Jolien Vanden Hautte

*Avoidance of Phrasal Verbs in Learner English*

*A Study of Flemish and Italian Students of English*

Masterproef voorgelegd tot het behalen van de graad van
Master in de taal- en letterkunde
Engels-Italiaans

2016-2017

**Promotor**
Prof. dr. Crocco
Vakgroep Taalkunde

**Copromotor**
Dr. De Cuypere
Vakgroep Taalkunde
Acknowledgements

I would like to thank my supervisors, Prof. Crocco and Dr. De Cuypere, for guiding me through the process of researching and writing this dissertation. Advice and assistance given by them has been a great help. I would also like to thank the following groups of people for their assistance with the collection of my data: my British friends, the students of SSLMIT Forlì, the students of interpretation and translation of the universities of Ghent, Brussels, Antwerp and Leuven, and anyone who has shared my survey among friends and family. I am very grateful that these people took the time and effort to fill in or distribute my survey. Furthermore, I would like to thank my family and friends for the support during this process. I would like to offer my special thanks to my British friends (and in particular Callum) who have helped me set up my experiment, have answered questions about the statistics and have suggested some corrections to this text. This accomplishment would not have been possible without all these people.
# Table of Contents

## Introduction

1. **Theoretical perspective**
   - Preliminary notions .................................................................................................. 3
   - Second Language Acquisition (SLA) .......................................................................... 3
   - Overt/covert crosslinguistic influence and language transfer .................................... 3
   - Contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA) ......................................................... 5
   - Avoidance, ignorance and underproduction ................................................................ 6
   - U-shaped behaviour .................................................................................................. 6

2. **Methodology**

### 1. Avoidance of phrasal verbs: literature review ....................................................... 7
   - Dagut and Lafer (1985) ............................................................................................. 7
   - Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) .................................................................................. 8
   - Lafer and Eliasson (1993) ......................................................................................... 9
   - Sjöholm (1995) .......................................................................................................... 10
   - Liao and Fukuya (2004) ........................................................................................... 10
   - Waibel (2007) .......................................................................................................... 11
   - Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012) ............................................................................... 12
   - Kharitonova (2013) .................................................................................................... 13
   - Barekat and Baniasady (2014) .................................................................................. 13

### 1.2.10 Summary ........................................................................................................ 14

### 1.3 Phrasal verbs ......................................................................................................... 17
   - General framework: phrasal verbs and language families ........................................... 17
   - English phrasal verbs .................................................................................................. 19
   - Italian construction corresponding to English phrasal verbs ........................................ 29
   - Dutch construction corresponding to English phrasal verbs ......................................... 37
   - Conclusion ................................................................................................................ 41

### 1.4 English as a foreign language in Italy and Flanders .............................................. 41

### 1.5 Research question and hypothesis ....................................................................... 42

2. **Methodology** .......................................................................................................... 44
   - Participants ................................................................................................................ 44
   - Tasks and procedure .................................................................................................. 45
   - Data analysis .............................................................................................................. 48
   - Results ........................................................................................................................ 49
     - Turn up vs. appear/arrive ....................................................................................... 49
     - Brush up vs. improve ........................................................................................... 50
     - Let down vs. disappoint/betray ............................................................................. 52
     - Give up vs. stop/quit ............................................................................................. 53
     - Get through to vs. reach ........................................................................................ 54
     - Get up vs. rise ........................................................................................................ 55
2.4.7 Go on vs. continue/resume .......................................................... 56
2.4.8 Break out vs. start ................................................................. 57
2.4.9 Go off vs. explode ............................................................... 58
2.4.10 Bring up vs. raise ........................................................... 59
2.4.11 Hang on/hold on vs. wait ..................................................... 60
2.4.12 Put out vs. extinguish ......................................................... 61
2.4.13 Make up vs. invent ............................................................ 62
2.4.14 Give in/give up vs. surrender ............................................... 63
2.4.15 Turn down vs. refuse .......................................................... 64

