7-8). In the 19th and 20th century, an increasing amount of studies on language contact has demonstrated the significance of cross-linguistic influence (Odlin 1989: 12).

Teachers have relied on contrastive observations of languages known by a learner ever since the ancient world. Although there was a common consensus that the L1 had a great impact on second language acquisition (SLA), it did not change the way language was taught up until the 1960s (Odlin 1989: 15), where contrastive analysis was introduced in the area of second language learning by Fries (1945) and Lado (1957) in order to identify "the existence of cross-linguistic differences" (del Mar Ramón Torrijos 2009: 149). In the 1950s and 1960s, there was widespread agreement that errors produced by learners could be anticipated by observing the differences and similarities of the native and target language (TL). Thus, differences between the two language systems indicated a high probability for the occurrence of errors. The rise of a new conception on CLI in the 1970s challenged the previously held view. Learner errors were no longer seen as a consequence of native language transfer but ascribed to the developmental processes in learning the L2. It was assumed that the L2 and the L1 function as two independent systems, whereby the target language is learnt in a comparable way as the native language. Due to this

reason, learner errors in the L2 were considered analogues to those committed by children while learning the L1. The present-day opinion on cross-linguistic influence involves a popular acceptance of the occurrence of transfer, although it appears to be of much greater complexity than previously assumed (Benson 2002: 68).

2.1.2 Definition of *transfer*

Not only has cross-linguistic influence been a controversial topic, defining *transfer* has also been rather problematic as scholars have different views on the topic. While some hold the opinion that the term should be abandoned or that, at least, a major restriction should be imposed on its usage, others apply it without limitations (Odlin 1989: 25). Deriving from the area of psychology, *transfer* was later-on brought to the field of linguistics and second language acquisition (Guo, Liu & Chen 2014: 1941). The psychological definition of the term could still be broadly used to describe the phenomenon in SLA and is defined by Sajavaara (1986: 69) as follows:

> In psychology the term transfer is employed to refer to the phenomenon of previous knowledge being extended to the area of new knowledge; i.e. the influence which the learning or remembering of one thing has on the learning or remembering of another thing.

It is without doubt that *transfer* has proven to play a significant role in the area of second language acquisition, affecting "all subsystems of linguistics including pragmatics and rhetoric, semantics, syntax, morphology, phonology, phonetics, and orthography" (Odlin 2003: 437). However, thinking of it in behaviouristic terms is no longer adequate as transfer goes beyond mere habit formation (Guo, Liu & Chen 2014: 1941-1942). Kellerman (1987: 3) convincingly argues that *transfer* does not signify an exclusive influence of the L1 on the L2 and refers to the studies by Weinreich (1953) and Haugen (1956) to show that the influence can be mutual, i.e. that the L2 can also have an impact on the L1. Furthermore, he states that *transfer* is rather limited in its meaning as it does not allow inclusion of phenomena such as 'language loss' and 'avoidance'. Thus, Kellerman (1987: 2) suggests a more extensive notion, i.e. *cross-linguistic influence* and provides the subsequent definition:

the term 'cross-linguistic influence […] is theory-neutral, allowing one to subsume under one heading such phenomena as 'transfer', 'interference', 'avoidance', 'borrowing' and L2-related aspects of language loss, and thus permitting discussion of the similarities and differences between these phenomena

While Kellerman (1987: 2) considers cross-linguistic influence to be a cover term and *transfer* to be a part of it, Odlin (2003: 436) uses the two terms interchangeably. He (1989: 27) defines his thoughts on transfer as follows:

Transfer is the influence resulting from similarities and differences between the target language and any other language that has been previously (and perhaps imperfectly) acquired.

According to this definition, transfer does not exclusively refer to an influence of the L1 on the L2 but suggests a mutual influence of all languages of which the learner has knowledge. Ringbom (2007: 78-79)'s views seem to be largely congruent with those of Odlin (1989: 27), given the next statement:

Transfer, most conspicuously in the area of lexis, occurs not only from the L1, but also from other languages known to the learner. If L2 and L3 are related, but L1 and L3 are not, it is natural for learners to look for whatever lexical and structural similarities they can perceive between L2 and L3. […] But even totally unrelated non-native languages may provide support in the form of positive transfer

It can be summarized that both, similarities and differences between two languages, can trigger transfer. The relation between transfer and language closeness, as well as positive and negative transfer, will be discussed in the chapter 2.1.3.

2.1.3 Classification of transfer

Benson (2002: 69) argues that transfer can further be described as a communication strategy consciously applied by learners that can be traced back to a gap in their currently existing knowledge of the target language. If transfer occurs unconsciously, it can be assumed that the learner has not yet mastered a full automatization of the form or that he/she even lacks the knowledge of the correct form. A significant role is ascribed to the

proximity of the languages; if two languages are recognized as closely related because, for example, they belong to the same language family such as English and Swedish, the probability is much higher for both positive and negative transfer to take place. Nevertheless, Kellerman (1987: 89) states that language specific items of the L1 might not be considered transferable despite a greater proximity of the languages involved. Studies have shown that idiomatic expressions are viewed as too specific to be transferred into English, regardless of existing equivalents.

In general, *positive transfer*, also referred to as *facilitation*, can be described as a positive influence of one language, mostly the L1, on the target language (Bardovi-Harlig & Sprouse 2018: 1). This is to say that the learners' native language has a facilitative effect on the learning of the L2. However, positive transfer does not necessarily result in a complete absence of errors but rather in a limited amount of the same as well as in the learning rate (Ellis 1994: 302-303). According to Odlin (1989: 36), positive transfer can manifest itself in multiple ways: similarities between the native and target language (1) vocabulary support developing better reading comprehension skills, (2) vowel systems contribute to recognising vowel sounds, (3) writing systems benefit reading and writing skills and (4) syntactic structures promote the correct usage of articles and help with word order as well as relative clauses. Odlin (1989: 36) further argues that the closer two languages are, i.e. the more similar, the easier it is for learners to acquire the target language (Odlin 1989: 36).

Negative transfer has received much more attention than positive transfer, which is due to the more straightforward establishment of relations between L2 errors and the learners' L1, or any other source language known by the learner. This is not the case for positive transfer since tracing back correct L2 expression to the learners' L1 is of greater difficulty. *Negative transfer*, also known as *interference*, is defined "as [the] absence of relevant concrete (positive) transfer, leading to subsequent wrong assumptions about cross-linguistic similarities between L1 and L2" (Ringbom 2007: 30-31). Thus, the most common consequence of negative transfer tends to be error production, although Odlin (1989: 36) argues that there are more ways in which the phenomenon can manifest itself in the target language, i.e. (1) underproduction, (2) overproduction, (3) production errors

as well as (4) misinterpretation. Since (1) underproduction, also known as *avoidance*, and (2) overproduction are of considerable significance for this diploma thesis, they will be discussed in greater detail in the chapters 2.2 and 2.3.

According to Odlin (1989: 37), similarities between two languages do not always have a promoting effect on the target language but might, under certain circumstances, also lead to negative transfer and thus (3) production errors. He considers three kinds of production errors occur due to L1 and L2 differences and similarities, which are substitutions, calques and alternation of structures. *Substitutions*, i.e. the use of L1 forms in the L2, and *calques*, i.e. the use of L1 structures in the L2, are the two types of errors most frequently mentioned in relation to bilingualism. In the case of (4) misinterpretation, Odlin (1989: 38) refers to an erroneous perception of L2 messages owing to the learners' L1. It can occur as a consequence of misinterpreting sounds, differences in word-order patterns or in cultural assumptions.

It is important to note that not all learner errors are a result of negative transfer or that, in fact, transfer always results in the production of errors (Ellis 1994: 302; Benson 2002: 68). Errors might also be "*intralingual* in nature (i.e. the result of general processes of language development similar to those observed in L1 acquisition" [original emphasis] (Ellis 1994: 302).

2.2 Avoidance

2.2.1 Definition of *avoidance*

Generally understood as a rather complex phenomenon in the area of second language acquisition, *avoidance* refers to an interlanguage strategy adopted by learners in order to cope with target language difficulties (Laufer & Eliasson 1993: 36; Kellerman 1987: 4). It refers to L2 words, forms and structures avoided in contexts where they should, in fact, be favoured. Schachter (1974) was the first to emphasize the importance of considering not only learner errors as a sign of L2 difficulty, but also learner omissions, i.e. the L2 structures they deliberately chose not to use (Ellis 1994: 304).

Identifying the manifestation of *avoidance* is by no means straightforward, which is reflected in some contradictory claims on the relation between *transfer* and *avoidance*. On the one hand, Seliger (1989, as referred to in Kamimoto, Shimura, and Kellerman 1992: 260) claims that "true avoidance can only be demonstrated where L1 and L2 are *identical* and the opportunity for positive transfer is present" [original emphasis]. On the other hand, Odlin (1989: 36-37) views avoidance, or what he calls *underproduction*, as one of the four manifestations of negative transfer that occur due to the differences between the learners' L1 and the L2.

2.2.2 Avoidance versus ignorance

There is common consensus among scholars that avoidance behaviour presupposes (passive) knowledge of the form in question. Kleinmann (1977: 365) describes this as follows

> an individual cannot be said to be avoiding a given syntactic structure, morpheme, or lexical item which he does not have in his linguistic repertoire, any more than he can be said to be avoiding doing anything which he is unable to do. To be able to avoid […] presupposes being able to choose not to avoid

Ellis (1994: 305) holds the same opinion in saying that "it only makes sense to talk of avoidance if the learners *know* what they are avoiding" [original emphasis]. If the opposite is the case, it would be more appropriate to talk of *ignorance*, i.e. an underproduction due to unfamiliarity and lack of knowledge (Kleinmann 1977 qtd. in Dagut & Laufer 1985: 73). Seliger (1989, as referred to in Ellis 1994: 305) mentions two conditions under which he believes avoidance to take place. On the one hand and as already mentioned, he agrees that the learners should have demonstrated knowledge of the target form. On the other hand, he claims that it has to be proven that a native speaker would actually apply the form in that particular context.

Kamimoto, Shimura, and Kellerman (1992: 251-252) argue that demonstrating knowledge of the target language form is often an insufficient condition for avoidance. They summarize their view on the relation between knowledge and avoidance in the subsequent paragraph:

The degree of incompetence may vary from 1) an awareness of a total absence of a vital bit of L2-specific knowledge in a given domain, though there may be some awareness of its function, probably viewed through the L1 [...], via 2) an awareness that the appropriate knowledge is only partially in place, to a final state 3) where the knowledge is complete, but the compositional effort required in assembling it is sometimes too great to be worthwhile, perhaps under the constraints of conversational pressure.

In other words, while the first and second point mentioned relates to learning difficulties due to partial knowledge of the form in question leading to avoidance, the third aspect mentioned suggests that learners might as well decide to avoid an L2 structure despite having complete knowledge of it. Kamimoto, Shimura, and Kellerman (1992: 251-252) thus convincingly argue that complete knowledge and simultaneous underproduction of an L2 form does not always point to avoidance but might be an indication of sheer preference for another form also preferred in their L1. In this case, the underproduction can be attributed to *negative transfer* from the L1 to the L2, not to avoidance. In addition, Kamimoto, Shimura, and Kellerman (1992: 252) suggest an extension of the term so that circumstances, in which learners avoid an L2 feature too similar to one in their L1, can also be taken into account. They refer to this phenomenon as *homoiophobia* describing situations in which "the L1 and L2 are in fact congruent" (Kamimoto, Shimura & Kellerman 1992: 252).

2.2.3   Factors behind avoidance

There seems to be some disagreement among scholars on the factors influencing, or triggering, avoidance. The first studies dealing with avoidance behaviour concluded that structural differences between the learners' L1 and the L2 seem to be the most significant factor causing avoidance (Schachter 1974; Dagut & Laufer 1985; Laufer & Eliasson 1993). However, other studies show evidence of alternative factors leading to avoidance, such as the similarity between the L1 and the L2 as well as inherent L2 complexity (see Hulstijn & Marchena 1989; Vanden Hautte 2017) but also learner proficiency (see Liao & Fukuya 2004). Those will be discussed in greater detail in chapter 6 of the present thesis.

2.3 Overuse

Overuse, or *overproduction*, is a term used in second language acquisition to describe intralingual processes, similar to *overgeneralization*, of certain grammatical target language forms (Ellis 1994: 305). Although all three terms sound fairly similar and have an excessive use of certain words, forms and structures in common, slight differences in meaning point to the fact that they should not be used interchangeably. Hence, *overgeneralization* refers to the production of a non-standard-like form due to, for example, a recently acquired rule in that language, which is then applied beyond its normal use and in the wrong circumstances thereby often leading to errors. It occurs not only in second language acquisition but can also be found in the acquisition of the native language. Two examples thereof would be the plural *-s* marker, producing erroneous words such as **foots* or **mans*, as well as the past tense inflection *-ed*, resulting in constructions like **holded* and **eated* (Yule 2010: 176-177).

Overuse and *overproduction*, however, can be used synonymously. Odlin (1989: 37) as well as Ellis (1994: 305) agree that an overuse can often be seen as "a consequence of underproduction", which means that learners excessively use certain L2 forms and structures in an attempt to avoid other, often more difficult, ones. It does not only occur on the linguistic level but can also be found on the discourse level (Ellis 1994: 306).

2.4 Interlanguage

2.4.1 Definition of *interlanguage*

The concept of *interlanguage* (IL) was introduced by Selinker in 1972 (Richards 1974: 29), although some "hints of the notion" can be found in several earlier works on SLA (Selinker 1992: 1). In observing utterances produced by second language learners and native speakers of the target language, Selinker (1972: 214) arrives at the conclusion that, in the process of acquiring a second language, learners develop a "separate linguistic system". He provides the following explanation (Selinker 1972: 214; original emphasis):

> This set of utterances for *most* learners of a second language is not identical to the hypothesized corresponding set of utterances which would have been produced by a native speaker of the TL had he attempted to express the same meaning as the learner. Since we can observe that these two sets of utterances are not identical, […] one would be […] compelled to hypothesize, the existence of a separate linguistic system

According to the *Unabridged Random House Dictionary of the English Language* (1987: 995 qtd. in Selinker 2011: 741), *interlanguage* in SLA is "the linguistic system characterizing the output of a non-native speaker at any stage prior to full acquisition of the target language". Therefore, it is an autonomous system that is neither closely tied to the native nor the target language, resulting in the creation of entirely new constructions (Selinker 2011: 742). These constructions are not arbitrarily selected but systematic in their own way (Tarone 2018: 1). This is to say that learners are actively involved in the construction of their own "mental grammars". Their individual grammars, including their errors, can be seen as "rule-governed" (Ellis 1994: 44). A concise summary of the concept of interlanguage is offered by Yang (n.d.: 2):

> Inter-language is neither the system of the native language nor the system of the target language, but instead falls between the two; it is a system based upon the best attempt of learners to provide order and structure to the linguistic stimuli surrounding them. By a gradual process of trial and error and hypothesis testing, learners slowly and tediously succeed in establishing closer and closer approximations to the system used by native speakers of the language.

The subsequent "syntactic/phonological example" (1) entails primary stress and shows a situation in which a native speaker of Spanish is not being understood in an English-speaking environment (taken from Selinker 2011: 742):

(1)   Spaniard: "How much cóst banana?"
       NS: "Pardon?"
       Spaniard: "How much dóes cost banana?"

Selinker (2011: 742) observes that the Spanish NS applied two rules of English grammar, i.e. do-support as well as do-emphasis, "in different idiosyncratic ways than NSs would". The English learner has thus "created a new construction in his interlanguage English",

as Selinker (2011: 742) concludes. Tarone (2018: 1) claims that erroneous constructions in the interlanguage stage might even be produced unconsciously. According to her, learners usually lack the awareness and the reflective ability to perceive the target form and the form produced as distinct. Although they are able to correctly recite the rules of the target language that they have consciously acquired, they, nevertheless, often interpret "the linguistic forms being used in IL to be 'the same' as forms in both NL and TL" (Tarone 2018: 1).

2.4.2   The role of the L1 in Interlanguage

Selinker (1992: 209) argues that, in the creation of the interlanguage, the learner's L1 "can serve a facilitative role". This is particularly the case when learners observe a similarity between a native and a target language feature (Selinker 1992: 209). Although the original idea behind the interlanguage hypothesis was it being an autonomous system (see Selinker 2011: 742), some scholars hold the controversial opinion that the L1 strongly shapes the interlanguage. Voicu (2012: 213)'s position on the influence of the learner's native language on the target language is the following (emphasis added):

> It is suggested that the language produced by foreign learners is so unavoidably influenced, and even distorted, by the mother tongue of the learner that it should rather be termed an 'Interlanguage' since it will *always* be a blend of the foreign language and the mother tongue. The better the learner is at overcoming language interference, the more dilute that blend will be.

Hence, it could be reasonably assumed that an increase in L2 proficiency would, consequently, lead to a decrease in the impact of the mother tongue on the target language. However, Jarvis (2000: 246-247) points out that there are, in fact, at least six possible ways of how the learner's L1 interacts with their L2 proficiency (entirely taken from Jarvis 2000: 246-247):

1   L1 influence decreases with increasing L2 proficiency.
2   L1 influence increases with increasing L2 proficiency.
3   L1 influence remains constant with increasing L2 proficiency.
4   L1 influence ultimately decreases, but nonlinearly.

5   L1 influence ultimately increases, but nonlinearly.

6   L1 influence ultimately never decreases or increases, but its presence continually fluctuates as L2 proficiency increases.

In addition, Jarvis (2000: 247) lists a number of studies whose outcome shows that all six directions mentioned above are possible. This incongruence, as Jarvis (2000: 247) amusingly comments, "make[s] one wonder whether transfer researchers have truly been investigating the same phenomenon".

