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AVOIDANCE

Grammatical or Semantic Causes?

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This article follows up on a study by Dagut and Laufer (1985), who found that Hebrew learners of English avoid phrasal verbs, such as 'let down', while preferring one-word verbs, such as 'disappoint', since phrasal verbs do not exist in Hebrew. A corollary derived from Dagut and Laufer's study is that Dutch learners of English would tend not to avoid English phrasal verbs, since phrasal verbs also exist in Dutch. It was hypothesized, however, that Dutch learners of English as a second language (ESL) would avoid phrasal verbs, too, not for structural, but for semantic reasons. Three tests (multiple choice, memorization, and translation) were administered to intermediate and advanced Dutch learners of English. Each test contained 15 sentences, eliciting preference for either a phrasal verb or an equivalent one-word verb. The results show that, as expected, Dutch learners of English do not avoid phrasal verbs categorically. However, they seem to avoid those idiomatic phrasal verbs that they perceive as too Dutch-like (lack of contrast between the first and second language). Furthermore, they exhibit a tendency to adopt a play-it-safe strategy, preferring one-word verbs with general, multi-purpose meanings over phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic, meanings. It is argued that this semantic play-it-safe strategy may have also played a causal role in the avoidance behavior of the Hebrew ESL learners observed by Dagut and Laufer.

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This study was designed and supervised by the first author and carried out by the second author within the framework of her master's thesis in the English Department of Leyden University.

Since the seminal work by Schachter (1974, 1979) and Kleinmann (1977, 1978) on avoidance behavior by learners of a second language (L2), researchers of second language acquisition (SLA) have realized that the empirical study of learner language has to take into account not only learners' overt L2 errors, but also their tendency to avoid L2 forms. Some avoidance studies attempt to explain avoidance behavior in terms of a negative influence from the first language (L1): L2 constructions that do not have a counterpart in the L1 system often tend to be avoided by L2 learners, especially at lower levels of L2 proficiency. For instance, Japanese learners of English as a second language (ESL) tend to avoid using English relative clauses, since their L1 does not contain English-like relative clauses (Schachter, 1974). Similarly, Kleinmann (1977) showed that Arabic ESL learners tend to avoid the passive voice and that Spanish and Portuguese ESL learners tend to avoid infinitive complements, since these constructions are absent in Arabic and Spanish/Portuguese, respectively. However, since overt L2 errors can be caused not only by L1 interference, but also by naturalness and markedness factors within the L2 (Ellis, 1986, p. 36; Hatch, 1983, p. 235), avoidance of L2 forms may similarly be "doubly determined," i.e., caused by factors other than L1 influence only. Thus, researchers, in explaining observed avoidance behavior on the basis of negative L1 influence (i.e., the absence in L1 of a construction similar to the one avoided in L2), must face the question of whether alternative explanations can effectively be ruled out.

This interpretation problem can be illustrated with a study, recently reported in this journal, conducted by Dagut and Laufer (1985). They tried to show that Hebrew learners of English avoid English phrasal verbs (such as 'let down' and 'mix up'), preferring instead one-word verbs ('disappoint' and 'confuse'), because phrasal verbs do not exist in Hebrew. The authors end their article with the following observation:

Since the phrasal verb structure is a peculiarity of the Germanic languages, it should be the case that the avoidance phenomenon noted in this paper is found generally with regard to learners of English who are native speakers of non-Germanic languages other than Hebrew. The theory advanced here would indeed receive strong support should similar studies done with speakers of other non-Germanic languages confirm our findings. (p. 78)

There is yet another corollary, not mentioned by the authors, that can be derived from their hypothesis, viz. that native speakers of Germanic languages (e.g., Dutch learners of English) would not avoid English phrasal verbs, since both the English and the Dutch language systems comprise phrasal verbs. (Examples are: 'I give up' *ik geef het op*; 'he writes it down' *hij schrijft het op*; and 'he puts her down' *hij zet haar neer*.)