2.5 Discussion ................................................................................. 65

Conclusion 69

Bibliography 71

Word count: 24 229
**Introduction**

A phrasal verb is a construction that consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle. Together the verb and the particle function as a lexical and syntactical unit (Liao & Fukuya 2004: 196; Darwin & Gray 1999). An example of an English phrasal verb would be ‘to let down’. A correct use of phrasal verbs, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, is very important for learners of English as it makes them seem more native-like (Waibel 2007). In addition, Barekat and Baniasady (2014)’s findings suggest that there is a close relationship between phrasal verb avoidance and writing proficiency: phrasal verb avoidance negatively affected the writing performance of their participants. I therefore think that it is important to study the avoidance of phrasal verbs so that learners of English can be helped to overcome their difficulties with this structure, which might help them sound more native-like and might improve their writing proficiency.

I will start this dissertation with the explanation of some theoretical notions and after that I will review the literature on phrasal verb avoidance. This literature review will illustrate that it is not yet entirely clear what exactly induces avoidance behaviour (L1-L2 difference, L1-L2 similarity or inherent L2 complexity). It will also show that it is widely claimed that the phrasal verb structure is a peculiarity of the Germanic languages. Because of this last claim, it is assumed that learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with a different native language, due to the smaller distance between L1 and L2 for learners with a Germanic mother tongue.

The research question I want to solve with this dissertation is linked to this assumption: I want to find out whether Flemish and Italian students differ in their phrasal verb usage. To establish this, I will first compare the English phrasal verbs to the equivalent structures in Dutch and Italian. From this comparison it will become clear that Italian in fact does have phrasal verbs and that these Italian phrasal verbs are even closer to the English phrasal verbs than the Dutch equivalents are. This is contrary to the widely held view that phrasal verbs only exist in Germanic languages.

I also conducted an experiment to establish whether Flemish and Italian students differ in their usage of phrasal verbs. For this experiment, I selected the multiple-choice test and the verb pairs used by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989). This study is therefore partly a replication study. The participants that contributed
to this experiment were 39 native speakers of British English as well as 36 Flemish and 44 Italian students of English translation and interpretation (master’s degree). The results indicated that there is no significant difference in the phrasal verb usage of the Flemish and the Italian learners of English. The aforementioned assumption, i.e. that learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with another mother tongue, is therefore incorrect. This is not surprising since the comparison between the equivalent constructions in English, Dutch and Italian already showed that the underlying claim (that only Germanic languages have phrasal verbs) is incorrect, too. I therefore argue that this claim should be updated or even discarded.
1 Theoretical perspective

1.1 Preliminary notions

1.1.1 Second Language Acquisition (SLA)

The aim of this master dissertation is to examine the acquisition, and more specifically the potential avoidance, of English phrasal verbs during the second language acquisition of Flemish and Italian learners of English. I will use the term ‘second language acquisition’ to refer to how learners learn an additional language after they have acquired their mother tongue (Sjöholm 1995: 1; Kharitonova 2013). The mother tongue will furthermore be abbreviated in this dissertation as ‘L1’ or ‘NL’ (native language); the additional language, or second or target language, as ‘L2’ or ‘TL’.

1.1.2 Overt/covert crosslinguistic influence and language transfer

The knowledge of other, previously acquired languages has an effect on the process of second language acquisition. In this respect, some terms and concepts merit further explanation, starting with the distinction between overt and covert crosslinguistic influence. Overt crosslinguistic influence is a more or less ‘literal’ transference of recognizable L1 features or rules to the L2 system (Sjöholm 1995: 224). Covert crosslinguistic influence, on the other hand, is a more indirect kind (Sjöholm 1995: 224). Positive and negative transfer are examples of overt crosslinguistic influence whereas examples of covert crosslinguistic influence are L1-based avoidance and under-use of certain L2 structures that do not occur in L1 (Sjöholm 1995: 224).

Let us first have a look at overt crosslinguistic influence and more specifically at language transfer. Kharitonova (2013) mentions a definition of transfer by Odlin (1989):
“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” (Odlin 1989: 27 as cited in Kharitonova 2013: 14).