2.4.3   Fossilization

In the process of L2 development, the learner's interlanguage undergoes constant changes. Once improvement, at least in some aspects of the target language, is no longer evident, the learner's interlanguage fossilizes, and the learner is considered to have reached his/her very individual 'last version' of the target language (British Council n.d.). Thus, *fossilization* refers to "linguistic items, rules, and subsystems" (Selinker 1972: 215) that remain in a state of semi-development as they are no longer affected by external input and thus fail "to progress towards the target" (Han 2013: 133). If this case arises, the semi-developed form in question stays in the interlanguage regardless of the learner's age "or amount of explanation and instruction" received (Selinker 1972: 215).

Towell and Hawkins (1994: 2) provide the following opinion on fossilization:

> If we are past the age of 7-10 years the acquisition of an L2, in marked contrast to the way we acquire our first language (L1), can turn out to be rather slow, laborious and, even in talented L2 learners, tends to stop short native-like proficiency. […] It is one of the noticeable characteristics of second language acquisition (SLA). Even after many years of exposure to an L2, in a situation where the speaker might use that L2 every day for normal communicative purposes, even to the extent of 'losing' the native language, it is not uncommon to find that the speaker still has a strong 'foreign' accent, uses nonnative grammatical constructions, and has nonnative intuitions about the interpretation of certain types of sentence.

The fossilization hypothesis implies that, what has also been mentioned by Towell and Hawkins (1994: 2), a second language learner is most probably unable to achieve native-

like proficiency (Han 2004: 15). Despite the initial belief that fossilization affects only adult second language learners, i.e. those who start learning an L2 after puberty, studies have shown that children might as well be affected by this phenomenon (Tarone 2018: 2-4; Han 2004: 15).

2.4.4 Processes of interlanguage construction

According to Selinker (1972: 215), there are five cognitive processes vital to the learning of a second language, i.e. (1) language transfer, (2) transfer-of-training, (3) strategies of second language learning, (4) strategies of second language communication and (5) overgeneralization of TL linguistic material. To Selinker (1972: 216), "the most interesting phenomena in IL performance are those items, rules, and subsystems which are fossilizable in terms of the five processes listed above". He claims that, if studies were able to show that the "fossilizable items, rules, and subsystems" present in the interlanguage can be traced back to the learners' native language, this would be a sign of the presence of language transfer (Selinker 1972: 216). Since chapter 2.1 of the present paper deals with the concept of transfer more extensively, no further examples will be given at this point.

The second process is *transfer of training* and proposes the idea that some features of the interlanguage can be seen as a derivation of the manner in which they have been taught (Ellis 1994: 351). An example thereof given by Selinker (1972: 218) involves native speakers of Serbian and Croatian who frequently experience difficulties with the English *he/she distinction*, regardless of their English proficiency level. Selinker (1972: 218) claims that Serbian and Croatian learners of English used *he* in almost all circumstances, even though *he* or *she* would be suitable. Since Serbian and Croatian, like English, have two individual pronouns to refer to both genders, i.e. *on* 'he' and *ona* 'she', their preference for *he* cannot be attributed to some kind of L1 transfer. Selinker (1972: 218) argues that the preferred masculine form in the interlanguage can be traced back to the presentation of "drills with *he* and never with *she*" [original emphasis] in learner textbooks as well as by teachers. This is particularly the case with Serbian and Croatian speakers of this interlanguage who are over 18 years old and who, despite showing awareness of the he/she distinction and its repeatedly erroneous use, "regularly produce

he for both *he* and *she*, stating that they feel they do not need to make this distinction in order to communicate" [original emphasis] (Selinker 1972: 219). This fossilizable error is initially attributed to the process of *transfer of training*, and subsequently to *strategy of second language communication* (Selinker 1972: 219).

Selinker (1972: 216) claims that the fossilization of some interlanguage elements can also be due to the third process, that is, *strategies of second language learning*, which he defines as "an identifiable approach by the learner to the material to be learned". An example of this process involves a quite common interlingual situation in which learners of English tend "to reduce the TL to a simpler system" (Selinker 1972: 219). For instance, if Indian speakers of English develop an interlanguage strategy in which they consider all verbs as either intransitive or transitive, this might result in the production of interlanguage constructions such as *Don't worry, I'm hearing him* (Jain 1969: 3-4, as referred to in Selinker 1972: 219).

The fourth process is named *strategies of second language communication* and describes the "identifiable approach by the learner to communicate with native speakers of the TL" (Selinker 1972: 217). To illustrate this, the subsequent examples concern two elderly Russian learners of English who tend to omit grammatical features such as (2) articles, (3) plural forms and (4) past tense forms (all originally provided by Coulter 1968, but referred to in Selinker 1972: 220; original emphasis):

(2)   It was ∅ nice, nice trailer, ∅ big one. (Coulter 1968: 22)

(3)   I have many hundred *carpenter* my own. (Coulter 1968: 29)

(4)   I *was* in Frankfort when I *fill* application. (Coulter 1968: 36)

Selinker (1972: 220) holds the opinion that the abovementioned examples could be attributed to "a *learning strategy* of simplification" [original emphasis], however, he explains that, according to Coulter (1968: 7-9), it is rather a *communication strategy*. This is due to the learner's past experiences with communicative situations involving English native speakers, in which the learner often finds "his speech […] hesitant and disconnected" as a result of the time needed to think of the appropriate grammatical

construction. As this is often followed by the English natives' impatient reaction, the learners choose to convey their desired message by avoiding grammatical structures that are superfluous and that do not alter the same (Coulter 1968: 7-9, qtd. in Selinker 1972: 220).

The fifth and final process, *overgeneralization of TL linguistic material*, refers to interlanguage "items, rules, and subsystems" that are fossilized as a consequence of the learner's overgeneralization of not only target language rules, but also semantic features (Selinker 1972: 216-217). An example including an overgeneralised target language rule in the learners' interlanguage would be, for instance, *What did he intended to say?* (Selinker 1972: 218).

Selinker (1972: 220) adds that there are many more processes involved that have an impact on the construction of the learners' interlanguage, such as *spelling pronunciations*, *cognate pronunciation*, *hypercorrection* etc. As those are irrelevant for the present study, they will not be discussed any further.

3   Phrasal verbs in English

3.1   Definition of *phrasal verbs*

Although the term *phrasal verb* seems to have been coined in the first half of the 20th century, the verb-particle construction has been of interest to linguists for the past three centuries, approximately. Phrasal verbs have long been considered a peculiarity of the English language; a belief that can be traced back to at least the mid-18th century (Thim 2012: 1). In the Preface to *A Dictionary of the English Language*, Johnson (1755, as referred to in Thim 2012: 1) provides the following definition on phrasal verbs:

> There is another kind of composition more frequent in our language than per-haps in any other, from which arises to foreigners the greatest difficulty. We modify the signification of many verbs by a particle subjoined; as to *come off*, to escape by a fetch; to *fall on*, to attack; to *fall off*, to apostatize; to *break off*, to stop abruptly; to *bear out*, to justify; to *fall in*, to comply; to *give over*, to cease; to *set off*, to embellish; to *set in*, to begin a continual tenour; to *set out*,

to begin a course or journey; to *take off*, to copy; with innumerable expressions of the same kind, of which some appear wildly irregular, being so far distant from the sense of the simple words, that no sagacity will be able to trace the steps by which they arrived at the present use.

Despite the long-held belief that phrasal verbs were exclusive to the English language, Thim (2012: 6) argues that "the inventories of particles in the various Germanic languages show a considerable, non-accidental etymological and semantic overlap". That is to say that analogous constructions to English phrasal verbs can be found in all present-day Germanic languages as they show an extraordinary syntactic and semantic similarity of the structure (Thim 2012: 247). To clarify, the Germanic languages are a part of the Indo-European language family and include, among others, languages such as German, English, Dutch as well as the Scandinavian languages (Merriam Webster Dictionary).

A *phrasal verb* (PV) is defined as a construction consisting of a verb and a particle, which is either a preposition, an adverb or a combination of the two. In combining the verb with the particle, a short phrase functioning as a unified whole is formed (Merriam Webster Dictionary). Although the phrasal verb has a verb at its core, the meaning of the whole phrase does not always overlap with that of the verb in isolation, which is illustrated in the following four examples (definitions and examples taken from Oxford Learner's Dictionaries):

(5)　single-word verb: look

　　　definition: to direct your eyes in a certain direction

　　　example: If you look carefully you can see our house from here.

(6)　adverbial phrasal verb: *look up*

　　　(6.1) definition: to raise your eyes when you are looking down at something

　　　　　　example: She looked up from her book as I entered the room.

　　　(6.2) definition: to look for information in a dictionary, reference book, etc.

　　　　　　example: Can you look up the opening times on the website?

(7)   prepositional phrasal verb: *look after*

definition: to be responsible for or take care of somebody/something

example: Who's going to look after the children while you're away?

(8)   prepositional-adverbial phrasal verb: *look forward to*

definition: to be thinking with pleasure about something that is going to happen (because you expect to enjoy it)

example: I am looking forward to the weekend.

Thim (2012: 11) observes that, "while the number of verbal elements in the construction is unrestricted, the number of particles is rather small, and all of them are homonymous with prepositions or with spatial adverbs". Kovács (2007: 7) points out that it is not only the verb carrying the meaning of the whole phrase but that "scholars recognise that the particle can also contribute some meanings to the meaning of the whole combination". Darwin and Grey (1999: 70) refer to a list of most frequently occurring particles in a phrasal verb construction provided by Fraser (1976: 5), which are *about, across, along, around, aside, away, back, by, down, forth, in, off, on, out, over, up*, adding those mentioned by Kennedy (1920) to their list, i.e. *at, for to, through* and *with*.

The semantic, syntactic and stylistic characteristics of phrasal verbs pose numerous difficulties to English language learners (Kovács 2007: 5), which is why special attention will be paid to them in the subsequent subsections of chapter 3 of this paper.

3.2   Semantic characteristics and L2 difficulties

Phrasal verbs are known for their high degree of polysemy, arbitrariness and unpredictability (Thim 2012: 11; Walková 2012: 169; Kovács 2014: 8). Although their complex nature results in enormous challenges to foreign language learners, their common occurrence in English makes it inevitable to learn them (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1992: 425). Kovács (2014: 11) points out that the studies undertaken by Lindner (1981), Lakoff (1987) and Rudzka-Ostyn (2003) show that

particles/prepositions have various central, prototypical meaning, which are their literal meanings, and most of the other meanings depart from these prototypical ones in various ways, typically via metaphorical extensions forming a complex network of related meanings.

Thim (2012: 11-12) explains that the meanings of phrasal verbs can be described in terms of their compositionality:

quite commonly, the meanings range on a cline from purely compositional to highly idiomatic […]. Such clines are commonly the result of linguistic change, with older and more recent forms continuing to co-exist. […] Not all phrasal verbs show the full range of idiomaticity […] – some will be purely compositional in all uses while others will appear as non-compositional combinations only. These can be assumed to have undergone a lexical development from compositional to non-compositional, with the earlier, compositional meanings lost, while the later non-compositional meanings fossilize.

Kovács (2007: 8)' view is in line with that of Thim (2012)'s above. She states that phrasal verbs can be placed on a scale from concrete to abstract, whereby metaphors establish a relation between them. To Kovács (2014: 12), the meaning of an idiomatic phrasal verb is, in the majority of instances, a "metaphorical extension" of the meaning of a literal phrasal verb. This is best illustrated with some examples involving the particles *up* and *down*. While the literal meaning of *up* is a "movement towards a higher position", that of *down* "describes movement towards a lower position", which has led to their metaphorical extensions of an increase, or decrease, "in size, number or strength" respectively, attributing meaning to sentences like *Prices went up* and *The children quieted down* (Kovács 2007: 9).

3.2.1 Three major semantic categories

Thim (2012: 13) classifies the phrasal verb category into three major semantic categories: (1) literal (or transparent), (2) aspectual and (3) non-compositional (henceforth idiomatic or figurative), visualising them with the following Figure 1.
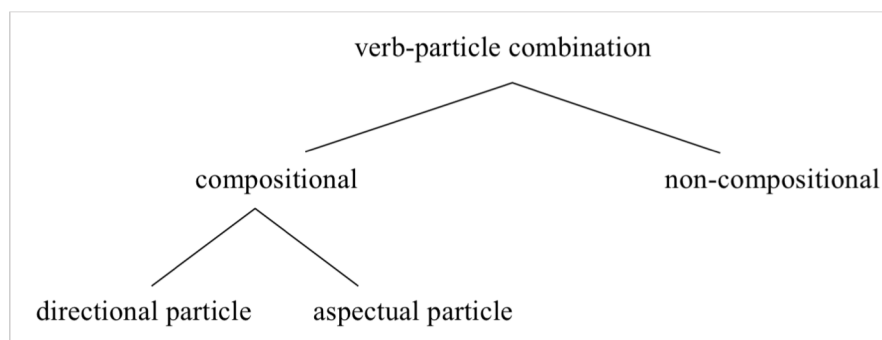
Figure 1. Semantic categories of English phrasal verbs (Thim 2012: 13)

In the case of *literal phrasal verbs*, i.e. 'compositional verb-particle combinations with directional particles' in the preceding figure, the meaning of the entity can be inferred from the meanings of the two individual parts. The two constituents of literal phrasal verbs are a motion verb as well as a particle indicating a particular direction (Walková 2012: 173). Example (9) below demonstrates the transparency of literal phrasal verbs (BNC, as referred to in Thim 2012: 14; original emphasis):

(9)   Well it reminds me when I was in a shop on the High Street for many years and a little boy and girl **came in** with a, with an Alsatian dog, a puppy.

Aspectual phrasal verbs, i.e. 'compositional verb-particle combinations with aspectual particles' in Figure 1, can be located between literal and idiomatic phrasal verbs with regard to their compositionality. While Thim (2012: 16) argues that "their meaning is usually fully transparent and readily understandable", Walková (2012: 171) describes them as "semi-idiomatic" and thus only partly transparent. According to Darwin and Grey (1999: 68), it is only the verbal constituent of aspectual phrasal verbs that has a literal meaning which is easily understood; the meaning of the particle refers to the verb's aspect, is rather abstract and thus usually not easy to grasp. Hence, as opposed to literal phrasal verbs, aspectual phrasal verbs do not have directional particles but aspectual ones typically indicating a complete action. This can be seen in the subsequent example (10) with the particle *up*, which is taken from Darwin and Grey (1999: 68; emphasis added):

(10)   They **ate up** all the chips and **drank up** all the soda.

Thim (2012: 17) claims that there is a limited number of particles that "can be used as aspectualizer", for which the particle *up* is probably the best example. Other particles would be, for instance, *down*, *out* and *through*, as can be seen in the following sentences (BNC taken from Thim 2012: 18 [original emphasis]):

(11) Spitting it on the floor, he raised the half-empty bottle to his lips and **drank down** the fiery vodka in great gulps, as if to drown the useless curses which rose in his throat.

(12) With that beat I needed a really stomping guitar line to go with it so I **worked** it **through** in my head and then **worked out** the chords on the piano.

For a better understanding of aspectual phrasal verbs, the terms *aspect* and *aktionsart* would need further clarification. A more detailed explanation of the two terms will therefore be provided in chapter 5 of this thesis, especially with regard to Serbian verbal prefixes and their similarities and differences to English phrasal verbs.

As for the *idiomatic* (or *figurative*) *phrasal verbs*, also called 'non-compositional verb-particle combinations' in Figure 1, the meaning can neither be deduced from the verb nor the particle, resulting in an opaque meaning of the whole phrase. This is illustrated in examples (13) and (14) (BNC, as referred to in Thim 2012: 13; original emphasis).

(13) My husband actually said to me that **giving up** smoking was easy because he's done it plenty of times.

(14) Farmers, sailors, and chemists **get by** perfectly well on the basis of everyday experience, without recourse to Aristotelian logic.

3.2.2 One-word equivalents

Dančetović (2013: 155) explains that, though not all, a large number of phrasal verbs can be substituted by a one-word verb without significant alternations in meaning. Kovács (2007: 9), however, critically points out that, in various instances, phrasal verbs and their one-word verbs "have such different ranges of use, meaning, or collocation that a single-word synonym cannot be substituted appropriately for a phrasal verb". On the one hand,

this is due to the aspect of formality. Phrasal verbs are considered to be "less formal, more colloquial and more emotionally colored than a word that replaces it" (Dančetović 2013: 155), which is why some researchers consider them redundant and inappropriate for academic contexts. Nevertheless, Machonis (2008: 1) argues that several other linguists, such as Hampe (2002), hold the opinion that these allegedly superfluous phrasal verbs bear more meaning than their one-word equivalents. Goodale (1993: iv) refers to the informality of phrasal verbs as a "misconception" and points out that they are, in fact, also used in formal texts such as government reports. The phrasal verbs in (15) to (18) are taken from Walter (2015; original emphasis) and show some examples of "neutral" or "positively formal" phrasal verbs:

(15) *carried out*

Scientists have **carried out** experiments/tests/research on …

(16) *consist of*

This report **consists of** three parts …

(17) *point out*

As Brown **points out** …

(18) *based on*

These recommendations are **based on** the results of extensive research.

On the other hand, there are often socio-linguistic differences between the phrasal verb and the one-word verb, making the phrasal verb more appropriate in some occasions (Kovács 2007: 9). For instance, *pass away* and *pass on* are politer ways to refer to the single-word verb *to die* and are especially used in social situations to show consideration for someone's feelings (Kovács 2007: 10). As can also be seen with *pass away* and *pass on*, some phrasal verbs have, in addition to one-word near-synonyms, other synonymous phrasal verbs as well. Further examples for this are *call back* and *ring back*, which are fairly synonymous to *phone back*. These stylistic variations contribute to the difficulty faced by second language learners of English (Kovács 2007: 9).