This corollary seemed to us somewhat counterintuitive. We felt that Dutch ESL learners would find English phrasal verbs hard to learn and use and that they would consequently tend to avoid such verbs. For instance, of the word pairs investigated by Dagut and Laufer, we felt that learners acquire one-word verbs such as 'appear', 'disappoint', 'investigate', and 'surrender' earlier and more easily than their phrasal counterparts 'turn up', 'let down', 'go into', and 'give in'. The reasons for our feeling that Dutch ESL learners would tend to avoid phrasal verbs like Hebrew ESL learners might be that phrasal verbs often have a specific, sometimes even idiomatic, meaning (e.g., 'let down'), whereas their one-word equivalents often have a more general

meaning (e.g., 'disappoint'). Thus, we reasoned that if Dutch ESL learners would avoid phrasal verbs on the basis of perceived semantic difficulties, Hebrew ESL learners' avoidance of phrasal verbs might as well be caused by semantic considerations in addition to or even instead of structural considerations (the absence of phrasal verbs in their L1).

This reasoning motivated us to investigate whether Dutch learners of English, when given the choice of using either a phrasal verb or an equivalent one-word verb, would avoid the phrasal verb even in cases where native English speakers would prefer the phrasal verb. It was hypothesized (a) that Dutch ESL learners, although familiar with the morphosyntactic characteristics of phrasal verbs, would nonetheless avoid these verbs because many of them have a more specific meaning than their nonphrasal counterparts, and (b) that this tendency to avoid phrasal verbs would diminish with increasing English proficiency. The investigation was consequently designed so as to include subject groups differing in English proficiency (intermediate and advanced levels). It was hypothesized that intermediate learners, although passively familiar with all phrasal verbs used in the study, would show a higher tendency to avoid these verbs than advanced learners, whose preference was expected to be more native-like. Furthermore, if the results of our investigation were found to support our claims concerning semantic factors underlying avoidance behavior, there would be good reason to challenge Dagut and Laufer's structural factor interpretation of Hebrew ESL learners' avoidance behavior.

In the present process-oriented (as opposed to product-oriented) view on interlanguage (cf. Van Els, Bongaerts, Extra, Van Os, & Janssen-Van Dielen, 1984, p. 66), avoidance behavior is taken as a cognitive strategy, implying a choice (not necessarily a conscious one) on the part of the L2 learner (Faerch & Kasper, 1984). Thus, if we were to say that a learner avoids using a phrasal verb, both the phrasal and the corresponding nonphrasal verb would have to be somehow available to the learner. This means, first of all, that the learner should be at least passively familiar with both verbs, ruling out ignorance as an explanation for nonuse (Kleinmann, 1978). Second, availability is influenced by task factors external to the learner. Various types of recognition, cued recall, and free recall tasks affect the demonstration of knowledge in different ways (Puff, 1982). Similarly, there are many different instruments with which word knowledge can be elicited (Melka Teichroew, 1982). Thus, we can assume that testing materials, instructions, and administration procedures may differentially affect avoidance behavior, too, to the extent that they differ in making the items from which the test takers have to choose explicitly available. Following Dagut and Laufer's study, we elicited data with three tasks: (a) a multiple-choice task that provided Dutch ESL learners with both the phrasal and the corresponding one-word verb (along with two distractor verbs), (b) a memorization task that provided learners only with the phrasal verb, and (c) a translation task that provided learners with a Dutch equivalent (which they had to translate into English), but not with the English phrasal verb nor with the corresponding English one-word verb. (For details about these elicitation procedures, see the method section.) Thus, the multiple-choice task made both verbs available, the memorization task only made the phrasal verb available, and the translation task made neither verb available. On the basis of these task

differences, we expected that if Dutch ESL learners were to avoid English phrasal verbs at all, the strongest evidence would be produced by the memorization task (i.e., if learners were to respond with nonphrasal verbs, even though they had been given phrasal verbs to remember). The next strongest evidence would be produced by the multiple-choice task if learners were not to follow native speakers' preference for phrasal verbs. The weakest evidence would be produced by the translation test, since we could not be absolutely sure whether learners, given a nonphrasal translation, would have actually considered (and rejected) the phrasal verb.