Kharitonova, however, further on states that the definitions on language transfer are still quite vague “as we are still not able to specify what exactly can be transferred from the native language into the target language” (Kharitonova 2013: 15). What does seem clear, however, is that both positive transfer (or simply ‘transfer’) and negative transfer (or ‘interference’) are possible (Waibel 2007: 122). In this dissertation ‘transfer’ will be used both in the sense of negative influence and positive influence.

Waibel (2007: 128) claims that it is difficult to decide whether a correct target language production feature is due to positive transfer or simply to the fact that this target language feature was mastered during the second language acquisition without any native language transfer. Negative transfer, on the other hand, should be easier to determine. It should therefore be more difficult to prove that potential avoidance of phrasal verbs by Flemish and Italian students of English is due to positive transfer than to prove that it is due to negative transfer.

In addition, it has been claimed that transfer is related to language distance and that both positive and negative transfers are more frequent between languages that are more closely related (Kharitonova 2013: 26). This suggests that we might find more evidence of transfer with the Flemish students than with the Italian students because Dutch and English are both Germanic languages whereas Italian is a Romance language.

However, other languages these students know, apart from their mother tongue, might also have an influence on their second language acquisition process of phrasal verbs. Sjöholm (1995: 85) explains that this phenomenon has been called, among other things, non-native language influence (Ln-influence). Non-native language influence means that learners may become sensitive to the fact that the distance between two target languages (L2 and L3) is smaller than the distance between the native (L1) and the target languages (L2 or L3). Because of this, the learner may under certain conditions transfer more readily between the target languages (L2 and L3) than between the native and the target language (Sjöholm 1995: 85). Unfortunately, however, I could not completely control for transfer from other languages known by the students selected for the experimental study due to practical reasons. Further research might look into this.

Examples of covert crosslinguistic influence are L1-based avoidance and under-use of certain L2 structures not occurring in L1, as mentioned by Sjöholm (1995: 224). These phenomena will be dealt with further on (see section 1.1.4).

To conclude, the term ‘crosslinguistic influence’ can be used as a more appropriate, theory-neutral cover term (cf. Sjöholm 1995). I will nevertheless use terms such as ‘transfer’, ‘interference’ and ‘avoidance’
more than the general and neutral term ‘crosslinguistic influence’ because these more specific terms are very useful to describe phenomena of SLA.

1.1.3 Contrastive analysis (CA) and error analysis (EA)

A theory linked to the phenomenon of transfer is contrastive analysis (CA). This is the systematic comparison of the learner’s native language and target language in order to identify differences and similarities (Sjöholm 1995: 27). Within this framework, it is supposed that structural divergence between two languages (NL and TL) will provoke learner difficulties (Waibel 2007: 55, footnote 71). It has thus been claimed that elements that are similar to the speaker’s native language will be easier to learn while elements that are different will be harder to learn (Sjöholm 1995; Kharitonova 2013: 11).

Two versions of CA can be distinguished: CA a priori (or the ‘predictive’ or ‘strong’ version) and CA a posteriori (the ‘explanatory’ or ‘weak’ version) (Schachter 1974; Li 1996). CA a priori departs from a point by point analysis of the phonological, morphological, syntactic or other subsystems of two languages (NL and TL) to predict errors and difficulties (Schachter 1974). This version of CA, however, has faced some criticism because research has shown that learning difficulties do not always derive from cross-linguistic differences and that learning difficulties can thus not always be predicted by CA a priori.

Research has shown, for example, that many errors are common for second language learners with different linguistic backgrounds. Therefore, some errors may arise from the way in which a student is taught rather than from language transfer (Kharitonova 2013: 11).

CA a posteriori, on the other hand, departs from an error analysis (EA), which is the analysis of the errors made by learners of a certain language (L2), to understand where the difficulties are situated. The subsequent contrastive analysis can help explain why those errors occur. CA a posteriori thus focuses more on what the learner actually does rather than on what the learner will do.