It should be considered that one-word verbs are more likely to be near-synonyms and very rarely "exact equivalents". Partly, this is due to the limitations in meaning of either

the one-word verb or the phrasal verb, as can be illustrated with the word pairs *resemble* and *take after* whereby the latter is used to refer to family members exclusively. As for the other part, this is due to variations in register, for instance, *discharge* is a more formal way to refer to "to do something that you have a responsibility to do", as opposed to *carry out*, which is considered less formal (Kovács 2014: 16). While the number of phrasal verbs is relatively large, that of their one-word near-synonyms is fairly small. As a consequence, there are many "things and concepts in English that cannot be expressed in any other way but by phrasal verbs" (Kovács 2014: 17).

3.3 Syntactic characteristics and L2 difficulties

According to Kovács (2007: 10), grammarians as well as teachers have observed "that the disposition of the words involved and their syntax is also governed by complex and unpredictable rules", which has led to a high learner-error rate with regard to the syntax of phrasal verbs. One of the greatest challenges for second language learners seems to be the fact that particles are usually homonymous with prepositions and adverbs (Thim 2012: 10), which is of considerable importance to the word-arrangement within a sentence (Kovács 2014: 12). There are a large number of particles carrying out the function of both, an adverb and a preposition. As listed by Kovács (2014: 13), those are, for instance, *about, across, along, around, by, down, off, on, over, through* and *up*.

Furthermore, PV-noun collocations are also among the more complex syntactic properties since not every phrasal verb can be combined with every noun. While it is natural for native speakers of English to know which phrasal verbs collocate with which nouns, second language learners are in need of acquiring specific knowledge of the fixed PV-noun relationships (Kovács 2007: 10). For example, *a conversation*, *a talk* and *a discussion* co-occur with the phrasal verb *carry on* whereas *an experiment, a test, research* or *an investigation* collocates with *carry out* (Cowie & Mackin 1993: xv).

In this context, it is worth mentioning that the phrasal verb category can be divided according to their transitivity. The following figure was created on the basis of the

categorization by Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999: 427-429) and serves to illustrate the division of phrasal verbs into transitive and intransitive:

Phrasal Verbs

transitive   intransitive

separable   inseparable
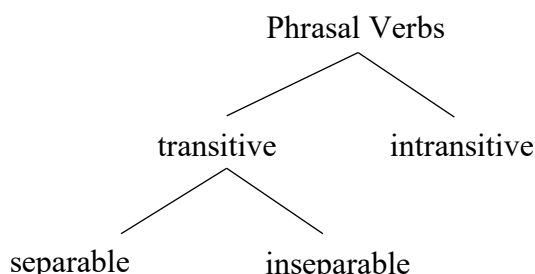
Figure 2. Transitive and intransitive PVs

In *The Concise Oxford Dictionary of Linguistics*, Matthews (2014) provides the subsequent definitions for *transitive* and *intransitive verbs*, respectively:

Transitive phrasal verbs:

> (Construction etc.) in which a verb takes at least two arguments, of which one will often have the semantic role of an agent and the other that of a patient. E.g. in English the construction of *I stroke the cat*, with 'agent' *I*, referring the stroker, and 'patient' *the cat*, referring to what 'undergoes' the action.

Intransitive phrasal verbs:

> (Construction) of a clause or sentence which is not transitive. Typically, therefore, one in which a verb takes a single argument: e.g. that of *The house vanished*, or *They moved*. This is currently identified, across languages, as the 'subject' […].

In other words, a *transitive verb* takes a direct object while an *intransitive verb* does not. As Figure 2 above indicates, transitive phrasal verbs can be further divided into *separable* and *inseparable*, which refers to whether or not the particle can, or should, be separated from the verb proper by the direct object (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 428). Usually, a verb-particle separation is obligatory when a pronoun functions as a direct object, which is shown in example (19) (taken from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 428; emphasis added):

(19)   a. Mark **threw** it **away**.

   b. *Mark **threw away** it.

In the case of *inseparable transitive phrasal verbs*, the particle should not be separated from the verb. According to Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999: 428), some linguistics hold the opinion that the particle of inseparable PVs is, in fact, a preposition and that, therefore, it is in its nature to appear before an object. However, Celce-Murcia and Larsen-Freeman (1999: 428) believe that prepositions and particles "appear to have a syntactic affinity […] and together have a meaning beyond what each word contributes individually", which is why they believe "that it makes good pedagogic sense to have a category of inseparable phrasal verbs". Some examples of inseparable PVs are provided in (20) and (21) (taken from Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman 1999: 428; emphasis added):

(20)   a. I **came across** an interesting article last night.

   b. *I **came** an interesting article **across** last night.

(21)   a. I **came across** it last night.

   b. *I **came** it **across** last night.

If a whole noun phrase functions as the direct object of the sentence, separating the particle from the verb is optional. Hence, the object can either precede or follow the particle (Thim 2012: 21), which is shown in examples (22) and (23) (Thim 2012: 22; original emphasis):

(22)   a. I can **put out** the announcement. (BNC)

   b. I can **put** the announcement **out**.

(23)   a. They never **blew up** the house. (BNC)

   b. The never **blew** the house **up**.

It should be noted that word-order alternations are determined by various criteria. As Kovács (2014: 13) explains, in the case of noun phrases as objects, the particle movement is not possible in the following instances: where the direct object noun phrase is

contrastively stressed, as can be seen in (24) below; where the noun phrase is too long or too complex, as shown in (25); where the pronouns are coordinated, as in (26); and where the phrasal verbs are idiomatic and the tie between the PV and the object is strong, as shown in (27). The subsequent examples are taken from Kovács (2014: 13; original emphasis):

(24) a. He **bought back** the book.

b. *He **bought** the book **back**.

(25) a. No one **brought up** the questions everyone most wanted to hear asked.

b. *No one **brought** the questions everyone most wanted to hear asked **up**.

(26) **Bring along** him and her.

(27) a. She **eked out** a poor existence/her salary/a living by selling flowers.

b. *She **eked** a poor existence/her salary/a living **out** by selling flowers.

Some phrasal verbs can be classified as both, transitive and intransitive. The phrasal verbs *give up* and *blow up* are two representatives of this group of PVs, as can be seen in (28) and (29) (taken from Traffis n.d.; emphasis added):

(28) a. Cindy has decided to **give up** sweets while she diets.

b. I hope Cindy doesn't **give up**.

(29) a. If we refuse to learn about transitivity, the Grammar Police will **blow up** our building.

b. When the Grammar Police confronted her about her verbs, she **blew up**.

The phrasal verb undergoes alternations in meaning depending on the presence or absence of an object. Hence, *give up* in (28 a.) refers to 'to forgo something' and in (28 b.) to 'to stop trying', while *blow up* in (29 a.) means 'to explode' and in (29 b.) 'to express rage' (Traffis n.d.).

3.4 Prefix verbs and phrasal verbs

In the scope of this diploma thesis, the relationship between prefix verbs and phrasal verbs is also worth mentioning. Thim (2012: 34) states that

> In present day English verbal prefixation and the formation of phrasal verbs are in general separate processes. However, it is worth pointing out that a number of verbal prefixes are homonymous with particles of phrasal verbs, and in a few instances the prefix verb and the phrasal verb are synonymous.

He continues by providing two examples (BNC, as referred to in Thim 2012: 34; original emphasis):

(30) His remarks, **downplayed** by the UK Foreign and Commonwealth Office, provoked an uproar among UK right-wing Conservative politicians.

(31) In July 1985 two serious disturbances occurred in Handsworth, but both were **played down** and went unreported in the media.

However, a prefix verb cannot always be substituted by a phrasal verb and the other way around (Thim 2012: 34). This becomes evident in (32) and (33) (BNC, as referred to in Thim 2012: 35; original emphasis):

(32) a. We've just been **overcharged** for this sandwich.

　　　b. *We've just been **charged over** for this sandwich.

(33) a. The words **came over** clearly but cautiously.

　　　b. *The words **overcame** clearly but cautiously.

3.5 Teaching and learning English phrasal verbs

Literal phrasal verbs constitute the vast majority of all phrasal verbs, which means that learners of English should not have great difficulties understanding the meaning of the whole phrasal verb construction when they already know the meaning of the base verb. For example, by understanding the meaning of *to give* or *to steam*, that of *to give back* or

to steam off should be rather straightforward. However, passively recognising the target language form does not necessarily mean that the learner is also able to actively produce it. Furthermore, the difficulty with phrasal verbs, in general, arises in that many of them are highly polysemous. Quite a number of literal phrasal verbs have additional, idiomatic meanings and those idiomatic ones, again, carry several other meanings (Cornell 1985: 270).

Cornell (1985: 271) conducted a study in order to investigate the "*active* knowledge of selected idiomatic phrasal verbs" [original emphasis] of university students of English who are between their fourth and tenth semester, i.e. more advanced learners. The study reveals "a widespread ignorance" of the phrasal verbs under investigation. Hence, he concludes that "it appears inescapable that the learning of phrasal verbs at school and university is generally not very successful" (Cornell 1985: 273) and not only wonders whether an active knowledge of PVs is a realistic goal for L2 learners of English but also questions its workload in relation to its usefulness. He suggests agreeing upon "a 'core' of phrasal verbs", some of which should be actively learnt, and others passively recognised (Cornell 1985: 276).

Due to the difficulties phrasal verbs tend to pose to second language learners, one might wonder whether teaching the more easily distinguishable one-word synonymous would be a better approach. Usually, the teaching and learning of vocabulary is essential and highly productive under the following circumstances: "high frequency, distribution across different text types, and high productivity in word formation processes" (Neumann & Plag 1995: 97-98). Since all of them apply to English phrasal verbs, including them in the foreign language classroom seems inevitable, in particular with advanced English learners who have the desire "to expand their lexical knowledge beyond the most basic vocabulary" (Neumann & Plag 1995: 98).

Traditionally, learners were provided with a list of phrasal verbs including either their translation and/or a definition, which they were required to learn by heart. This approach has received much criticism as the phrasal verbs were organised on the basis of the verb despite it being actually the particle that, in many cases, contributes most of its meaning

to the overall meaning of the phrasal verb. Thus, if the learner receives a list of ten phrasal verbs containing the same base verb, he or she will have difficulties deducing the meaning of an unfamiliar phrasal verb only by having knowledge of the base verb alone (Neumann & Plag 1995: 98-99). Side (1990: 150) points out that phrasal verbs should not be taught in isolation. Teachers should provide a "context within the language, to show that they are meaningfully idiomatic rather than meaninglessly random" (Side 1990: 150-151). This involves an organisation of phrasal verbs on the basis of the particles, not the verbs. Examples involving the particle *up* would, thus, be *let up, ease up, pull up, draw up* and *give up.* Side (1990: 151) holds the opinion that there must be a "balance […] between presenting phrasal verbs in their context within a text on the one hand, and on the other presenting them in their overall linguistic context with each other: in other words, lists". Furthermore, in order to facilitate the memorisation of phrasal verbs, Side (1990: 151) argues that learners should organise their vocabulary notebooks according to "meaningful patterns". This pattern can be, for example, devoting one page to one particle, thereby continuously adding new phrasal verbs to the page. To make this more beneficial, learners should provide greater semantic context to each phrasal verb.

Neumann and Plag (1995: 103) express themselves in favour of a contrastive approach to the teaching of phrasal verbs as they believe that it helps learners to be "more autonomous". The cognitive approach "suggests that there is a great deal of systematicity in the meaning of particles which designates the overall meaning of the phrasal verbs" (Leung 2004: ii). Conveying the fact that "the particle is integral to the meaning of the phrasal verb" (Side 1990: 146) seems essential to Neumann and Plag (1995: 100). Equally important to them is a "systematic explanation" of the particles' polysemous nature and, thus, their multiple meanings.

It seems that English phrasal verbs have received greater attention in the context of second language learning and teaching over the past few decades. Neumann and Plag (1995: 99) argue that quite a number of textbooks do not handle phrasal verbs entirely, and if they do, only a section is devoted to their syntactic, and not semantic, problems. These are, among others, the distinction between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs, pronominalization as well as the question of (in)transitivity. Only textbooks that were, at

that time, "more recent" were concerned with the semantic aspects of the particles, including their collocation with certain verbs, as well as with encouraging English learners to be more active in their use of phrasal verbs (Neumann & Plag 1995: 99). Today, it can be observed that there is quite a number of books that explicitly deal with phrasal verbs from different perspectives and with different methods. For example, some of them deal with phrasal verbs in use, e.g. *English Phrasal Verbs in Use Intermediate* (McCarthy, O'Dell & MacCarthy 2017), others include phrasal verbs and idioms *Oxford Work Skills: Intermediate. Idioms and Phrasal Verbs Student Book with Key: Learn and practise English vocabulary* (Gairns & Redman 2011).

4   German Particle Verbs

Thim (2012: 45-46) points out that all contemporary Germanic languages have "verb-particle constructions which are very similar to the English phrasal verbs", making their "shared historic origins" clearly evident. In the scope of the present diploma thesis, English phrasal verb parallels of German will receive primary attention.

4.1   Semantic and syntactic properties and parallels to English PVs

Particle verbs, also traditionally referred to as *separable prefix verbs*, are the German equivalents of English phrasal verbs (Claridge 2002: 361). Their close resemblance becomes apparent in verbs such as *aufgeben* 'to give up', which "consist of a particle (*auf*, cognate to *up*) and a verb (*geben*, cognate to *give*)" (Thim 2012: 4; original emphasis). The subsequent illustration shows the particle verb *aufgeben* embedded in greater semantic context and is discussed by Thim (2012: 4; original emphasis) as follows

(34)   *Alexander gab das Chellospielen auf*
         Alexander gave the cello:playing up
         'Alexander gave up playing the chello'

However, he further explains that not all German particle verbs can have "one-to-one correspondences" with English phrasal verbs, "neither syntactically nor semantically"

(Thim 2012: 4). To show this, he provides an example (35) involving the verb *aufmachen* 'to open', which is composed of the particle *auf* as well as the verb *machen* 'to make' (Thim 2012: 4; original emphasis):

(35) *Wenzel sagt dass Eva die Tür aufmachen wird*

Wenzel says COMP Eva the door up:maken:INF AUX:3SG

'Wenzel says that Eva will open the door'

4.2 Separability

As becomes evident in examples (34) and (35), the particle *auf* can follow or precede the verb. This can be regarded as one significant distinguishing factor between German particle verbs and English phrasal verbs, since the particle of the latter is always separated from the verb and is not likely to precede it (Thim 2012: 4). In order to draw proper comparisons, two important patterns of the German equivalent structure need further clarification. As Motsch (1999: 46, 51 quoted in Claridge 2002: 361) points out, German particle verbs can either be composed of "verbs with separable particles (e.g. *ab, auf, ein, weg*) and verbs with inseparable prefixes (e.g. *ent-, er-, ver-*) with some forms being found in both patterns (*durch, über, um, unter*)". While the particle of separable particle verbs is a free morpheme, the element in word-initial position of inseparable prefix verbs is a bound morpheme (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 49). Olsen (1996: 261-262)'s argument is in line with that of Motsch (1999: 46) as she agrees that *particle verbs* can only be named as such if the particle can be separated from the verb, i.e. is thus a free morpheme; otherwise they should be referred to as *prefix verbs*, which are inseparable and form part of a closed set with a small and limited number of particles. Similar to German, verbal prefixes can also be found in English, such as *be-, en-, de-, un-,* and *re-,* as can be seen in verbs like *befriend* (German 'als Freund *be*halten'), *enslave* ('*ver*sklaven'), *debug* ('*ent*wanzen'), *unwrap* ('*aus*packen') and *rewind* ('*auf*ziehen') (Olsen 1996: 282). Whether the particle is placed in a pre- or postposition is tied to specific rules in all Germanic languages (Thim 2012: 4).

Claridge (2002: 362) argues that German separable verbs and English phrasal verbs show a striking closeness "as their surface structure and syntactic behaviour is remarkably similar […] and both types of verbs are apparently governed by the same lexical principles". Such great resemblance can facilitate the learning process, especially with structurally and semantically matching verbs such as *wegschauen* 'to look away'. Nevertheless, it might also lead to obstacles and learner difficulties as there is a higher risk of so-called 'false friends', i.e. those verbs that appear to fit but might do so only syntactically and not semantically. For instance, although *ausgeben* 'to spend (money)' might syntactically correspond to the English phrasal verb *give out*, its meaning 'announce' fails to match that of the German particle verb (Claridge 2002: 362). Claridge (2002: 372) concludes, however, that "real 'false-friend' translations are very rare".

4.3 Transitivity

Tied to the aspect of separability is the matter of transitivity. It can be said that German particle verbs behave fairly equal to English phrasal verbs with regard to their transitivity. Examples of transitive particle verbs are provided by Hentschel (2010: 369) in (36) and of intransitive particle verbs by Dehé (2015: 612) in (37).

(36) *Wir verkaufen das Haus.*
      We PARTICLE buy the house
      'We are selling the house'

(37) *Der Film fängt an.*
      The film catches PARTICLE
      'The film is (just) starting'

Traditional German grammars, however, suggest that transitive particle verbs take only direct objects which can be passivized and placed in subject-position. The transitive particle-verb-sentence of example (36) could thus be transformed into (38) as follows (Hentschel 2010: 369):

(38) *Das Haus wird (von uns) verkauft*

   'The house is being sold (by us)'

As a consequence, particle verbs that take no objects or any other but indirect objects are not transitive but *intransitive particle verbs*. Also, if a particle verb takes an indirect object which cannot be placed in subject position, it is not considered transitive but rather *pseudo-transitive*, as seen in (39) and (40) (Hentschel 2010: 369):

(39) *Peter bekommt ein neues Auto*

   Peter receives a new car

(40) **Ein neues Auto wird von Peter bekommen*

   *A new car is received by Peter

Hentschel (2010: 369) further argues that, according to typology, a verb is transitive when it can take an object, regardless of the type, whereas intransitive verbs do not take any kind of object.