DESIGN

The study was designed along the lines that had been followed by Dagut and Laufer (1985), with essential differences. First, the division of subjects into intermediate and advanced learners figured more systematically and prominently in the design of our study than in the design of Dagut and Laufer's study.¹ Second, different test sentences were used, as it was not possible to obtain the test sentences that had been used in Dagut and Laufer's study. Third, we found some verb pairs used in the original study less appropriate. For example, the counterparts of the phrasal verbs 'burn down' and 'shoot down' in that study did not consist of one-word verbs, but of multi-word paraphrases, such as 'be destroyed by fire' and 'destroy by a missile'. Furthermore, two phrasal verbs in the original study were of a special subtype, consisting of a verb+adverb+preposition combination ('put up with' and 'look up to'), whereas all other phrasal verbs consisted of a verb+adverb combination only (cf. Courtney, 1983). Fourth, to the extent that the students' first language had to be used in the test materials, our study obviously differed from the original study. (We will deal with some other differences, mainly involving test administration and scoring procedures, later in this section.)

The study was carried out in two stages. In the first stage, we identified 15 cases of native-speaker preference for a phrasal verb over a semantically equivalent one-word verb in the context of a sentence. For instance, native speakers preferred the phrasal verb 'let down' over the one-word verb 'disappoint' in the sentence 'We didn't believe that John could ever ____ his friends'. The second stage was to find out whether and to what extent these phrasal verbs would also be preferred by Dutch intermediate and advanced learners of English. This stage consisted of the administration of three tests (multiple-choice test, translation test, and memorization test) to three independent groups of intermediate learners and three independent groups of advanced learners.

Materials

Fifteen pairs of phrasal and one-word verbs were selected (see Appendix 1). For these verb pairs, 15 sentences were constructed (see Appendix 2), such that in the opinion of native speakers, the phrasal verb was to be preferred in casual, colloquial style, although the one-word verb was also considered correct. This set of 15 sentences was used in all three tests.

Multiple choice. This test consisted of 15 sentences, each with a blank to be filled in with one of four verbs presented in parentheses: the phrasal verb, the equivalent one-word verb, and two distractor verbs.² Subjects were given 15 minutes to complete this test. In contrast to a normal multiple-choice test, the present test contained not one but two correct answers, one of which was preferred by natives. Thus, special attention had to be given to the instructions. The following two sentences appeared in the instructions (reprinted here in English translation): "Choose for each sentence the verb that in your opinion best fits the context and fill in that verb. Assume that these sentences have been written in normal, colloquial English."

Memorization. At the beginning of a regular English lesson, students received the same 15 sentences as in the multiple-choice test, written out in full with the phrasal verb. Five distractor sentences were added, containing one-word verbs. Subjects were asked to memorize these sentences in 10 minutes. They were told that they would be tested at the end of the lesson to check how much they had remembered. After nearly 1 hour, they were given the same (English) sentences, only this time with the verbs left out. Students were asked to supply the English form. The testing part also took 10 minutes. No Dutch equivalents were given in this test, contrary to the use of Hebrew cues in the original study. We feared that the use of L1 cues might interfere with the very task of memorization, possibly obscuring a memory effect through a potential translation effect. Next to the sentence list, on the right-hand side of the page, two response columns were printed. The headings read as follows: (left column) "I know the original word(s)" and (right column) "I can't remember the original verb but it could be." Subjects were instructed to fill in the exact original word(s) that they remembered in the left-hand column. If they could not remember the original word(s), they were to fill in another appropriate verb in the right-hand column. With this procedure, we tried to isolate the cases in which learners were sure they had remembered the original word from those in which they were not sure. We reasoned that in cases of reported uncertainty, a low number of phrasal and a high number of nonphrasal responses could be interpreted as evidence of avoidance behavior. In cases of reported certainty, nonphrasal responses could be interpreted as evidence of avoidance; however, the number of phrasal responses, whether low or high, could not be interpreted as evidence of either avoidance or nonavoidance behavior: learners simply did what they were instructed to do, namely, reproduce exactly the words they had studied.