In her article Schachter (1974) argues for the a priori approach and against the a posteriori approach because she has found evidence of avoidance behaviour, which can be predicted by CA apriori but which CA a posteriori cannot handle: if a student does not produce a certain construction because he/she finds it too difficult, CA a posteriori –which focuses on production- cannot explain why. Schachter (1974), however, concludes her article by stating that a combination of different approaches (CA a priori predictions, error analysis and comprehension testing) should be used to gain some “reasonably unassailable information on what the second language learning process is all about” (Schachter 1974: 213).
1.1.4 Avoidance, ignorance and underproduction

The phenomenon of avoidance behaviour in SLA was first brought to light by Schachter (1974) (cf. Liao & Fukuya 2004: 194). Schachter (1974) claimed that investigators could be led to assume that the Chinese and Japanese learners she used as participants did not have any difficulty with producing relative clauses in English because they had made only a small amount of errors (i.e. 14). However, she argues that this would be an erroneous conclusion as these students also produced relative clauses in English much less than the Persian and the Arabian learners. She concluded that the Chinese and Japanese learners avoided relative clauses in English and that one should not only examine L2 forms that are actually produced but also the L2 forms that seem to have been avoided consistently (Schachter 1974; cf. Liao & Fukuya 2004: 194).

However, it has been argued that one should distinguish between avoidance and ignorance (Laufer & Eliasson 1993: 36; Liao & Fukuya 2004: 194; Kharitonova 2013: 52; Sjöholm 1995: 118). One can only speak of avoidance, rather than ignorance, when the learners are at least passively familiar with the construction that is being studied (Hulstijn & Marchena 1989: 243). Liao and Fukuya (2004: 194) therefore claim that Schachter (1974)’s study was limited because it cannot be ruled out that ignorance was at the basis of the non-use, considering that there is no proof that the learners actually had the ability to use relative clauses.

Li (1996), on the other hand, has argued that the distinction should be made between subconscious underproduction and conscious avoidance. Subconscious underproduction is when L2 learners underproduce a certain structure in the TL without realizing that they are doing so, as opposed to conscious avoidance, in which the learners deliberately underproduce the structure (Li 1996: 173). Considering that the differentiation between conscious avoidance and subconscious underproduction has hardly received any attention (Li 1996: 171), however, I will also not differentiate specifically between these terms in this dissertation.

1.1.5 U-shaped behaviour

I want to conclude this part on preliminary notions by mentioning another phenomenon linked to SLA, i.e. U-shaped behaviour. Kharitonova (2013) explains that this behaviour takes place when the learner produces a target-language form at an early stage of his/her SLA only to produce an interlanguage form in its place at a later stage. The production of the interlanguage form happens because the learner has become sensitized to new semantic and pragmatic distinctions which make him/her alter the initial assumption of parallels between L1 and L2. After this, at an even later stage of his/her SLA, the learner will again approximate near-native performance (Sjöholm 1995).
Sjöholm (1995: 113) further explains that this behaviour occurs in the performance of fixed, multi-word expressions which have equivalent expressions in the mother tongue of the learners, i.e. when L1 and L2 are similar. It therefore seems that U-shaped behaviour could potentially explain certain patterns of the behaviour of the Flemish students but not of the Italian students considering that Flemish and English are related more closely than Italian and English.

In conclusion, I have now introduced the necessary notions about second language acquisition, which allows me to move on to a literature review.

1.2 Avoidance of phrasal verbs: literature review

This section summarizes previous research on the avoidance of phrasal verbs in learner English. I will discuss the studies in order of their year of publication.

1.2.1 Dagut and Laufer (1985)

Dagut and Laufer (1985) were the first to apply Schachter (1974)’s finding of avoidance behaviour to the acquisition of phrasal verbs in learner English (for the discussion of Schachter (1974)’s study, see section 1.1.4). They administered three tests to Hebrew learners of English: a multiple-choice test, a translation test and a memorizing test. For each test, they used 15 test sentences for which they had found - with a multiple-choice test- a preference for the phrasal verb over the semantically equivalent one-word verb by a group of native speakers. The multiple-choice test with these 15 test sentences, then, was given to 60 first-year university students from various departments except English Language and Literature. These students had had 7-8 years of English in high school and they were taking an EFL course for non-English majors. The translation test, on the other hand, was given to 60 different Hebrew students, 30 of which were EFL students whereas the other 30 were students of English Language and Literature whose proficiency in English was higher than that of the EFL students. The memorizing test, lastly, was given to a third group of 60 EFL (non-English majors) Hebrew students.