4.4 Semantic transparency

Hoppermann and Hinrichs (2014: 50) argue that the meanings of German particle and prefix verbs can be placed on a continuum, ranging from "full semantic transparency" to "highly lexicalized". Particle and prefix verbs that are found on the highly lexicalised end of the continuum are characterised by semantic non-transparency. An example of such particle verbs would be *aufnehmen* 'to record' (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 50), consisting of the particle *auf* 'up' and the verb *nehmen* 'to take'. Highly lexicalised particle (and prefix) verbs would thus correspond to English idiomatic (or figurative) phrasal verbs whose meaning cannot be derived from the individual constituents.

The other end of the continuum contains fully semantically transparent particle and prefix verbs, which strongly resemble English literal phrasal verbs and whose meaning can thus be deduced from that of the two individual parts. Hoppermann and Hinrichs (2014: 51-52) thereby distinguish between three classes: (1) full transparency and light contribution,

(2) full transparency and high contribution as well as (3) low transparency and high contribution. Thereby, the degree of contribution refers to "the highest semantic contribution of the word-initial element to the meaning of the complex verb as a whole" (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 53). An explanation for the first class is offered as follows (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 51):

> Thus, the simplex [verb proper] keeps its original meaning while the semantic contribution of the preverb is light, fulfilling one of the following two core functions: (a.) indication of a direction or (b.) intensification of the meaning denoted by the simplex.

Thus, like the particle of English literal phrasal verbs, the German particle and prefix verbs are also directional in the majority of instances. When the particle or the prefix is added to the verb, the meaning of the verb proper continues to be transparent while that of the particle "adds further directional information" (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 51): *laden* 'to load' becomes *aufladen* 'to load up' with the particle *auf* 'up', *einladen* 'to load into' as well as *umladen* 'to reload' with the particles *ein* 'in' and *um* 're-'. Furthermore, if the particle acts as an intensifier, the meaning of the whole phrase intensifies, as is illustrated with the German prefix verb *verärgern* 'to annoy', created out of *ärgern* 'to tease'.

As far as the full transparency and high contribution class is concerned, there is one class containing fully transparent particle and prefix verbs that, as Fleischer and Barz (1995: 388 qtd. in Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 51) suggest, "represents an exceptional case that is only valid for a limited number of complex verbs such as prefix verbs with *miss-* as negator of the meaning denoted by the simplex". An example therefore would be *missgönnen* 'to begrudge', whereby *gönnen* 'not to begrudge' would be its antonym.

The final class with particle and prefix verbs to which Hoppermann and Hinrichs (2014: 53) refer to as having low transparency and "the highest semantic contribution of the word initial element". The particle verb *aufschrauben* 'to unscrew', for instance, has two superordinate meanings, i.e. that of *schrauben* 'to screw' as well as of *öffnen* 'to open' (Hoppermann & Hinrichs 2014: 53).

Bott and Schulte im Walde (2018: 42; original emphasis) explain the aspect of compositionality by providing the following two examples:

(41) *Der Verlag DRUCKTE das Buch NACH.*

the publisher PRINTED the book PARTICLE

'The publisher reprinted the book'

(42) *Peter GAB ihrer Bitte NACH.*

Peter GAVE her request PARTICLE

'Peter gave in to her request'

Bott and Schulte im Walde (2018: 42) argue that evaluating particle verb "compositionality requires one to assess the semantic contributions of both the BV and the verb particle"; BV, in this case, refers to 'base verb' and is synonymously used with 'verb proper' in this diploma thesis. Hence, as can be seen in (41), the meaning of *nachdrucken* 'to reprint' is highly compositional and easily understandable via the meaning of both, the base verb *drucken* 'to print' and the particle *nach* 'again' that, as Bott and Schulte im Walde (2018: 42) point out, has one further meaning, i.e. "it implies that an additional copy is created". Example (42) shows a case in which the meaning of the particle verb cannot straightforwardly be deduced from that of the individual constituents. The particle verb *nachgeben* 'to give in' has the base verb *geben* 'to give' and the particle *nach* 'again', whereby neither one of the two constitutes provides a meaning that "straightforward" as to make the whole phrase semantically transparent (Bott & Schulte im Walde 2018: 42).

Similar to Hoppermann and Hinrichs (2014: 50), Bott and Schulte im Walde (2018: 43) view the transparency of particle and prefix verbs as a "scalar property". Along that scale, German particle verbs can also be semi-transparent, equal to English phrasal verbs. Particle verbs such as, for example, *absegnen* 'to approve' (43) "are not fully transparent with respect to their BV, but still integrate meaning components attributed by the particle and the BV" (Bott and Schulte im Walde 2018: 43; original emphasis):

(43) *Der Chef SEGNETE die Pläne AB.*

the boss BLESSED the plans PARTICLE

'The boss approved the plans'

4.5 Polysemy

German particle and prefix verbs also resemble English phrasal verbs in terms of their polysemous nature. Bott and Schulte im Walde (2018: 47) explain that some particles can be fairly ambiguous, resulting in various meanings of the whole particle verb in spite of them being actually highly transparent with regard to matching meaning of the base verb. This is shown in examples (44) to (46) including the particle verb *anfahren* (taken from Bott & Schulte im Walde 2018: 47; original emphasis):

(44) *Das Auto FUHR den Fußgänger AN.*

the car DROVE the pedestrian PARTICLE

'The car ran into the pedestrian.'

(45) *Das Auto FUHR AN, als die Ampel grün wurde.*

the car DROVE PARTICLE, when the light green turned

'The car went when the light turned green.'

(46) *Der Bus FUHR die Haltestelle AN.*

the bus DROVE the stop PARTICLE

'The bus approached the bus stop.'

Thus, the example sentences above have the following meanings in the semantic contexts provided above, demonstrating the polysemous nature of German particles: (44) "to drive into" (45) "to start driving" and (46) "to approach by driving" (Bott & Schulte im Walde 2018: 47).

5 Serbian prefix-verbs

Unlike English and German, Serbian does not have constructions like phrasal verbs (Mandić 2016: 107). Therefore, this chapter focuses on what appears to be their most suitable equivalent, i.e. Serbian prefix-verbs. It is observable that prefix-verb parallel structures can also be found in both, German and English, which becomes evident in the example of Serbian *raspakovati*, which strongly resembles German *auspacken* and English *unwrap* (see Olsen 1996: 282 and chapter 4.2 of this present thesis).

5.1 Semantic characteristics of Serbian prefix-verbs

It has been observed in the area of translation studies that equivalents of English phrasal verb are most commonly found in Serbian verbal prefixes. Due to this observation, Lazović (2009: 136) as well as Mandić (2016: 107) conclude that there must be a strong resemblance between Serbian verbal prefixes and English phrasal verbs, which Lazović (2009: 141) explains as follows:

> English can convey semantic nuances with one phrasal verb, while Serbian most frequently uses a highly developed system of verbal prefixes for the same or similar purpose, as these prefixes are lexically 'strong' and hence resemble English adverbial particles in their semantic functions, in that they indicate various qualities of actions and states.

That is to say that, while the particle of English phrasal verbs may alter the meaning of the base verb, it is the verbal prefix serving the same purpose in Serbian (Mandić 2016: 135). This can be seen in the example of *paliti* 'to burn' and *zapaliti* 'to burn down', in which the Serbian verbal prefix *za-* and the English adverbial particle *down* are held responsible for the semantic modifications of the original meaning of the verbs *paliti* and *burn* by denoting complete destruction by fire (Milivojević 2005: 69).

According to Mandić (2016: 112), Serbian verbal prefixes are suitable equivalents if English phrasal verbs maintain their literal meaning; when the meaning of the PV is extended, the "translation equivalents need complementation". These may adopt the shape of, for instance, objects (*zabeležiti brojku* 'to write down'), prepositional phrases

(*bacati na hrpe* 'to bundle up'), clauses (*krene da učini nešto* 'to set up') or even fixed expressions often encountered in Serbian, i.e. idiomatic expressions (*ispustiti dušu* 'to go down') (Mandić 2016: 112).

5.1.1 Polysemy of Serbian verbal prefixes

According to Maretić (1899: 382, as referred to in Klajn 2002: 239), there are 17 verbal prefixes in the Serbian language: do-, iz-, mimo-, na-, nad-, o(b)-, od-, po-, pod-, pre-, pri-, pro-, raz-, s(a)-, u-, uz-, za-. A large number of these prefixes is characterised by polysemy (Lupurović 2016: 22), leading to various context-dependent meanings (Lazović 2009: 142). This can be seen in example (47) provided by Klajn (2002: 252-254) including the prefix *za-*:

(47) [1]a. enclosing, encircling

zagraditi 'to fence', *zamotati* 'to wrap something around something'

b. indication of unknown or undesirable direction, also metaphorically

zalutati 'get lost', *zagubiti* 'to lose something', *zastraniti* 'to depart from something'

c. start of something

zakoračiti 'to make the first step', *zapevati* 'to start singing', *zaigrati* 'to start dancing'

d. change in a trait/quality/feature of people and things

zagluhnuti 'to go deaf', *zacrniti* 'to turn black', *zasladiti* 'to sweeten'

e. perfectivization, completive meaning (Babić 1986: 494, as referred to in Klajn 2002: 254)

zapamtiti 'to memorize', *zalediti* 'to freeze', *zakasniti* 'to be late'

It can be observed that some of the meanings of *za-* also seem to apply to the German prefix *ver-*. Some examples are (47 a.) *zamotati* German 'verhüllen', (47 b.) *zalutati* German 'verlaufen' and (47 d.) *zasladiti* German 'versüßen'.

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[1] This set of examples has been reproduced from my seminar paper on the same topic that has been written in the scope of the Linguistics Seminar in the summer term of 2018.

With regard to Slavic prefixes, Svenonius (2004a: 213) argues that "nearly all prefixes can be used as prepositions, or are homophonous with prepositions". Due to this strong resemblance, the meaning of the prefix is mostly spatial (Lupurović 2016: 22) but can, among others, also "contribute a cumulative, diminutive, inchoative, completive or distributive interpretation" (Kagan 2012: 207). The following examples illustrate the shared spatial meaning of prepositions and prefixes involving the base verb *ići* 'to go' (taken from Alexander 2006: 269):

(48) *iz-* and *iz* 'out from': *iz*ići 'to go out'
      u- and *u* 'into': *u*ći 'to enter'
      pri- and *pri* 'near': *pri*ći 'to approach'

As has been shown, a verb can have several prefixes whereby their meaning is generally quite difficult to determine in isolation (Alexander 2006: 272). Additionally, Alexander (2006: 268) points out that "not every preposition can be used as a prefix, and not every prefix also exists as a preposition", which means that "even when preposition and prefix are identical in form, the prefix will not have all the same meanings as the preposition". It can be assumed that the Slavic system of verbal prefixes is rather complex and thus might not only pose considerable challenges to L2 learners of Serbian, but also to Serbian native speakers in their attempt to find corresponding English equivalents.

5.1.2 Semantic transparency

Similar to Germanic particle and prefix verbs, Slavic verb-prefix constructions can also have literal and idiomatic meanings (Rojina 2004: 25). Via the means of prefixation, it can be observed that, in some cases, the meaning of the newly formed word undergoes only slight alterations, as in *pevati* 'to sing' and *otpevati* 'to finish singing' (see Progovac 2005: 114). The meaning of the new form is thus the sum of the meanings of the verb and the prefix (Rojina 2004: 24). In other cases, however, prefixation causes more substantial changes in meaning, whereby the meaning of the newly formed prefix-verb construction is no longer deducible from the original one of neither the base verb nor the prefix (Rojina 2004: 25). This is shown in the following examples provided by Kharitonova (2013: 37) for Russian, which are also generally applicable for Serbian as can be seen in (49):

(49) *vratiti* 'to give back' and *povratiti* 'to throw up'

      kazati 'to say something' and *otkazati* 'to cancel'

      saditi 'to plant' and *dosaditi* 'to annoy someone'

Thus, similar to English phrasal verbs, Serbian prefix-verbs can appear in a more literal but also rather idiomatic sense.

5.2   Syntactic characteristics of Serbian prefix-verbs

5.2.1   Prefixation

Prefixes are bound morphemes that are placed in a pre-position to the verb root, leading to the formation of an entirely new form (Jovanović 2006: 2). It is worth mentioning that the number of prefixes Serbian and English verbs take is fairly distinct. English words usually adopt one prefix, occasionally up to two, and very rarely more than two prefixes, whereby special attention should be paid to the order of the prefixes in the latter case, for example, *over-rewrite* vs *re-overwrite* (Jovanović 2006: 2). In contrast, prefixation in Serbian usually involves up to three prefixes as can be seen in the following instances including "the two most productive prefixes in recursive prefixation", i.e. *is-* and *po-*, in the words *is-po-raz-bijati* 'to destroy everything around oneself' and *is-po-raz-boljevati se* 'to be very ill' (Jovanović 2006: 12). Kharitonova (2013: 37) observes that, in contrast to Germanic particles, Russian verbal prefixes are inseparable from the base verb and always appear in a pre-position. This also applies to the verbal prefixes of all Slavic languages, including Serbian (Kiefer 2010: 138).

Svenonius (2004a: 213) aims to show the resemblance between Germanic particles and Serbian prefixes by pointing out the mutual categorial properties of prepositions and particles, i.e. their core spatial meaning. Although the majority of prefixes can also serve as prepositions, several prior studies have shown the "Slavic prefixal construction to be primary morphological, and therefore syntactically distinct from the Germanic particle system" (Svenonius 2004a: 213).

5.2.2 Transitivity

Comparable with English verbs, Serbian verbs can be transitive or intransitive, depending on whether or not they take a direct object. For instance, the verb *kupiti* 'to buy' in *Miloš je kupio televizor* 'Miloš bought a TV' is transitive, while the verb *ustati* 'to get up' in the sentence *Svakog dana ustajemo u isto vreme* 'Every day we get up at the same time' is intransitive (Hammond 2005: 50).

Progovac (2005: 102) points out that an intransitive verb can become transitive via the means of prefixation or, to be more specific, by attaching a perfective prefix of completion to the base verb. This is exemplified with the verb *spavati* 'to sleep' in (50) to (52) (taken from Progovac 2005: 102; adapted and emphasis added):

(50)   Imperfective and intransitive:

Dušan je *spavao*.

'Dušan *slept/was sleeping*.'

*Dušan (je) prespavao/naspavao

(51)   Perfective and transitive (direct object):

Dušan je *prespavao* doručak.

'Dušan *slept through* the (whole) breakfast.'

(52)   Perfective and transitive (reflexive):

Dušan se *naspavao*.

'Dušan *has slept to an abundant and sufficient degree/all he needed to sleep*.'

The verb *spavati* 'to sleep' is intransitive in nature; attaching the prefixes *pre-* and *na-* changes its transitivity and requires them to take a direct object (51) or a reflexive pronoun (52) (Progovac 2005: 102).

Some verbs can be transitive and intransitive simultaneously. In this case, adding a prefix to the base verb results in a verb that is transitive or reflexive. This is illustrated in examples (53) and (54) concerning the verbs *jesti* 'to eat' and *pevati* 'to sing' (taken from Progovac 2005: 114; adapted and emphasis added):

(53) *jesti* (supu) 'to eat (soup)'
      pojesti supu 'to eat up soup'
      najesti se 'to have one's fill of eating'

(54) *pevati* (pesmu) 'to sing (a song)'
      otpevati pesmu 'to finish singing a song'
      napevati se 'to have one's fill of singing'

In observing Serbian translation equivalents of English phrasal verbs, Lazović (2009: 143) arrives at the conclusion that, in most cases, "Serbian translated verbs reflected the same transitivity as the English original verbs, that is transitive verbs were translated as transitive and intransitive verbs were translated as intransitive". Examples thereof are provided in (55) and (56) below (taken from Lazović (2009: 143; original emphasis):

(55) English transitive to Serbian transitive:
      a. He rather wished he'd **made up** some Minoan aphorism …
      b. Zažalio je što nije **izmislio** neki minojski aforizam …

(56) English intransitive to Serbian intransitive:
      a. … then the plane **went away**.
      b. … zatim je avion **otišao**.

5.2.3   Aspect and Aktionsart

Prior studies on verbal aspect have highlighted the significance of prefixation due to the primary function of prefixes in aspectual morphology, i.e. perfectivization (Stosić 2007: 1). Hence, for better understanding of the Serbian prefix system, the clarification of two further terms appears to be of necessity, i.e. *aspect* and *aktionsart*. Milivojević (2005: 67)

defines *aspect* as a "grammatical verbal category" marking "completeness of an action or state denoted by the verb". Three groups of verbs in Serbian are distinguished by Stanojčić and Popović (1992: 97-98), i.e. (a.) imperfective verbs, (b.) perfective verbs as well as (c.) verbs that can be both, perfective and imperfective, based on the context. While those actions, states or events marked by imperfective verbs are incomplete, those indicated by perfective verbs mark completeness. Examples of the three groups are provided in (57) (Stanojčić & Popović 1992: 97-98) (adapted):

(57) a. *šetati* 'to take a walk' (imperfective)

   Šetao je po čaršiji 'He was walking through the streets'

b. *doći* 'to come' (perfective)

   Kad je on došao… 'When he came…'

c. *ručati* 'to have lunch' (imperfective and perfective)

   imperfective: *Evo, sedim i ručam* 'Well, I am sitting and having lunch'

   perfective: *Čim ručam, otići ću u školu* 'As soon as I finish lunch, I'll go to school'

In the context of prefixation, it should be noted that perfective forms are usually prefixed while the imperfective ones are not (Svenonius 2004b: 179). However, imperfective verbs can be converted into perfective verbs by the means of prefixation (Svenonius 2004b: 183), thus changing the action, state or event from incomplete to complete. Naturally, there are also exceptions to this rule (Alexander 2006: 272). The following examples (58) and (59) illustrate the process of perfectivization with the verb *gledati* 'to watch' (taken from Lupurović 2016: 24):

(58) *Gledao je film*

   watched-IMPF Aux movie

   'He was watching a movie'

(59) *Po-gledao je film*

   watched-PERF Aux movie

   'He watched a movie'

Nevertheless, as Milićević (2004: 280) argues, "a small number of native verbs are not overtly marked for aspect, and the perfective/imperfective distinction is a matter of contextual coercion". Similar to the previous example of *ručati* 'to have lunch', Milićević (2004: 280) illustrates her argument with the example *večerati* 'to have dinner', with the perfective meaning in (60) and the imperfective one in (61):

(60) *Večerali smo i otišli u bioskop.*
dined.plP be.1pl and gone.pl in cinema.acc
'We had dinner and went to the cinema.'