Thus, the memorization test in this study differed from that in Dagut and Laufer's original study in two ways: (a) subjects were not given L1 cues, and (b) they had to indicate how certain they were of their responses by locating them in either column.

Translation. This test included the same 15 sentences as in the multiple-choice test, with the verb left out. At the end of each sentence the Dutch equivalent of the missing verb was given (see Appendix 1 and 2), which students were required to translate into English. For this test, subjects were also given 15 minutes. The instructions were similar to those in the multiple-choice test, emphasizing the normal colloquial style of the sentences.

METHOD

The tests were administered to independent groups of intermediate learners and independent groups of advanced learners, i.e., six groups in all. In the original study, only the translation test had been administered to learners of different proficiency levels. We decided to include the level of proficiency more systematically in our follow-up study.

Subjects

The intermediate learners in this study were about 17-years-old and had received instruction in English for a period of 5 to 6 years. They were students from three different secondary schools (so-called atheneum schools) at the end of their fifth year or in their sixth year. The advanced learners were first-year students of English from four Dutch universities and one teacher-training college. The multiple-choice test was administered to 50 intermediate and 25 advanced learners, the translation test to 25 learners of each level, and the memorization test to 50 learners of each level.

A consultation of English teachers and textbooks confirmed that all verbs used in this study had been taught to the intermediate learners. Furthermore, those subjects taking the multiple-choice test were asked to indicate which words they did not know. No subject marked as unknown any of the 15 phrasal or any of the 15 one-word verbs under investigation. We reasoned, therefore, that ignorance (rather than avoidance) as an alternative explanation for nonuse of phrasal verbs could be ruled out.

RESULTS

The response frequencies in the three tests, summed over all 15 items, are given in Tables 1, 2, and 3, respectively. The performance of intermediate and advanced learners showed the following similarities and differences.

Multiple-Choice Test

The intermediate ESL learners responded significantly differently from the English native speakers, $\chi^2=42.4$, $df=1$, $p<.01$, showing much less preference for phrasal verbs. The advanced ESL learners, however, showed a clear preference for phrasal verbs not significantly different from native preference, $\chi^2=.49$, $df=1$, ns .³

Memorization Test

The intermediate learners responded less often with a phrasal verb ($M=4.9$, $SD=3.0$) than the advanced learners ($M=6.8$, $SD=3.0$), when writing their responses in the "Certain" column. This difference was significant ($t=3.294$, $df=98$, $p<.005$). Intermediate learners also gave more erroneous responses than advanced learners, showing a lower general proficiency level: a 2×2 chi-square test on correct/wrong responses against intermediate/advanced proficiency level yielded, $\chi^2=11.1$, $df=1$, $p<.01$.

Table 1. Response frequencies on the 15 pairs of phrasal and one-word verbs: Multiple-choice test

	Phrasal	One-Word	Wrong Response	No Response
Natives (N=11)	130	30	—	5
Intermediate (N=50)	390	348	9	3
Advanced (N=25)	312	63	0	0

Table 2. Response frequencies on the 15 pairs of phrasal and one-word verbs: Memorization test

	Correct Response				Wrong Response				No Response
	Phrasal		One-word		Phrasal		Nonphrasal		
	Certain	Uncertain	Certain	Uncertain	Certain	Uncertain	Certain	Uncertain	
Intermediate (N=50)	250	87	80	88	27	43	18	67	90
Advanced (N=50)	340	82	88	83	28	21	14	52	42

However, an analysis of correct responses, which had been written in the “Uncertain” column, showed that both groups provided as many one-word verbs as phrasal originals ($\chi^2=0$, in both cases). A 2×2 analysis of all phrasal/nonphrasal (including one-word) responses against intermediate/advanced proficiency level did not yield a significant result either, $\chi^2=3.46$, $df=1$, *ns*.

Translation Test

The intermediate learners responded less often with the target phrasal verb ($M=4.2$ out of 15, $SD=2.4$) than the advanced learners ($M=6.2$, $SD=1.8$). This difference was significant ($t=3.356$, $df=48$, $p<.005$). Intermediate learners also gave more erroneous responses than advanced learners, showing a lower general proficiency level: a 2×2 chi-square test on correct/wrong responses against intermediate/advanced proficiency level yielded, $\chi^2=26.69$, $df=1$, $p<.01$. Intermediate learners responded with a phrasal verb significantly less often than with a one-word or other nonphrasal verb, $\chi^2=14.88$, $df=1$, $p<.01$. The advanced group, however, responded with phrasal verbs as often as with nonphrasal verbs, $\chi^2=.14$, $df=1$, *ns*. A 2×2 chi-square test on

Table 3. Response frequencies on the 15 pairs of phrasal and one-word verbs: Translation test

	Correct Response		Wrong Response		No Response
	Phrasal	One-word	Phrasal	Nonphrasal	
Intermediate (N=25)	106	146	36	70	17
Advanced (N=25)	157	158	21	28	11

phrasal/nonphrasal (including one-word) responses against intermediate/advanced proficiency level yielded, $\chi^2=6.11$, $df=1$, $p<.05$.

ITEM ANALYSIS

These results pertain to mean scores across all 15 verb-pairs and their corresponding sentences. Naturally, there were some inter-item differences. The aim of the item analysis was to assess which phrasal verbs had received relatively low scores (avoidance) and which one-word verbs had received relatively high scores. Note that a low score for the phrasal verb of a target verb pair does not necessarily imply a high score for the one-word counterpart (and the reverse is not implied either), especially in the translation and memorization tasks, since there was a substantial number of incorrect responses and nonresponses in these tasks.

Group Commonalities

Low phrasal verb scores and corresponding high one-word verb scores for both groups were obtained on items 4, 8, 9, and 10 (memorization and translation) and on items 7 and 9 (multiple-choice).

The phrasal verbs ‘give up’ (item 4), ‘break out’ (8), ‘go off’ (9), and ‘bring up’ (10) are the only ones among the 15 selected for this study that have a literal counterpart in Dutch with the same meaning: *opgeven*, *uitbreken*, *afgaan*, and *opbrengen*, respectively. Apparently, the verbs ‘give up’, ‘break out’, ‘go off’, and ‘bring up’ seemed too Dutch-like to subjects and were therefore avoided in (re)production tasks (memorization and translation), while being recognized as correct in the receptive task (multiple-choice). This response behavior can be interpreted as avoidance due to lack of L1–L2 contrast. As Kellerman (1977) and Jordens and Kellerman (1981) observed, such avoidance behavior may occur especially when the L1 word is perceived as having a restricted, often idiomatic meaning. Note that with ‘make up’ (item 13), neither intermediate nor advanced learners had difficulties, as the meaning of Dutch *opmaken* was not related in any way to ‘make up’ and ‘invent’. Thus, ‘make up’ could not have been perceived as too Dutch-like.

Group Differences

Intermediate learners performed substantially more poorly than advanced learners on all three tasks, as has been reported. This difference was mainly due to their poorer performance on the following items: (translation: phrasal and one-word) 1, 11, and 15; (multiple-choice: phrasal and one-word) 1, 2, 5, 7, 8, 9, 11, 14, and 15; and (memorization: phrasal only) 1, 2, 4, 5, and 15. Note that "poor" performance means relatively low phrasal scores and relatively high one-word scores and that "relatively" means in relation to other items in the same task and for the same learners' group.