(61) *U sedam smo još uvek večerali.*
in seven be.1pl still dined.plI
'At seven we were still having dinner.'

Prefixation does not only result in perfectivization. Stanojčić and Popović (1994: 374-387, as referred to in Milivojević 2005: 67) explain that, in several instances, the prefix also assigns "specific meaning" to an already perfective verb. The prefix-verbs in (62) are provided by Stanojčić and Popović (1994: 374-387 qtd. in Milivojević 2005: 67) and contrasted here with their base verbs in order to demonstrate the slight alterations in meaning of the pairs due to the added prefix:

(62) *igrati* 'to dance' and *zaigrati* 'to start dancing'
govoriti 'to speak' and *progovoriti* 'to start speaking'
raditi 'to work' and *doratiti* 'to finish working'

Furthermore, Milivojević (2005: 67) states that "prefixes in Serbian function as *aktionsart* markers" [original emphasis], which means that "the prefix determines whether the action denoted by the verb has a clearly marked starting or ending point". In this context, the term *telicity* calls for further explanation as, according to Mandić (2016: 110), it "appears to be the most important semantic feature when aktionsart is concerned". Hence, a verb is *telic* if it denotes "a natural terminal endpoint" whereas it is *atelic* if it does not do so (Mandić 2016: 110). In English, the particle marks telic aktionsart, which becomes

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evident in the example *to clear up* with the particle *up* denoting the end of the action (Mandić 2016: 135). In Serbian, as already mentioned, the verbal prefix fulfils this function, for instance, *jesti* 'to eat' and *pojesti* 'to eat up' (Milivojević 2005: 68). Mandić (2016: 110-111) concludes that, "even though aspect represents a grammatical category, and aktionsart represents a lexical category, it is often hard to distinguish between the two".

Due to the complexity of "[t]he semantics of aspect" (Svenonvius 2004b: 179), a more in-depth description of the concept of both, aspect and aktionsart, would extent the scope of the present diploma thesis. The explanations of the two concepts given above suffice the needs of understanding the present research.

6 Previous studies on avoidance behaviour with regard to English phrasal verbs

Some of the first, and probably best-known, studies on avoidance behaviour displayed by second language learners of English with regard to phrasal verbs were conducted by Dagut and Laufer (1985), Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), Laufer and Eliasson (1993) as well as Liao and Fukuya (2004). Since phrasal verbs are exclusive to the Germanic languages (Dagut & Laufer 1895: 78; Kharitonova 2013: 35), it seems perfectly reasonable to compare the extent of avoidance behaviour displayed by learners of English whose L1 is a Germanic language to speakers of a non-Germanic language in order to draw more insightful conclusions. In the following four studies, the languages under investigation are Swedish and Dutch (Germanic) as well as Hebrew and Chinese (non-Germanic).

In each one of the aforementioned studies, multiple test methods were applied with the purpose of identifying the impact the method might have on the test takers' performance. All researchers incorporated a multiple-choice test, a translation test and a memorization test in their studies with the exception of Laufer and Eliason (1993), who omitted the latter one. Although the phrasal verbs vary from study to study, the selected phrasal verb and one-word verb pairs within one study were used in all three, or in the case of Laufer and Eliasson (1993) two, tests.

The multiple-choice tests of Dagut and Laufer (1985), Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) as well as Laufer and Eliason (1993) included single sentences in which the verb at issue was left blank. The learners had to choose one of the four provided answers, i.e. the correct phrasal verb, the correct one-word equivalent, a wrong phrasal verb and a wrong one-word verb. Liao and Fukuya (2004) convincingly argue that, due to the informality of phrasal verbs and their widespread occurrence in spoken language, the sentences should be shorter and embedded in greater semantic context. Therefore, they opted for short dialogues as opposed to long sentences that might be considered too formal, as is the case with Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)'s MC test (see Liao & Fukuya 2004: 203).

Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s focus lies on avoidance behaviour exhibited by Hebrew learners of English. Their study reveals that Hebrew speakers, despite having knowledge of the form in question, tend to avoid English phrasal verbs as a category and prefer the one-word verb with a similar meaning. The researchers ascribe this underuse to structural differences between the learners' L1 and the target language, concluding that L1-L2 difference is the decisive factor. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) are rather critical about this claim. They believe that L1-L2 difference does not inevitably have to be the leading cause of avoidance as this suggests that learners of English whose L1 contains phrasal verbs would, therefore, not display any kind of avoidance behaviour. To Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), this implication felt quite "counterintuitive" as the semantic aspect, i.e. idiomaticity of phrasal verbs, was not considered, which is known to pose considerable difficulties to foreign language learners. In order to find other plausible explanations for the avoidance of phrasal verbs, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) compared Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s study involving Hebrew native speakers with the results of their research including Dutch L1 learners of English. Despite the existence of phrasal verbs in Dutch, the scholars assumed that their participants would, like the Hebrew speakers, show a significant preference for the more general one-word near-synonym. In contrast to Dagut and Laufer (1985), Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) divided their participants into proficiency levels, i.e. intermediate and advanced, and included a reference group of English native speakers. The results of their multiple-choice test show that intermediate ESL learners tend to avoid phrasal verbs, although not categorically, while the advanced group and the English natives demonstrate a strong preference for the form in question.

Taking all tests into consideration, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) conclude that those PVs affected by avoidance were verbs that have an identical Dutch counterpart with precisely the same meaning. Due to this similarity, the intermediate ESL learners adopted a "play-it-safe strategy" by opting for the one-word verbs with a more general meaning thereby avoiding phrasal verbs that "were perceived as idiomatic and too Dutch-like and therefore nontransferable" (Hulstijn & Marchena 1989: 249). This phenomenon was later-on termed "idiomatic disbelief" by Laufer and Eliasson (1993: 44). Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) came to the conclusion that the Dutch learners' partial avoidance of PVs is due to semantic reasons and that the participants of Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s study might have faced the same challenge next to, or instead of, structural difficulties, i.e. the lack of phrasal verbs in the L1.

Laufer and Eliason (1993) compared the outcome of their study on avoidance behaviour of Swedish L1 advanced learners of English to that of Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s as well as Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)'s research. The study reveals that Swedish native speakers do not avoid neither literal nor figurative phrasal verbs, disregarding the similarity between the English phrasal verb and the Swedish phrasal equivalent. Therefore, the phenomenon of what they call "idiomatic disbelief", which was present in the Dutch learner group of Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)'s study, does not occur in the Swedish group, pointing to the conclusion that "[i]diomatic meaning similarity between L1 and L2 does not necessarily induce learner disbelief and subsequent avoidance" (Laufer & Eliasson 1993: 44). Since, compared to the Hebrew speakers of Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s study, the Dutch and Swedish advanced learners of English showed a marked preference for phrasal verbs, Laufer and Eliasson (1993) conclude that avoidance behaviour of certain target language forms is caused by structural differences between the learner's L1 and the L2. As the speakers of Hebrew and those of Dutch showed a tendency to avoid PVs in their figurative sense, Laufer and Eliasson (1993) consider inherent complexity of the target language form to play a further role, yet not the primary one. They argue that, if inherent L2 complexity played a vital role, this would have an effect on each learner group regardless of the native language and, in their specific case, would have resulted in the underuse of figurative PVs by the Swedes. Since this is not the case and since the avoidance of figurative PVs displayed by Hebrew and Dutch learners

is not "statistically significant", Laufer and Eliasson (1993: 44) arrive at the conclusion that inherent L2 complexity plays a subordinate role, which they explain as follows:

> This is not to say that [inherent L2 complexity] has no effect at all. If a structure is complex and missing in the L1, it is a better candidate for avoidance than a simple structure that is absent in the L1 (cf. the findings from the Hebrew speakers). If, on the other hand, the structure is complex but familiar to the learners from his or her L1, this complexity in itself is not a sufficient condition for avoidance.

According to this hypothesis, the familiarity of a structure due to its existence in the learners' native language diminishes its complexity in the L2, which leads to the assumption that L1-L2 difference is the decisive factor for avoidance.

Liao and Fukuya (2004) incorporate the outcome of the three previously mentioned studies into their research and take the suggested avoidance-triggers L1-L2 difference, L1-L2 similarity and L2 complexity into consideration. Their study including six groups of Chinese intermediate and advanced learners of English and one reference group of English natives aims to demonstrate that the avoidance of English phrasal verbs is affected by (a) the learners' proficiency level, (b) the phrasal verb type and (c) the test type and can thus be seen as an indication of interlanguage development. The findings show that Chinese advanced learners of English do not avoid phrasal verbs, while the intermediate group shows a stronger preference for the one-word verb. In the multiple-choice test, the advanced group behaved similarly to the English native speakers, opting for the phrasal verb in the majority of the cases. The advanced group showed an even stronger preference for phrasal verbs in the memorization test but a significant underuse of the same in the translation test. The intermediate group opted for phrasal verbs in no more than half of the instances, whereby the lowest score was also found in the translation test.

As far as the phrasal verb type is concerned, the study shows that the scores were generally higher for literal phrasal verbs in both learner groups as well as in the native speaker group. Liao and Fukuya (2004) ascribe this to semantic reasons, i.e. the fact that the meaning of figurative phrasal verbs cannot be deduced from the meaning of their

individual parts, as is the case for literal PVs. Hence, avoidance behaviour results from the learners' difficulty with a correct form-meaning-mapping. Nevertheless, it should be considered that Liao and Fukuya (2004) included a relatively small number of literal PVs compared to the figurative ones (four opposed to eleven), which might have had an influence on the results.

Regarding the effect of the test type, the researchers allege that the relation between the test type and the phrasal verb type is only present in the translation test. The findings reveal that both Chinese learner groups avoided figurative phrasal verbs to a significant extent in the translation test. Liao and Fukuya (2004) draw a parallel to Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)'s study and claim that the Chinese learners, although lacking the phrasal verb structure in their L1, behaved similarly to the Dutch learners in that both intermediate groups tend to avoid PVs while the advanced groups do not. Therefore, they convincingly argue that avoidance does not necessarily result from the absence of the target form in the learners' L1, i.e. L1-L2 difference, but that it can be seen as an indication of interlanguage development. Their assumption is that learners "seem to go through the same developmental process from avoidance to nonavoidance of phrasal verbs", irrespective of the existence (Dutch) or non-existence (Chinese) of phrasal verbs in their native language. This means that, although avoidance might result from structural differences, this "does not rule out the possibility that L2 learners' difficulties with phrasal verbs would eventually subside" (Liao & Fukuya 2004: 213).

The majority of the studies point to the conclusion that the lack of a parallel structure in the learners' native language leads to the avoidance of that structure in the second language. Although suggested by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), L1-L2 similarity does not seem to have gained widespread acceptance among the researchers. A more plausible explanation would be L2 complexity, which is, however, also considered to have a minimal effect when the structure in question is familiar to the learners via their L1 (Laufer & Eliasson 1993). It has been shown by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) as well as Liao and Fukuya (2004) that the learners' proficiency level of the L2 should receive greater attention when investigating avoidance behaviour. Liao and Fukuya (2004: 212)'s claim that avoidance is a "developmental manifestation of interlanguage" suggests it to

be a temporary phenomenon which diminishes with increased proficiency in the target language. Giving this claim more weight, this would mean that the learners' L1 has only a minor impact on phrasal verb use in the L2 but that the complexity of certain target language forms and structures alone leads to temporary avoidance. Further studies appear to be of necessity in order to verify this hypothesis.

7 Methodology

The present study is based on the research conducted by Hulstijn and Marchena (1985) as well as Laufer and Eliasson (1993), as both studies investigate avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs displayed by learners of English whose L1 is a Germanic language (Swedish and Dutch), comparing it to the behaviour exhibited by those learners whose native language lacks phrasal verbs (Hebrew). While the idea of comparing a Germanic with a non-Germanic language was taken over, this diploma thesis focuses on two entirely different languages, i.e. German, which has a parallel structure to English phrasal verbs, and Serbian, a Slavic language with an absence of the category in question. In addition to the two learner groups, one reference group of English native speakers was added in order to enable a comparison between native and non-native speakers of English with regard to the (non-)preference of phrasal verbs while completing the task instruments used for this study.

7.1 Research Questions

The theoretical part of the present diploma thesis as well as previous studies on avoidance behaviour have shown the complex nature of English phrasal verbs, mostly with regard to their idiomatic and thus unpredictable meanings. Hence, it can be hypothesised that both, German and Serbian natives, will prefer the one-word synonym with a more general meaning over the phrasal verb carrying a more specific and narrower one. It can also be assumed that the OWV preference will be greater in the case of figurative phrasal verbs, since the meaning of literal phrasal verbs can be deduced from that of the individual constituents. Furthermore, it can be hypothesised that the English natives will show a

strong preference for the phrasal verb category. In order to verify these assumptions, the present study addresses the following research questions:

1 Do Serbian learners of English tend to avoid English phrasal verbs as a category in both, their literal and figurative meaning?

2 Do German learners of English prefer phrasal verbs over their one-word equivalents? If so, does this account for both, literal and figurative phrasal verbs?

3 In what ways do Serbian L1 learners differ from German L1 learners of English regarding the avoidance of the phrasal verb category?

4 Do English native speakers prefer phrasal verbs over their one-word equivalents?

7.2 Informants

The informants of the study were divided into three groups according to their native language. The participants of the two learner English groups are high school students between the age of 16 and 18 who have been exposed to English primarily in a school-setting for ten to twelve years, which means that their knowledge of English can be estimated to be at the level of B1 (according to CEFR 2001). Hence, both learner groups are considered to be of the same proficiency level, i.e. B1. The German L1 learners are students of the 6th and 7th form of an upper level secondary school based in Vienna, while the Serbian L1 students attend the 7th and 8th form of an upper level secondary school as well as an agricultural technical school located in Svilajnac, a town in the Pomoravlje District of Central Serbia. As for the English control group, the average age of the participants is 24, the youngest being 18 and the oldest 56.

While the German and Serbian learners of English received a hard copy of the test, a web link to Google Forms was forwarded to the English native speaker group. Apart from the test per se, some background information about their persona was enquired, such as their age and gender as well as the languages they speak. The study reached a total number of 185 participants, out of which 143 were considered to fulfil the need of the present study. Among those final 143 participants were 23 English native speakers, 52 German L1 and 68 Serbian L1 learners of English. The most common additional languages apart from

English are the Romance languages. All German participants have some knowledge of Spanish since Spanish is being taught to them as a second foreign language at school. Out of all Serbian participants, 4 indicated to have knowledge of Spanish, 1 of Romanian, 2 of Italian and 38 of French. In addition, 7 of them have some knowledge of Russian. The German native speakers who noted down to speak Serbian, Bosnian or Croatian were excluded from the study, which was also the case for the Serbian natives who indicated to speak German.

7.3   Test format and tasks

Participants received a multiple-choice test consisting of 25 casual dialogues in informal settings, which was designed along the lines of Liao and Fukuya (2004)'s multiple-choice test but with partly different phrasal verbs and entirely different test dialogues. The PV and OWV pairs taken over from Liao and Fukuya (2004)'s research were the following: *get up / rise*, *come in / enter*, *hold on / wait*, *make up / invent*, *turn down / refuse* (although *refuse* was exchanged for *reject* in the present study). The majority of the remaining 15 phrasal verbs were selected from the More! student books, which are, among others, the books typically used in grades one to four in Austria's lower secondary schools. Due to their presence in the textbooks, an assumption can be made that learners will, at least, be able to passively recognise the phrasal verbs in question. Since the Serbian natives are considered to be at the same language level as the German natives, they should, too, have come across the same PVs. Another criterion for the selection was the PV transferability from German to English, as is the case with direct translation equivalents such as *zurückgeben* 'to give back', i.e. *geben* 'to give' and *zurück* 'back'. This aims to show the scope of positive transfer from German to English and to examine the German natives' performance in comparison to the Serbian natives', which, consequently, should help to determine the extent of L1 influence on the L2.

In each one of the 25 dialogues, the verb in question was omitted so that the participants had to decide on one of the four given verbs: the appropriate phrasal verb, its one-word near-equivalent, a distractor phrasal verb or an incorrect distractor verb. Out of the 25 items, 10 contained literal and 10 figurative phrasal verbs, while the remaining 5 were

filler items asking for either a correct adjective or adverb. The following three examples give an impression of the test's structure (the full test can be found in Appendix 1).

(63) Literal phrasal verbs
- "She _____ the book she had borrowed from me two years ago."
- "Which one was it?"
a. returned   b. lifted   c. gave back   d. looked after

(64) Figurative phrasal verbs
- "I'm sorry that I didn't _____ that topic."
- "It's okay, I'm not angry."
a. hold   b. mention   c. bring up   d. put up

(65) Distractor items
- "My neighbour's dog is very _____. He barks at everyone passing by."
- "Maybe someone should do something about it."
a. disappointed   b. angrily   c. comfortable   d. angry

Furthermore, two versions of the test were designed in order to observe whether the order of the test items had an effect on the test takers. Both versions contained the same dialogues and phrasal verbs, however, version A commenced with a dialogue asking for a literal phrasal verb while version B's first item contained a figurative phrasal verb. All phrasal verbs and their one-word near-equivalents, or near synonyms, used in the test are listed in Table 1 below.