According to Jordens and Kellerman (1981), learners seem hesitant to apply a transfer strategy with idiomatic words while using words with a (perceived) general meaning much more easily. We believe that preference for general-meaning verbs (nonphrasal verbs in this study) has played a role in the response pattern of our subjects, too. The verbs 'appear' (1), 'improve' (2), 'disappoint' (3), 'reach' (5), 'continue' (7), 'wait' (11), 'surrender' (14), and 'refuse' (15) do indeed have a more general meaning than their phrasal counterparts. The intermediate learners, then, although passively familiar with the phrasal verbs, may have adopted a play-it-safe strategy more often than the advanced learners by choosing the one-word verb with its more general meaning more frequently than the phrasal verb.

Thus, the observed inter-item response differences may be interpreted in terms of two strategies:

1. An avoidance of those phrasal verbs that were perceived as idiomatic and too Dutch-like and therefore as nontransferable. This tendency was strongest among the intermediate learners, but was also observable among advanced learners.
2. A tendency to opt for multi-purpose one-word verbs with general meanings rather than for special-purpose phrasal verbs with specific, or even idiomatic, meanings. This tendency was characteristic for the group of less proficient intermediate learners only.

DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

As stated in the introduction, the aim of this study was to test the prediction that Dutch ESL learners tend to avoid English phrasal verbs and that intermediate learners do so more often than advanced learners. We also argued that the evidence for avoidance behavior potentially produced by the three elicitation procedures would be strongest for the memorization task, less strong for the multiple-choice task, and least strong for the translation task. In the following discussion, we will therefore take task factors explicitly into account.

In the introduction, it was argued that if Dutch ESL learners were to avoid phrasal verbs at all, the strongest evidence would be produced by the memorization test. This task had been designed with a bias in favor of phrasal verb responses. If learners still responded with the one-word counterparts, this had to be interpreted as strong evidence of phrasal verb avoidance. The results show that this was not the case. Both intermediate and advanced learners remembered the original phrasal verbs correctly in most cases. Even when subjects were uncertain, their correct responses did not

contain more one-word verbs than phrasal verbs. Intermediate learners gave significantly fewer correct phrasal responses than advanced learners. In the multiple-choice task, advanced learners approached native phrasal preference very closely. Intermediate learners gave significantly fewer phrasal responses. In the translation task, we did not expect the proportion of correct phrasal responses to be as high as in the multiple-choice task, due to the fact that the latter task made both verb-pair members explicitly available, whereas the former task made neither member available. Yet, advanced learners produced as many phrasal as nonphrasal verb responses. Intermediate learners produced significantly fewer phrasal verb responses, although the number was still substantial.

Summarizing the performance of both learner groups on these three tasks on all 15 verb pairs together, we conclude that the advanced learners did not avoid phrasal verbs as a form class and that the intermediate learners, although showing a tendency to avoid phrasal verbs to some extent, did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically either.

Four phrasal verbs received very low scores in the translation and memorization tasks from both intermediate and advanced learners. These verbs have Dutch equivalents with an identical, specific meaning. In contrast to the finding mentioned earlier, this can be interpreted as a manifestation of avoidance. The Dutch learners in the present study may have avoided these verbs, perceiving them as being too idiomatic, too Dutch-like, and therefore nontransferable. Thus, similarity in form combined with similarity in (idiomatic) meaning between an L1 and an L2 item may lead learners to avoid using the L2 item.

The intermediate learners, in comparison to the advanced learners, not only gave more erroneous responses in the translation and memorization tasks—thereby demonstrating their lower proficiency—but also responded more often with a semantically broader one-word verb. This finding indicates that with moderate proficiency, learners feel tempted to adopt a play-it-safe strategy by using multi-purpose one-word verbs with general meanings, rather than restricted-purpose phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic, meanings. Thus, intermediate learners could be said to have avoided some of the target phrasal verbs, and this avoidance can be explained in terms of these phrasal verbs being semantically more specific than their one-word counterparts.

These findings suggest that avoidance or play-it-safe behavior may manifest itself on at least three occasions. First, learners may hesitate to use an L2 construction when they perceive it as markedly different from their L1 system (Kleinmann, 1977, 1978; Schachter, 1974, 1979). Second, learners may hesitate to use an L2 form for fear of making an interference error, perceiving this form as being too similar to an L1 counterpart (Jordens & Kellerman, 1981; Kellerman, 1977). Third, learners may hesitate to use an L2 form having specific (as opposed to general) semantic features. This type of avoidance behavior is caused by a comparison of forms within the L2 system. Hence, avoidance may occur in cases of comparisons between, as well as within, languages.

This brings us to a comparison of our study with the study by Dagut and Laufer.

An exact comparison between the two studies, in the form of statistical analyses of the responses of Dutch and Hebrew learners of English, was not possible. First, for reasons explained before, we had decided to use word pairs, test sentences, and testing procedures that were partly different from those used by Dagut and Laufer. Second, subjects in the two studies may have been at different proficiency levels. The Dutch advanced learners may have had a higher proficiency level than the Hebrew majors, and the Dutch intermediate learners may have had a higher level than the Hebrew nonmajors. Yet a global comparison of the findings of the two studies suggests that the Hebrew subjects provided fewer phrasal-verb responses in the translation and memorization tests than the Dutch subjects (cf. Dagut & Laufer, 1985, Table 1). This difference might indicate that Hebrew learners do tend to avoid phrasal verbs as a form class, and Dutch learners do not.

However, as has been argued, our study provides some evidence that the Dutch subjects avoided a number of phrasal verbs on the basis of semantic considerations. In principle, such an explanation would be valid for any group of learners, regardless of mother tongue, and not excluding Hebrew learners of English. We believe that such semantic considerations may have played a role in the avoidance behavior of Dagut and Laufer's subjects, too. Of the 15 phrasal verbs used by Dagut and Laufer, 9 are classified by the authors as figurative ('turn up', 'let down', 'put up with', 'mix up', 'look up to', 'give in', 'show off', 'go into'), three as completive, in which the particle describes the result of an action ('cut off', 'burn down', 'shoot down'), and four as literal ('go out', 'take away', 'come in', 'get up'). Avoidance of phrasal verbs was highest for the figurative and lowest for the literal phrasal verbs. We believe this suggests that for phrasal verbs with specific (as opposed to general) meanings, avoidance need not necessarily be explained in terms of a structural contrast between English (presence of phrasal verbs) and Hebrew (absence of phrasal verbs), but rather can be explained better in terms of semantic considerations.

For Dutch learners of English, English phrasal verbs as a morphological verb class do not constitute a learning problem. Yet, many individual phrasal verbs may be avoided for reasons of perceived semantic difficulty.

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NOTES

1. Unfortunately, Dagut and Laufer did not have the test materials used in the original study at their disposal when we designed our investigation. They regretted not being able to send us these materials. However, after we had completed our investigation, Dagut and Laufer discovered the materials used in the original study and forwarded them to us for comparison.

2. Actually, our tests contained 21 sentences with which we aimed to measure phrasal-verb preferences. However, for various reasons, 6 sentences had to be omitted from the analyses, 1 sentence, because only a minority of the native speakers preferred the phrasal verb, and 5 other sentences because after a thorough scrutiny they turned out to contain no true examples of phrasal verbs.