Table I: List of verbs

literal PVs	OWVs	figurative PVs	OWVs
gave back	returned	get through	survive
went into	entered	call off	cancel
walks over	crosses	made up	invented
goes down	sinks	hold on	wait
put on	wore	bring in	introduce
take off	remove	bring up	mention
ran after	chased	come across	found
turn up	increase	bring up	raise
check in	register	turn down	reject
get up	rise	find out	discover

7.4 Data Analysis

The scoring method for the data analysis was inspired by Liao and Fukuya (2004) and involves the conversion of scores into proportions. Thus, the scores of version A and B of all three groups were calculated by dividing the sum of the chosen verbs by the total number of possible items multiplied by the participants of the group in question. For a better understanding, consider the following example: since there were 31 participants in the Serbian group who filled out version A of the study as well as 20 items containing phrasal verbs, the total number of possible verbs for this group would be 620 (31x20). Therefore, if the participants chose 266 phrasal verbs (out of the 620 phrasal verbs) over their one-word near-equivalents and the distractors, the proportion would be 266/620, or 0.43. Since the test has an equal amount of figurative and literal phrasal verbs, the proportions for each of the two categories were calculated separately. This means that, for the same group, the total amount of possible figurative or literal phrasal verbs would be 310 (10 fig. / lit. PVs x 31 participants), respectively. Therefore, if participants chose 137 figurative PVs out of the 310 possible ones, the proportion would be 137/310, or 0.44. The same method was also applied for calculating the proportions for individual items with the purpose of highlighting and illustrating the most outstanding differences between the three language groups in terms of their avoidance behaviour.

8   Results and Discussion

8.1   Overall results and discussion

Table II below shows the results of the present study, whereby the scores are presented in terms of proportions for versions A and B as well as for the German, Serbian and English native speaker groups. Since participants were asked to choose one out of four options, the results of their choices are shown in the last four columns and are abbreviated as follows: correct phrasal verb (PV), correct synonymous one-word verb (OWV), distractor phrasal verb (xPV) and distractor one-word verb (xOWV).

Table II: Results of the PV study of all three language groups

Version	Group	Phrasal verb type	PV	OWV	xPV	xOWV
A	German	total	0.49	0.48	0.01	0.02
		literal	0.47	0.50	0.01	0.02
		figurative	0.52	0.45	0.02	0.01
	Serbian	total	0.43	0.53	0.02	0.02
		literal	0.42	0.55	0.02	0.02
		figurative	0.44	0.52	0.02	0.01
	English	total	0.43	0.57	--	--
		literal	0.39	0.61	--	--
		figurative	0.47	0.53	--	--
B	German	total	0.50	0.48	0.01	0.01
		literal	0.51	0.47	--	0.02
		figurative	0.49	0.49	0.01	0.01
	Serbian	total	0.43	0.52	0.02	0.02
		literal	0.41	0.54	0.02	0.03
		figurative	0.45	0.50	0.02	0.02
	English	total	0.40	0.60	--	--
		literal	0.39	0.61	--	--
		figurative	0.42	0.58	--	--

It can be seen that the participants of the two versions behaved fairly similarly within their individual language groups. Thus, for better understanding, the results will be grouped together correspondingly and represented in the form of figures in the two

56

subsequent instances. Figure 3 below shows the German, Serbian and English natives' choice with regard to phrasal verbs in general and their one-word synonyms, represented in percent.
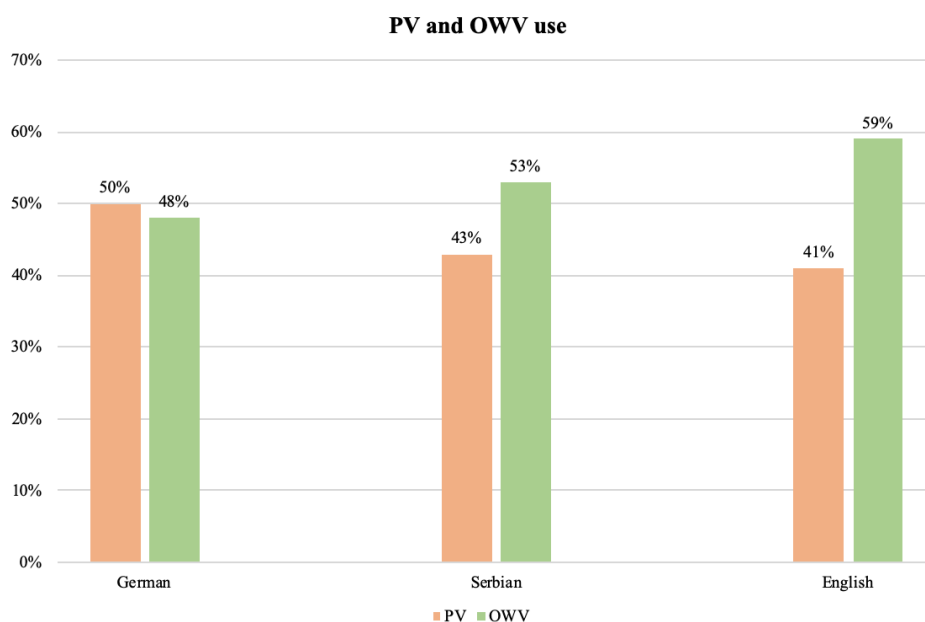
Figure 3. Results on PV and OWV use of all participants

Figure 3 shows some differences in phrasal verb usage by the two English learner groups. The German group opted for phrasal verbs in half of the instances and almost equally often for the one-word verbs. However, the contrary is the case for the group of Serbian natives who preferred the one-word synonym in somewhat more than 50 percent of the time, thereby rejecting the phrasal verb category for the most part. Furthermore, it becomes evident from Table II above that the Serbian natives committed slightly more errors in comparison to the German natives. It is observable that neither the German nor the Serbian language group showed a marked preference for either the phrasal verb or the one-word near-synonym. As a consequence, it would be more appropriate to refer to the learners' use or non-use of phrasal verbs as 'tendencies' for preference or avoidance.

The results of the English native speaker group offer some fairly interesting and valuable insights, which will be explained in greater detail throughout the present chapter. Contrary to expectations, the English natives displayed the strongest preference for the one-word verb, rejecting the phrasal verb category even more often than the Serbian

natives. Since it can be assumed that native speakers of English are familiar with the different shades of meaning carried by phrasal verbs, the underuse of the same cannot be traced back to some kind of L2 difficulties. This raises the question of the motives behind their one-word verb preference. Possible answers thereto will be given when discussing the responses to the individual items later-on in this chapter.

Figure 4 below shows the participants' choices with regard to literal and figurative phrasal verbs as well as their corresponding one-word near-synonyms. The '(lit.)' and '(fig.)' refers to the degree of transparency of the OWV's corresponding phrasal verb.
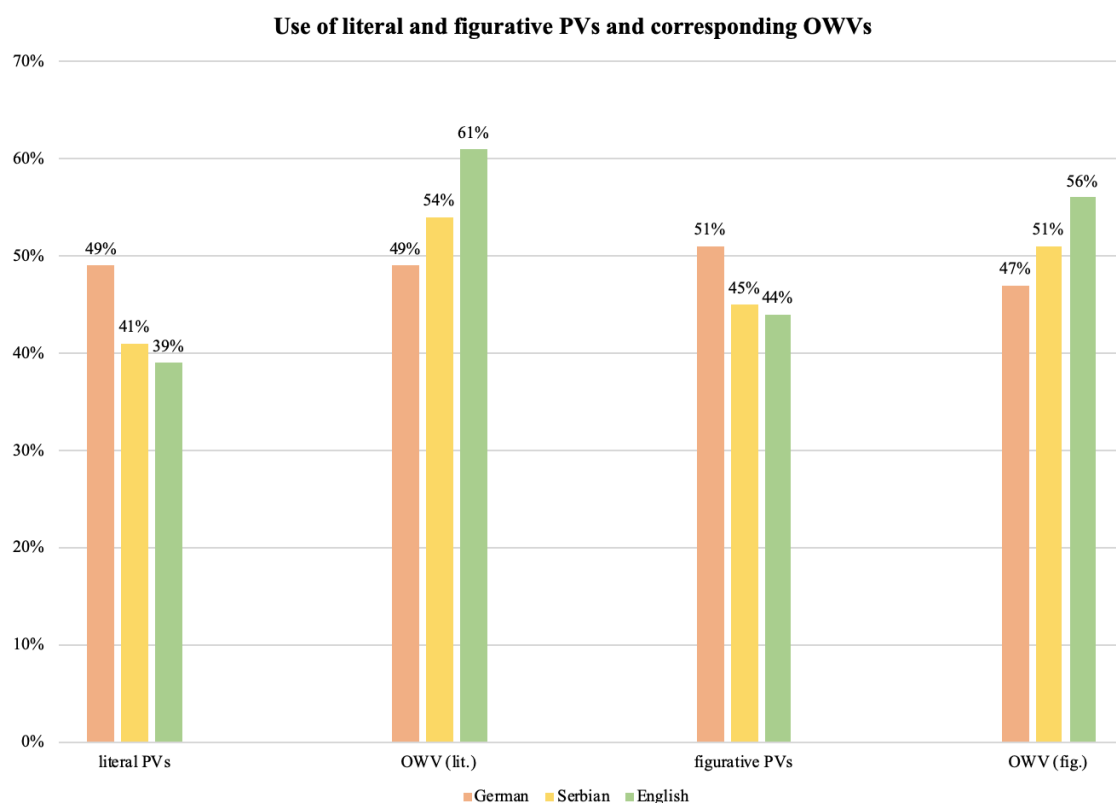
Figure 4. Use of literal and figurative PVs and corresponding OWVs

In dividing the phrasal verbs according to their transparency, it can be seen that figurative phrasal verbs have been chosen slightly more often than literal phrasal verbs by all three language groups. Nevertheless, both phrasal verb types have been chosen less often than the one-word verbs by all language groups except the German native speakers. The German learners of English opted for literal phrasal verbs equally often as for the one-

word counterpart and showed a preference for the figurative phrasal verbs over the corresponding one-word synonym in slightly more than half of the instances. The contrary is true for the Serbian and English native speaker groups who displayed a preference for the one-word verb with regard to both phrasal verb types. The Serbian participants opted for the literal phrasal verbs in 41% and the figurative phrasal verbs in 45% of the instances while preferring the one-word verbs in over 50% of the time. Interestingly, it is the English natives who rejected the PV category to the greatest extent, most significantly in their literal sense by opting for the one-word alternative in over 60% of the time.

Even though German and English are both Germanic languages, participants of the two language groups did not show a strong similarity in their phrasal verb choices. Figures 3 and 4 show that, in fact, the Serbian participants and the English natives behaved in a more similar manner by preferring the one-word verb over the phrasal verb. Hence, the hypothesis that English native speakers would show a significant preference for phrasal verbs over their one-word counterpart has been disproved.

More striking differences can be found with regard to individual items of the study, not only across the two versions but also, and most importantly, across the three languages. These differences will be discussed below in greater detail for the literal phrasal verbs *gave back*, *walks over*, *run after* and *go down* as well as for the figurative phrasal verbs *hold on, turn down, make up* and *bring in* and their one-word synonyms.

8.2   Results and discussion of individual test items

8.2.1   *gave back* vs. *returned*

Table III below shows the results of the PV *gave back* and its OWV *returned*, divided into version A and B as well as the individual language groups. The semantic context in which *gave back* and *returned* were presented was the following:

- "She _____ the book she had borrowed from me two years ago."

- "Which one was it?"

a. returned   b. lifted   c. gave back   d. looked after

Table III: Results for the PV *gave back* and its OWV *returned*

A	Group	*gave back*	*returned*	B	Group	*gave back*	*returned*
	German	0.40	**0.52**		German	0.30	**0.70**
	Serbian	0.10	**0.84**		Serbian	0.11	**0.86**
	English	--	**1.00**		English	0.15	**0.85**

Given that there is a one-to-one correspondence between the English phrasal verb and the German verb-particle construction, that is *gab zurück* 'gave back', it is somewhat surprising that the preference was expressed towards the one-word verb. In version B, the German natives displayed a clear preference for the OWV *returned*, choosing it in 70% of the instances. German participants of version A opted for the OWV in 52% of the time, thereby rejecting the corresponding phrasal verb, mostly so in version B. Also, it becomes evident that participants of version A had difficulties with the item, which is reflected in the erroneous choices made in 8% of the cases. Hence, although the opportunity for positive transfer was clearly given, only a minority of German natives took advantage of it.

As for the Serbian native speakers, participants of both versions behaved similarly and showed a marked preference for the one-word verb. The phrasal verb *gave back* does not have a Serbian translational equivalent in the form of a verb-prefix construction, but the meaning can be expressed with a simple verb, i.e. *vratiti* 'to give back' or *vratila je* 'she gave back' in the past tense. A literal translation of the English PV in question would make no sense in Serbian, i.e. *dati* 'to give' and *nazad* 'back', since the language uses two distinct words to express the meaning of *give* and *give back*, i.e. *dati* and *vratiti*, respectively. One possible explanation is that Serbian natives avoided the phrasal verb at issue due to its somewhat unsatisfactory transferability to their L1 and vice versa. However, considering that the German natives as well as the English natives

demonstrated a preference for the one-word verb too, alternative explanations should be taken into consideration.

The English native speakers who received version A of the test opted for the one-word verb in 100% of the instances, while the score of those who filled out version B is 85%. Thus, an assumption can be made that the natives might have considered the OWV more appropriate in this particular semantic context. Since it can be observed that the German and Serbian groups behaved in a quite similar manner as the English natives, it would not be entirely accurate to interpret the underuse of the phrasal verb *gave back* as a manifestation of avoidance on the part of the English learner groups. Instead, it is more likely that the German and Serbian participants opted for the one-word verb for the same reasons as the English natives, that is, a greater suitability in the context of the test sentence.

8.2.2 *walks over* vs. *crosses*

Table IV shows the outcome regarding the phrasal verb *walk over* and its one-word synonym *cross*. The following dialogue was provided to the test takers:

- "She always looks left and right before she _____ the street."
- "This is very important."
a. turns to   b. lifts   c. walks over   d. crosses

Table IV: Results for the PV *walks over* and its OWV *crosses*

A	Group	*walks over*	*crosses*	B	Group	*walks over*	*crosses*
	German	0.12	**0.88**		German	0.04	**0.96**
	Serbian	0.13	**0.87**		Serbian	0.08	**0.92**
	English	--	**1.00**		English	--	**1.00**

It seems that the phrasal verb *walk over* is mostly used in English in its idiomatic sense, namely "to treat contemptuously" (Merriam Webster Dictionary). In the context of the

test sentence, the meaning was intentionally literal in order to trigger the German natives' choice in favour of the phrasal verb, which has a direct German equivalent *gehen über* 'walk over' as in *über die Straße gehen* 'to walk over the street (to the other side)'. As for Serbian, the literal translation of *walk over* is *ići preko*, however, since this construction is not commonly used to refer to the notion of 'crossing', a more appropriate verb would be *preći (preko)*. The Serbian translation equivalent of *walk over* has both, a literal and a figurative meaning. In its literal sense, it denotes exactly what the test sentence aimed for, i.e. 'to walk across the street (to the other side)' as in *Prešla je preko ulice* 'She walked across the street'. In contrast, various idiomatic expressions can be formed with the same construction, such as, for instance, *Prešla je preko ponosa* 'She swallowed her pride'.

It is unclear to what extent the German natives considered the phrasal verb *walk over* too German-like to be accurate, which consequently resulted in their preference for the more general one-word verb. Also, the fact that a small number of German and Serbian participants opted for the phrasal verb, thus displaying non-English native like behaviour, raises the question of whether or not their choice in favour of the phrasal verb can be seen as a sign of native language influence or if it should rather be attributed to a somewhat lower target language proficiency.

As can be seen, the English natives rejected the phrasal verb entirely, well-aware of its predominantly figurative meaning, and opted for the one-word verb *crosses*. Similarly, the German and Serbian natives preferred the one-word synonym over the phrasal verb in over 80% in version A and in over 90% in version B. Given that the majority of the English learners of both language groups displayed a similar behaviour as the English natives, it can be assumed that, what appears to be avoidance of the phrasal verb, is, in fact, English-native like behaviour and thus an indication of higher target language proficiency.

8.2.3   *ran after* vs. *chased*

Table V reveals the scores obtained for the phrasal verb *ran after* and its single word equivalent *chased*. Participants of the study received the subsequent test dialogue:

- "Yesterday, my dog _____ the cat for an hour."
- "Crazy dog."
a. ran after   b. looked up   c. chased   d. called

Table V: Results for the PV *ran after* and its OWV *chased*

A	Group	*ran after*	*chased*	B	Group	*ran after*	*chased*
	German	0.20	**0.80**		German	0.44	**0.56**
	Serbian	0.16	**0.84**		Serbian	0.14	**0.78**
	English	0.10	**0.90**		English	--	**1.00**

Similar to many other phrasal verbs, *run after* has a literal and an idiomatic meaning. In its literal sense, the PV should expresses what its one-word equivalent does, i.e. "to chase someone" (Macmillan Dictionary), while its idiomatic meaning is "to pursue (a potential romantic […] partner) with persistent attention" in the sense of "trying to start a relationship with them" (Collins Dictionary). This polysemy also applies for the translation equivalents of *run after* in both, German and Serbian. The translation equivalent of German is *nachlaufen* while that of Serbian is *trčati za*, which is constituted of the base verb *laufen* or *trčati* 'to run' as well as *nach* 'after' and, in the sense of this context, *za*.

Table V above shows that the one-word verb *chased* was preferred over the corresponding phrasal verb by all participants, but particularly by the English natives. It can be assumed that the English natives considered the one-word verb more suitable due to its additional connotation of 'hunting' (see Merriam Webster Dictionary). As for the German natives, participants who received version A show a clear preference for the one-word verb while those who filled out version B opted for the same in 56% of the instances, making them

the ones with the greatest PV usage. Presumably, the German natives had the same reason for their OWV preference as the English natives, given that the appropriate German translation of 'to chase', i.e. *verfolgen* or, even better in the context of the test sentence, *(herum)jagen*, as well carry the connotation of 'hunting'. Since the English native speakers did not perceive the phrasal verb to be a suitable option, it is unclear whether the learners' choice in favour of the PV should be considered positive or negative transfer. However, apart from the issue of the most appropriate terminology, a reasonable assumption can be made that their PV usage is due to transfer from German to English.

The Serbian natives opted for the one-word verb in 84% and 78% of the instances in version A and B, respectively. Thus, they rejected the phrasal verb more often compared to the German natives and less often than the English natives. It can be assumed that the erroneous answers given by 8% of the Serbian participants are due to a failed attempt in translating the literal phrasal verb accordingly and their lacking knowledge of the meaning of *to chase*. Moreover, like the English phrasal verb in question, the Serbian translation equivalent *trčati za* would be a suitable option, however, its one-word synonym *juriti*, which corresponds to the English OWV 'to chase', would probably be used more often in a context like the abovementioned. Thus, like the German and English natives, the Serbian participants' preference for the OWV can be attributed to the 'hunting' aspect of the verb.

It can be argued that the German and Serbian learner groups' avoidance of the phrasal verb and preference for the one-word verb is due to the semantic context of the test dialogue, given that their responses match with those of the English natives. Although Serbian lacks constructions like English phrasal verbs, the avoidance of *run after* is unlikely to be due to L1-L2 difference. The phrasal verb at issue carries a literal meaning; by understanding the meaning of the base verb, that of the whole phrasal verb construction could, at least, be passively recognised of the context.

8.2.4 *goes down* vs. *sinks*

The literal phrasal verb *go down* and its one-word equivalent *sink* were provided in the context of the following test dialogue:

  - "Titanic is a great movie."
  - "I think so too. But I always cry when the ship _____."
  a. drowns   b. goes down   c. sinks   d. falls down

Table VI: Results for the PV *goes down* and its OWV *sinks*

A	Group	*goes down*	*sinks*	B	Group	*goes down*	*sinks*
	German	0.12	**0.80**		German	0.15	**0.70**
	Serbian	0.03	**0.87**		Serbian	0.05	**0.81**
	English	--	**1.00**		English	0.08	**0.92**

As Table VI reveals, all test takers avoided the phrasal verb *goes down* in favour of the one-word verb *sinks*. The greatest OWV preference can be found among the English native speakers. The German participants opted for the OWV in 80% (A) and 70% (B) of the instances and thus less often than the Serbian natives, who showed a preference for the synonym in 87% (A) and 81% (B) of the time. The direct German equivalent of the English phrasal verb is *untergehen* and consists of the verb *gehen* 'to go' and *unter* 'down'. In translating the test sentence, both, the German verb-particle construction *untergehen* as well as its one-word synonym *sinken* 'to sink' are equally suitable and also commonly used. As for the Serbian natives, the most appropriate translation equivalent of the PV would be *potonuti*, whereby the base verb already carries the notion of 'sinking', i.e. *tonuti* 'to sink'. The prefix *po-* is a perfective prefix, which adds the sense of completion to the whole prefix-verb construction *potonuti*.

It can be argued that the English natives preferred *sinks* due to its usually more frequent occurrence with the noun *ship*. Since *goes down* is also suitable in the context of the test sentence (see Collins Dictionary), the aim was to trigger positive transfer on the part of

the German natives. However, only a small minority opted for the PV in question, which can be partly attributed to positive transfer. As for Serbian natives, a one-to-one translation of the individual constituents of the PV neither conveys the intended meaning of the whole PV construction nor can it be used in this particular context. Hence, possibility for any kind of transfer was unlikely.

It becomes evident that both learner groups gave some erroneous responses. Despite the fact that both, the phrasal verb *goes down* and its one-word synonym *sinks*, have rather easily translatable equivalents in German, some German participants did not consider them to be the correct choice. Rather, all erroneous answers given by the German natives involved the incorrect verb *drowns*, which can be attributed to the learners' lack of knowledge that *to drown* is used in relation to animate objects, such as people and animals, while *to sink* is used to refer to inanimate objects like ships. The Serbian learners' wrong responses involved *drowns* in 7% and *falls down* in 4% of the cases.

As far as the German natives are concerned, it can be argued that, to some degree, *goes down* was considered too German-like to be accurate, which resulted in the preference for the equally suitable one-word verb. However, it is rather unlikely that this was the case for the majority of the learners, since the Serbian and, more importantly, the English natives also displayed a marked preference for the OWV. One factor that might have affected the underuse of the phrasal verb concerns the syntax of the test sentence. The sentence-final position of the PV might have led to a somewhat oddly sounding construction. Nevertheless, none of these reasons can be said to be most decisive with regard to the PV underuse. The most promising explanation for the underuse can probably be found in the English natives' behaviour and thus their preference for the one-word verb due to its more frequent occurrence with the noun *ship*.

The literal phrasal verbs *give back*, *walk over*, *run after* and *go down* discussed above are four examples of the ten included in the study. Although all ten literal phrasal verbs have direct German equivalents in the form of verb-particle constructions, six out of them have been rejected by the learners in favour of the one-word near-synonym. The scores for each language group and test item can be found in Appendix 2. In the following, the

figurative phrasal verbs *hold on*, *turn down*, *make up* and *bring in* will be discussed in greater detail.

8.2.5 *hold on* vs. *wait*

Table VII reveals the findings with regard to the phrasal verb *hold on* and its one-word synonym *wait*. The following test sentence for the figurative phrasal verb in question was provided:

- "Hey Sue, can I ask you something…"
- "Just _____ a second, I need to finish this first."
a. believe   b. wait   c. hold on   d. let in

Table VII: Results of the PV *hold on* and its OWV *wait*

A	Group	*hold on*	*wait*	B	Group	*hold on*	*wait*
	German	**0.64**	0.36		German	**0.63**	0.37
	Serbian	0.23	**0.77**		Serbian	0.35	**0.62**
	English	**0.70**	0.30		English	**0.54**	0.46

Table VII shows that the Serbian native speakers' use of the phrasal verb *hold on* significantly deviates from the German as well as the English natives' use. Participants of the German L1 and English L1 groups displayed a fairly strong preference for the phrasal verb, while the Serbian L1 speakers avoided the PV construction in favour of the synonymous one-word verb in 77% and 62% of the time in versions A and B, respectively.

The phrase *hold on a second* is an idiomatic expression and more colloquial in comparison to the quite imperative-like sounding verb *wait*. This is most probably the reason behind the English natives' preference for the PV and not for the OWV. It is rather unlikely that the learners' L1 or, more specifically, the lack of a parallel structure in the L1 has caused the avoidance of *hold on* among the Serbian natives. The fact that the

meaning of the phrasal verb cannot be deduced from the meaning of the individual constituents has the consequence that a literal translation into the L1 makes no sense, neither in German nor in Serbian, making the construction equally complex to all English learners. Hence, there was no opportunity for the German natives to transfer the meaning of *hold on* from German to English, which signifies that the lack of a parallel structure in Serbian could not have caused the underproduction of the phrasal verb at issue. Due to this, another factor might have had an impact on the decisions for or against the PV. The German natives might have stored the phrasal verb *hold on* together with the whole idiomatic expression *hold on a second / a minute*, making it thus more easily accessible in their mental lexicon. The Serbian learners of English might not have dealt with the whole idiomatic expression and were unsure of the suitability of *hold on* in the given context, thus applying a play-it-safe strategy by opting for the non-figurative and more straightforward one-word verb *wait*. It can thus be argued that the complexity of figurative phrasal verbs per se has a strong impact on avoidance behaviour.

8.2.6 *turn down* vs. *reject*

Table VIII provides the results for the phrasal verb *turn down* and its one-word equivalent *reject*. The participants were provided with the following test sentence:

- "I think my boss will _____ that company's offer."
- "What will happen then?"
a. reject   b. play   c. turn down   d. get up

Table VIII: Results of the PV *turn down* and its OWV *reject*

A	Group	*turn down*	*reject*	B	Group	*turn down*	*reject*
	German	**0.44**	0.40		German	0.30	**0.70**
	Serbian	0.42	**0.55**		Serbian	**0.68**	0.30
	English	**0.60**	0.40		English	0.31	**0.69**

As can be seen, there is a considerable difference in phrasal verb usage between the two versions of each language group. The German and English natives show a preference for the phrasal verb in version A and for the one-word verb in version B, while the Serbian natives preferred the one-word synonym in version A and the phrasal verb in version B. The greatest difficulties with the test item can be found among the German natives of version A, who have given an erroneous answer in 16% of the instances. In order to provide a better overview of the choices made by the test takers, the division into the two versions has been abolished and the following overall results for this test item can be considered:

Table IX: Results of the PV *turn down* and its OWV *reject* grouped together

A + B	Group	*turn down*	*reject*
	German	0.37	**0.56**
	Serbian	**0.56**	0.41
	English	0.43	**0.57**

The translation equivalents of German and Serbian are likewise figurative. Hence, *turn down* can be translated into German *ablehnen* and Serbian *odbiti*, whereby the German particle *ab*, unlike the Serbian prefix *od-*, is a direct translation of 'down'. Serbian natives chose the figurative phrasal verb *turn down* over the one-word verb in 56% while the German and English natives favoured *reject* in 56% and 57% of the cases, respectively. Although previous studies have shown that figurative phrasal verbs tend to be particularly complex for learners whose L1 lacks the PV construction, it is the Serbian natives, in this case, who displayed the greatest preference for the phrasal verb. In fact, it can be seen that German natives had the greatest difficulties with this test item, despite the existence of verb-particle constructions in their native language. This is, therefore, a valuable indication that the learners' L1, or the lack of phrasal verbs in their native language, does not play the key role in the avoidance of PVs in English.

The inconsistency in answers between the two versions of each language group can be seen in Table VIII above. Since, for instance, English natives of version A clearly

favoured *turn down* over *reject*, those of version B displayed the opposite preference. This shows that both options are equally suitable in the context of the test sentence, which means that the choice for the PV or the OWV can be attributed to personal preference or style. The generally low score obtained by the German natives is primarily due to the relatively high number of erroneous responses, which can be traced back to ignorance of the L2 construction at issue and thus slightly lower L2 proficiency.

8.2.7 *made up* vs. *invented*

The figurative phrasal verb *make up* and its single-word counterpart *invent* were presented to the test takers in the context of the following test sentence:

- "I can't believe John _____ the story about his illness."
- "I know. I am so disappointed."
a. saw   b. thought up   c. made up   d. invented

Table X: Results of the PV *made up* and its OWV *invented*

A	Group	*made up*	*invented*	B	Group	*made up*	*invented*
	German	**0.92**	0.08		German	**0.74**	0.19
	Serbian	**0.97**	0.03		Serbian	**0.95**	0.05
	English	**0.90**	0.10		English	**1.00**	--

As Table X reveals, there is a clear and strong preference for the phrasal verb, displayed by all language groups. Due to its idiomatic meaning, neither German nor Serbian has a direct equivalent. The most suitable translation would be the German verb *ausdenken*, which is similar to Serbian *izmisliti* in that they consist of the base verbs *denken* or *misliti*, literally 'to think'. Together with the particle *aus* and the prefix *iz-*, they denote the desired meaning of 'to make up' in the sense of 'invent'. Therefore, it is rather unlikely that the preference for the phrasal verb was due to some kind native language transfer. A more probable assumption is that the choice in favour of *made up* is due to its frequent co-occurrence with the noun *story*, thus making *invent* rather unattractive. It can thus be

concluded that a sufficiently high target language proficiency and, again, the semantic context of the test sentence has the greatest impact on the use or non-use of phrasal verbs.

8.2.8 *bring in* vs. *introduce*

Table XI provides the results of the figurative PV *bring in* and its synonym *introduce*. The semantic context of the test dialogue was the following:

- "They plan to _____ a new law that prohibits smoking entirely."
- "That's great!"
a. sell   b. bring in   c. introduce   d. keep down

Table XI: Results of the PV *bring in* and its OWV i*ntroduce*

A	Group	*bring in*	*introduce*	B	Group	*bring in*	*introduce*
	German	0.36	**0.64**		German	**0.52**	0.48
	Serbian	0.45	**0.55**		Serbian	0.30	**0.65**
	English	0.10	**0.90**		English	0.08	**0.92**

The English participants show a strong preference for the one-word verb *introduce* in the context given above. In comparison to the English native speaker group, the two learner groups also reveal a tendency towards the one-word verb, however, their preference is not as strong. The German natives favoured the OWV in version A and the PV in version B of the study, while the Serbian natives preferred the OWV in both versions.

Thus, the greatest avoidance of the figurative phrasal verb *bring in* was among the English natives. A reason thereof might be found in the frequent occurrence and treatment of the topic on *introducing* smoking bans in the last few years. While this might have triggered the English natives' choice for *introduce*, the two learner groups were not exposed to the smoking discussion in the same way. German and Serbian learners of English considered the phrasal verb and the one-word verb equally suitable. Hence, since there is no considerable difference between the two learner groups in their phrasal verb usage, it can

be concluded that the learners' L1 does not have the greatest impact on their decision. Most probably, therefore, it can be assumed that their use or non-use of the phrasal verb is due to personal preference and style.

9 Conclusion

Considering the outcome of previous studies on avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs and the lack of consensus on what induces the same, i.e. L1-L2 difference (Dagut & Laufer 1985; Laufer & Eliasson 1993; Liao & Fukuya 2004), L1-L2 similarity (Hulstijn & Marchena 1989) as well as inherent L2 complexity (Liao & Fukuya 2004), the aim of the present study was to examine the actual impact of the learners' native language on their usage or non-usage of phrasal verbs as well as to find alternative answers to a possible PV-underuse. Furthermore, the present study aims to determine whether English native speakers, indeed, display a strong preference for phrasal verbs and, if not, whether a PV-underuse on the part of the learners is, in fact, avoidance or sheer OWV-preference. Hence, the English native speakers were included to serve as a point of reference for the two groups of German and Serbian L1 intermediate learners of English. Four research questions have been posed which seek to find answers to the overall question of whether or not avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs can be traced back to the lack of a parallel structure in the learners' L1.

The first research question asked whether Serbian learners of English avoided English phrasal verbs as a category in both, their literal and figurative meaning. In general, the study has shown that Serbian native speakers do not avoid English phrasal verbs categorically. Nevertheless, a tendency towards avoidance can be observed, surprisingly more often in the literal than in the figurative sense. Considering the responses given by the English natives, it can be observed that there is no considerable difference in the PV underuse since the natives rejected phrasal verbs even more often. Hence, if it was not for the English native speaker group, the most straightforward answer as to why Serbian natives tend to avoid phrasal verbs would probably be L1-L2 difference or L2 difficulties, as has hitherto been concluded in the previous studies. However, due to the fact that the English natives avoid phrasal verbs even more often, the Serbian natives' behaviour can

be considered native-like. This is not to say that L1-L2 difference or L2 difficulties has no impact at all, but that its role is subordinate.

The second research question was concerned with whether German learners of English preferred phrasal verbs over their one-word equivalents and whether this accounts for both, literal and figurative phrasal verbs. German L1 learners of English do not show a marked preference for phrasal verbs, however, they do tend to prefer phrasal verbs, in general, over the corresponding one-word counterpart. The division into literal and figurative shows that literal phrasal verbs are chosen equally often as the single verbs, while figurative phrasal verbs are preferred not only over the one-word equivalents but also over the literal PVs somewhat more often. Although each literal phrasal verb of the study provides the opportunity for positive transfer, six out of the ten presented PVs are avoided. The remaining four phrasal verbs are the only ones favoured by all participants, not just the German natives. Due to this, it can be concluded that positive transfer, and thus L1 influence, does not play the most crucial role in the preference of the phrasal verb.

The third research question investigated the ways in which Serbian L1 learners differed from German L1 learners of English with regard to the avoidance of the phrasal verb category. Overall, neither the German nor the Serbian L1 learners of English display a marked preference for either the phrasal verbs or the one-word equivalents. Nevertheless, German natives show a tendency towards PV preference while Serbian natives reveal a tendency towards OWV preference. Both groups preferred figurative phrasal verbs more often than literal phrasal verbs. Interestingly, it can be observed that the German and Serbian participants display a preference for the same phrasal verbs or one-word verbs in 17 out of the 20 cases, but sometimes to different extents. The items that reveal differences in usage between the German and the Serbian natives are three figurative phrasal verbs, whereby the phrasal verb is preferred in two cases by the German and in one instance by the Serbian natives. This supports the assumption that the existence or non-existence of phrasal verbs in the learners' L1 is probably not the most decisive factor influencing the (non)use of PVs in English.

The last research question addressed whether or not English native speakers preferred phrasal verbs over their one-word equivalents. Contrary to expectations, the English native speakers rejected both phrasal verbs types to the greatest extent, thus even more often than the Serbian natives. This is particularly the case for literal phrasal verbs. Therefore, the outcome of the present study is not entirely in line with Liao and Fukuya (2004)'s, since their English L1 participants display a significant preference for phrasal verbs. In the analysis and discussion of the individual test items, some motives behind the natives' one-word verb preference can be found. On the one hand, all one-word verbs are near-synonyms, which means that they do not always cover the meaning of the phrasal verb in its entirety. In some semantic contexts, therefore, the natives might have felt that the one-word verb is more suitable than the phrasal verb, or vice versa. This also includes circumstances in which the OWV and the PV are equally appropriate, but the one tends to occur more frequently than the other in the given context, resulting in its preference. On the other hand, every person has a very individual language style as well as personal preferences. This means that, although an English native might view the PV and the OWV equally appropriate, he or she will choose the option that feels most natural to him or her. Hence, it is fairly reasonable to assume that the factors influencing the English natives' decision for the (non)use of phrasal verbs also apply for the German and Serbian native speakers.