3. On all chi-square tests reported here, Yates' correction for discontinuity was applied.

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APPENDIX 1

THE 15 PAIRS OF PHRASAL AND ONE-WORD VERBS
USED IN THE STUDY WITH DUTCH ESL LEARNERS

Phrasal Verb ^a	One-Word Verb ^a	Dutch Equivalent
1 turn up (show up)	appear	<i>op komen dagen</i>
2 brush up	improve	<i>ophalen</i>
3 let down	disappoint	<i>laten zitten</i>
4 give up	stop (quit)	<i>ermee uitscheiden</i>
5 get through to	reach (contact)	<i>te pakken krijgen</i>
6 get up	rise	<i>uit mijn nest komen</i>
7 go on	continue	<i>doorgaan met</i>
8 break out	start (begin)	<i>beginnen</i>
9 go off	explode (detonate)	<i>ontploffen</i>
10 bring up	raise (educate)	<i>opvoeden</i>
11 hang on (hold on)	wait	<i>een momentje hebben</i>
12 put out	extinguish	<i>doven</i>
13 make up (think up)	invent	<i>uit zijn duim zuigen</i>
14 give in (give up)	surrender	<i>zich gewonnen geven</i>
15 turn down	refuse (reject)	<i>afslaan</i>

^aAlternative responses which were coded as correct in Translation and Memorization are entered in parentheses.

APPENDIX 2

TEST SENTENCES

After each sentence the following information is added in parentheses: in order of their appearance, the four alternative verbs presented in the multiple-choice test; following the slash, the Dutch equivalent presented in the translation test (in infinitival form). The percentage of native speaker preference for the phrasal verb is inserted after its occurrence. There were 11 informants (adult, native speakers of British English, all of whom held a university degree), thus 73% means 8 out of 11.

1. As we all thought that my uncle had left the country we were surprised to see him ____ at my mother's birthday party.
(claim, appear, look up, turn up [100%] / *op komen dagen*)
2. After having failed to have a decent conversation with a German couple I had met in the pub, I decided that it was time to ____ my German.
(calm down, improve, abolish, brush up [82%] / *ophalen*)
3. We were really astonished when John did not keep his promise: we hadn't thought that he would ever ____ his friends.
(let down [82%], solve, disappoint, carry on / *laten zitten*)
4. When you are a chain-smoker it is incredibly difficult to ____ smoking.
(fall down, stop, give up [73%], elect / *ermee uitscheiden*)
5. I spent one hour trying to ring my mother from a phone booth but didn't manage to ____ her.
(earn, get through to [73%], reach, mix up / *te pakken krijgen*)
6. When the weather is nice I love to ____ early.
(release, look after, get up [100%], rise / *uit mijn nest komen*)
7. "Don't you think it's a good idea to have a break now and to ____ playing after lunch?" my hungry bridge-partner asked me.
(cheer up, continue, flush, go on [73%] / *doorgaan met*)
8. When the war was just about to ____, in 1940, my father must have been about 15-years-old.
(break out [55%], look down on, start, satisfy / *beginnen*)
9. Luckily there would be no one in the embassy-building when the bomb was to ____.
(go off [64%], explode, tune in, reply / *ontploffen*)
10. According to my grandfather it is very difficult, nowadays, to ____ one's children well.
(listen, raise, bring up [73%], come across / *opvoeden*)
11. "Hello Suzy? How nice of you to call me! But someone has just rung the doorbell: could you ____ a second?"
(capture, hang on [82%], wait, fall down / *een momentje hebben*)
12. She did it again! She always forgets to ____ the fire when she leaves!
(put out [91%], foresee, extinguish, break into / *doven*)

13. When Jack was late for his date, he knew his girlfriend would be furious, so he had to ____ a story about a traffic-jam.
(make up [64%], follow, lie down, invent / *uit zijn duim zuigen*)
14. The fight between Robert and Paul stopped when Paul twisted his ankle and had to ____.
(realize, surrender, look up to, give in [73%] / *zich gewonnen geven*)
15. When my aunt had just opened the shop, she was forced to ____ several interesting business-offers, because she was simply short of time.
(offend, turn down [100%], cheer up, refuse / *afslaan*)