This is supported by an observation made during the evaluation process of the present study. As the tests for the German and Serbian groups were in hard copy, it was not entirely possible to prevent that participants add comments or choose multiple answers. It can be observed that, in some cases, participants opted for one answer, which they later-on crossed out in order to choose a different answer. Interestingly, this only occurred with regard to the phrasal verb and one-word verb pairs, but not with wrong answers that were later-on corrected. This shows the learners' awareness of the suitability of both, the phrasal verb and the one-word verb, in the given contexts, yet also their indecisiveness. Their final choice for or against the phrasal verb might, thus, have been influenced by their personal preference and language style, as has been argued above. However, another plausible explanation concerns the very nature of testing situations and the test format per se. Hence, as proposed by Kharitonova (2013: 63), learners often tend to vary their

responses instead of always choosing the same kind of answer, believing that they are expected to do so. This should be considered as an alternative explanation for not only the learners', but also the natives', behaviour.

The analysis and discussion of the individual test items show that the Serbian natives' behaviour is not very different from the German and English natives', despite the lack of equivalent verb-particle constructions in their L1. This can be seen as an indication that the learners' native language does not play the most crucial role with regard to the avoidance or preference of phrasal verbs. Rather, a sufficiently high target language proficiency and, along with that, the ability to distinguish slight nuances in meaning appear to be most decisive in order to overcome the inherent complexity of the L2 structure. However, this is not to say that the existence of verb-particle constructions in German do not facilitate the learning process of English phrasal verbs but that, although the learning of PVs might be more difficult to Serbian natives, once higher L2 proficiency is reached, the category should not be considered as complex any longer.

Taking into account the outcome of the previous studies, which are summarised in chapter 6 of this thesis, the findings of the present study show some differences. Firstly, it can be seen that the results of the present study are not entirely in line with those of Liao and Fukuya (2004)'s study. In contrast to their Chinese intermediate and advanced learners of English, the English learners of the present research do not avoid phrasal verbs significantly more often than the English natives. In fact, the contrary is the case since the German as well as the Serbian participants outperformed the English natives in phrasal verb usage. A possible reason for this might be found in the specific target language input. This is to say that the English learners might have been encouraged by their teachers to use phrasal verbs more often, or that they might have dealt with some examples of phrasal verbs fairly recently. As a consequence, this made the structure in question mentally more prominent to the English learners. Secondly, the Serbian and German learners show a similar behaviour as the Hebrew and Swedish learners of Laufer and Eliasson (1993)'s research, since the Hebrew L1 learners of English avoid phrasal verbs while Swedish learners prefer the same. Nevertheless, the difference between the Serbian and German participants in their phrasal verb (non-)usage was not as significant

and can, as already mentioned, be seen as a *tendency* for avoidance or preference. Moreover, although Dagut and Laufer (1985)'s, Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)'s as well as Laufer and Eliasson (1993)'s studies lacked an English native speaker group, they seem to assume that English natives would show a marked preference for phrasal verbs. Since this assumption was not supported by evidence in neither one of the aforementioned studies, it cannot be entirely excluded that the English natives would, also, prefer the one-word verb in the semantic contexts of their test sentences, as is the case in the present study. Thirdly, Laufer and Eliasson (1993) argue that their Hebrew speakers as well as the Dutch speakers of Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)' study avoid figurative phrasal verbs more often than literal phrasal verbs, which they ascribe to L1-L2 difference and not L2 complexity as such avoidance was not displayed by the Swedish natives. However, the outcome of the present study shows that both, German and Serbian natives, opted for figurative phrasal verbs more often than for literal phrasal verbs. Also, by analysing the individual test items, some avoidance of German and Serbian natives can, indeed, be ascribed to the inherent complexity of idiomatic phrasal verbs and thus learner difficulties. Again, since the English natives almost always rejected the same figurative phrasal verbs as the German and Serbian natives, more weight should be given to the alternative explanations provided above.

As far as the terminology is concerned, in some cases of underuse it seems no longer appropriate to use *avoidance* as the counterpart of *preference*. The verb *to avoid* carries not only the meaning of 'to choose not to do something' but has the additional implication of 'to put oneself in a situation where you do not have to do it' (Collins Dictionary), i.e. where you 'do not have to deal with it'. Hence, if a word, form or structure is chosen out of sheer preference, the other word, form or structure is not being *avoided*, but rather *rejected*, i.e. 'not accepted or not agreed to it' (Collins Dictionary) as in 'being considered inappropriate in a particular context'.

Future inquiry

Future studies on avoidance behaviour of English phrasal verbs should consider a variety of test formats, including one that requires active production, not only passive recognition

of the structure in question. If there is access to the necessary resources, eliciting phrasal verbs through some kind of spoken interaction should be considered, so that new insight into the motives behind the decision-making process can be gained. Also, participants with different target language proficiencies should be included so as to examine the scope of phrasal verb avoidance with increasing L2 proficiency.

Furthermore, in previous studies, the assumption was made that English native speakers would prefer phrasal verbs over one-word verbs in the majority of instances, without actually testing this hypothesis. As a consequence, the underuse of phrasal verbs on the part of L2 English learners was automatically ascribed to their native language, i.e. L1-L2 similarity or L1-L2 difference. While Liao and Fukuya (2004)'s English natives displayed a preference towards phrasal verbs, the natives of the present study did the opposite. They preferred the one-word synonym. This discrepancy points to the necessity of a study focusing on the actual degree of phrasal verb preference displayed by English natives.

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Appendix

Appendix 1

You are about to read 25 incomplete dialogues. For each dialogue, choose <u>ONE</u> *answer that you think fits best by circling* <u>one</u> *of the given letters (a-d).*

Example: - "Jane _____ her husband that she had quit her job."
             - "How did he react?"
             a. draw   b. slowed down   c. told   d. caught up

1) - "She _____ the book she had borrowed from me two years ago."
    - "Which one was it?"
    a. returned   b. lifted   c. gave back   d. looked after

2) - "I'm sorry to hear that you and Tom are no longer together."
    - "It's okay. I'll _____."
    a. get through   b. survive   c. eat   d. hold on

3) - "Tom really needs ages for this task."
    - "Yeah, I know. He is so ___."
    a. slowly   b. fast   c. slow   d. quickly

4) - "She _____ the room, sat down and ordered a drink."
    - "What happened then?"
    a. opened   b. entered   c. showed up   d. went into

5) - "You wanted to talk to me?"
    - "Yeah. I have to _____ the trip next weekend. I am so sorry."
    a. call off   b. go on   c. cancel   d. decrease

6) - "She always looks left and right before she _____ the street."
    - "This is very important."
    a. turns to   b. lifts   c. walks over   d. crosses

7) - "My neighbour's dog is very ___. He barks at everyone passing by."

- "Maybe someone should do something about it."

a. disappointed   b. angrily   c. comfortable   d. angry

8) - "I can't believe John _____ the story about his illness."

- "I know. I am so disappointed."

a. saw   b. thought up   c. made up   d. invented

9) - "Titanic is a great movie."

- "I think so too. But I always cry when the ship _____."

a. drowns   b. goes down   c. sinks   d. falls down

10) - "Hey Sue, can I ask you something…"

- "Just _____ a second, I need to finish this first."

a. believe   b. wait   c. hold on   d. let in

11) - "This little girl over there looks so ___."

- "Let's go and comfort her."

a. sad   b. relaxed   c. sadly   d. happy

12) - "So, how was your night out with Marry?"

- "Great! She even _____ the dress I had bought her."

a. talked   b. wore   c. put on   d. carried away

13) - "They plan to _____ a new law that prohibits smoking entirely."

- "That's great!"

a. sell   b. bring in   c. introduce   d. keep down

14) - "The whole evening, Jim wouldn't _____ his hat. Can you believe this?"

- "He really has no manners."

a. remove   b. hit   c. close up   d. take off

15) - "I really like your mother's cooking."

- "Yeah, her soups always taste ___."

a. well   b. terrible   c. good   d. careful

16) - "I am sorry that I didn't _____ that topic."
- "It's okay, I'm not angry."
a. hold   b. mention   c. bring up   d. put up

17) - "Yesterday, my dog _____ the cat for an hour."
- "Crazy dog."
a. ran after   b. looked up   c. chased   d. called

18) - "The music at Sean's wedding was ___."
- "I also liked it a lot."
a. warm   b. clever   c. beautifully   d. beautiful

19) - "Do you know this for a fact?"
- "Yes, I have _____ this information on the internet."
a. continued   b. found   c. joined up   d. come across

20) - "Why did he _____ the volume? It is way too loud."
- "I really have no clue."
a. hurry   b. increase   c. burn down   d. turn up

21) - "Don't you think that Carol is an amazing woman?"
- "Yes, I do. She managed to _____ four children all alone."
a. buy   b. raise   c. bring up   d. sing along

22) - "Sue, hurry. We need to _____ at the hotel."
- "Don't stress. We have plenty of time."
a. run   b. register   c. break into   d. check in

23) - "I think my boss will _____ that company's offer."
- "What will happen then?"
a. reject   b. play   c. turn down   d. tell on

24) - "I had to _____ early this morning to catch the train. I'm so tired now."

- "Why don't you take a nap?"

a. follow   b. rise   c. let down   d. get up

25) - "I'm so addicted to this new series."

- "Me too. I can't wait to _____ what's going to happen in the next episode."

a. discover   b. hang on   c. show   d. find out

Appendix 2

The following table is an illustration of the German, Serbian and English native speakers' choices for each PV and OWV (grey = figurative, white = literal). The dialogue numbers correspond with the those of the test provided in Appendix 1. This table was taken and adapted from Kharitonova (2013: 60).

Dialogue	PV	OWV
1	*gave back* English: 2/23 (9%) Germans: 18/52 (35%) Serbians: 7/68 (10%)	*returned* English: 21/23 (91%) Germans: 32/52 (62%) Serbians:58/68 (85%)
2	*get through* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 42/52 (81%) Serbians:34/68 (50%)	*survive* English: 12/23 (96%) Germans: 9/52 (17%) Serbians: 34/68 (50%)
4	*went into* English: 2/23 (9%) Germans: 5/52 (10%) Serbians: 13/68 (19%)	*entered* English: 21/23 (91%) Germans: 46/52 (88%) Serbians: 54/68 (79%)
5	*call off* English: 7/23 (30%) Germans: 8/52 (15%) Serbians: 6/68 (9%)	*cancel* English: 16/23 (70%) Germans: 44/52 (85%) Serbians: 54/68 (79%)
6	*walks over* English: 0/23 (0%) Germans: 4/52 (8%) Serbians: 7/68 (10%)	*crosses* English: 23/23 (100%) Germans: 48/52 (92%) Serbians: 61/68 (90%)
8	*made up* English: 22/23 (96%) Germans: 43/52 (83%) Serbians: 65/68 (96%)	*invented* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 7/52 (13%) Serbians: 3/68 (4%)
9	*goes down* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 7/52 (13%) Serbians: 9/68 (13%)	*sinks* English: 22/23 (96%) Germans: 39/52 (75%) Serbians: 57/68 (84%)

10	*hold on* English: 14/23 (61%) Germans: 33/52 (63%) Serbians: 20/68 (29%)	*wait* English: 9/23 (39%) Germans: 19/52 (37%) Serbians: 47/68 (69%)
12	*put on* English: 2/23 (9%) Germans: 11/52 (21%) Serbians: 19/68 (28%)	*wore* English: 21/23 (91%) Germans: 41/52 (79%) Serbians: 47/68 (10%)
13	*bring in* English: 2/23 (9%) Germans: 23/52 (44%) Serbians: 25/68 (37%)	*introduce* English: 21/23 (91%) Germans: 29/52 (56%) Serbians: 41/68 (60%)
14	*take off* English: 17/23 (74%) Germans: 49/52 (94%) Serbians: 61/68 (90%)	*remove* English: 6/23 (26%) Germans: 1/52 (2%) Serbians: 5/68 (7%)
16	*bring up* English: 14/23 (61%) Germans: 21/52 (40%) Serbians: 40/68 (59%)	*mention* English: 9/23 (39%) Germans: 29/52 (56%) Serbians: 20/68 (29%)
17	*ran after* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 17/52 (33%) Serbians: 10/68 (15%)	*chased* English: 22/23 (96%) Germans: 35/52 (67%) Serbians: 55/68 (81%)
19	*come across* English: 6/23 (26%) Germans: 21/52 (40%) Serbians:10/68 (15%)	*found* English: 17/23 (74%) Germans: 31/52 (60%) Serbians: 58/68 (85%)
20	*turn up* English: 19/23 (83%) Germans: 43/52 (83%) Serbians:49/68 (72%)	*increase* English: 4/23 (17%) Germans: 8/52 (15%) Serbians: 14/68 (21%)
21	*bring up* English: 3/23 (13%) Germans: 3/52 (8%) Serbians: 4/68 (6%)	*raise* English: 20/23 (87%) Germans: 49/52 (94%) Serbians: 61/68 (90%)
22	*check in* English: 23/23 (100%) Germans: 50/52 (96%) Serbians: 51/68 (75%)	*register* English: 0/23 (0%) Germans: 2/52 (4%) Serbians: 13/68 (19%)

23	*turn down* English: 10/23 (43%) Germans: 19/52 (37%) Serbians: 38/68 (56%)	*reject* English: 13/23 (57%) Germans: 29/52 (56%) Serbians: 28/68 (41%)
24	*get up* English: 22/23 (96%) Germans: 50/52 (96%) Serbians: 62/68 (91%)	*rise* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 1/52 (2%) Serbians: 3/68 (4%)
25	*find out* English: 22/23 (96%) Germans: 50/52 (96%) Serbians: 63/68 (92%)	*discover* English: 1/23 (4%) Germans: 1/52 (2%) Serbians: 2/68 (3%)

Abstract

This diploma thesis examines the degree of avoidance of English phrasal verbs by Serbian L1 English learners as well as avoidance and transfer of German L1 English learners. English native speakers serve as a point of reference for this purpose. The participants of the two English learner groups are high school students between the age of 16 and 18, whose level of English can be estimated to be intermediate, i.e. B1. The study reached a total number of 143 participants, i.e. 23 English native speakers, 52 German L1 and 68 Serbian L1 learners of English. A multiple-choice test of 25 dialogues was provided, whereby the verb in question was omitted so that participants had to decide on one out of four verbs: the appropriate phrasal verb (PV), its one-word equivalent (OWV), an incorrect phrasal verb or an incorrect one-word verb. The findings reveal that the German natives slightly tend to prefer PVs, while the Serbian natives tend to avoid the same. Since the difference between the Serbian and German natives in their (non-)usage of PVs is not as significant, it would be more appropriate to refer to their choices as *tendencies* for avoidance or preference. Furthermore, since the English natives reject PVs to the greatest extent, it can be concluded that the learners' L1 does not play the most decisive role in PV avoidance. It is more likely that, due to the slightly different nuances in meaning between the PV and the OWV, the one or the other was considered more suitable in the given semantic contexts. If the PV and the OWV were considered equally suitable, the choice depended on personal preference and language style, which, in addition to the semantic context, can be concluded to have the greatest impact on the preference or avoidance of phrasal verbs.

Die vorliegende Diplomarbeit untersucht, in welchem Ausmaß Schülerinnen und Schüler deutscher und serbischer Muttersprache englische *phrasal verbs*, welche vergleichbar sind mit deutschen Partikelverben, meiden. Englische Muttersprachler dienen hierfür als Bezugspunkt. Die Schülerinnen und Schüler sind zwischen 16 und 18 Jahre alt und weisen ein Englischniveau von ungefähr B1 auf. Die Studie erreichte eine Beteiligung von 143 Personen, die sich aus 23 englischsprachigen, 52 deutschsprachigen und 68 serbisch-sprachigen Teilnehmerinnen und Teilnehmern zusammensetzt. Ihnen wurde ein Multiple-Choice Test bestehend aus 25 Dialogen ausgehändigt, in welchen jeweils das

betreffende Verb ausgelassen wurde. Sie sollten eine von vier vorgegebenen Antwortmöglichkeiten auswählen: dem richtigen Partikelverb oder dessen Synonym (ein einfaches Verb), einem falschen Partikelverb oder einem falschen Verb. Die Studie zeigt, dass deutschsprachige Schülerinnen und Schüler zu den Partikelverben tendieren, während serbische Muttersprachler eher dazu geneigt sind, sich für das einfache Verb zu entscheiden. Die englischen Muttersprachler zeigen die größte Abneigung gegenüber den *phrasal verbs*. Daraus folgt, dass die Muttersprache nicht die ausschlaggebende Rolle bei der Vermeidung der Partikelverben spielt. Es ist wahrscheinlicher, dass die feinen, aber dennoch vorhandenen, Unterschiede in der Bedeutung des Partikelverbes und dessen Ein-Wort-Synonyms dazu beitragen, dass eines der Beiden als etwas geeigneter im vorgegebenen Kontext empfunden wird. Wenn das Partikelverb und dessen Ein-Wort-Synonym als gleichermaßen geeignet empfunden wird, kann die Wahl auf persönliche Präferenzen und Sprachstil zurückgeführt werden. Es kann daher die Schlussfolgerung gemacht werden, dass der semantische Kontext, die persönliche Präferenz sowie der eigene Sprachstil den größten Einfluss darauf haben, ob die Wahl auf das Partikelverb oder dessen Ein-Wort-Synonym fällt.