Dagut and Laufer (1985) found that a majority of the learners avoided using the phrasal verbs, preferring the one-word verbs, and that this avoidance was most evident with the figurative phrasal verbs rather than with the literal or completive phrasal verbs (cf. Liao & Fukuya 2004: 197). They concluded that this avoidance was due to the structural differences between L1 (Hebrew) and L2 (English) as Hebrew does not have a construction that corresponds to the English phrasal verbs.
Liao and Fukuya (2004) and Waibel (2007) however, pointed out some weaknesses of the study by Dagut and Laufer (1985). They state that Dagut and Laufer (1985) could not rule out ignorance because they had not tested the participants’ proficiency of the phrasal verbs but had just assumed, based on their teaching experience, that “these students had come across all of the 15 phrasal verbs at some point in their education” (Dagut and Laufer 1985: 75). The underproduction of phrasal verbs by these Hebrew learners of English could therefore be due to ignorance of the phrasal verbs rather than real avoidance (which presupposes that the learners know the phrasal verbs at least passively, see section 1.1.4).

Liao and Fukuya (2004) and Waibel (2007) further indicate that Dagut and Laufer (1985) did not consider semantic difficulties as a cause of avoidance even though they had pointed out that the literal phrasal verbs had been used much more frequently than the figurative phrasal verbs.

Despite these weaknesses, the study of Dagut and Laufer (1985) has been important because other researchers have used it as a basis to investigate further into the avoidance of phrasal verbs in learner English.

1.2.2 Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)

Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) used the same kinds of tests as Dagut and Laufer (1985), i.e. a multiple-choice test, a translation test, and a memorizing test, to find out whether Dutch learners of English would avoid phrasal verbs, not because of structural reasons but because of semantic reasons. At the end of their article Dagut and Laufer (1985) had claimed that “the phrasal verb structure is a peculiarity of the Germanic languages” (Dagut and Laufer 19985: 78) and since Dutch is a Germanic language like English, there should be no avoidance due to structural reasons. Phrasal verbs are hard to master though, so Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) hypothesized that there could be avoidance due to the semantic properties of the phrasal verbs. They felt that Dutch ESL learners would tend to avoid phrasal verbs just like the Hebrew learners of Dagut and Laufer (1985)’s study did because phrasal verbs often have a specific, sometimes even idiomatic, meaning (for example ‘let down’) while their one-word equivalents often have a more general meaning (for example ‘disappoint’). Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) argued that if they would find that Dutch ESL learners avoided phrasal verbs on the basis of perceived semantic difficulties, then the avoidance of phrasal verbs by the Hebrew ESL learners might also have been caused by semantic considerations, in addition to or even instead of the structural considerations (i.e. the absence of phrasal verbs in Hebrew).

Their participants were six independent groups, three groups of intermediate learners and three groups of advanced learners. The intermediate learners were secondary school students (about 17 years old) who had received instruction in English for a period of 5 to 6 years whereas the advanced learners were
first-year university students of English. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) state that their results indicated that these Dutch learners of English did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically.

They also argue, however, that even though their participants did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically, these Dutch learners of English did tend to avoid some idiomatic phrasal verbs that were perceived as too Dutch-like due to a lack of contrast between the first and second language. They also sometimes tended to adopt a ‘play-it-safe strategy’, which made them prefer one-word verbs with general, multi-purpose meanings to phrasal verbs with specific, sometimes idiomatic, meanings. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) therefore claim that these results could help explain the results of Dagut and Laufer (1985) in another way, i.e. considering semantic instead of structural reasons.

1.2.3 Laufer and Eliasson (1993)

Laufer and Eliasson (1993) tried to find out whether avoidance behaviour was due to:

1) structural differences between L1 and L2 (as claimed by Dagut and Laufer 1985);

2) identity between L1 and L2, which is construed as difference by the learner (e.g. avoided because too Dutch-like, as maintained by Hulstijn and Marchena 1989);

3) inherent complexity of the avoided construction (which could cause a play-it-safe strategy, as maintained by Hulstijn and Marchena 1989) (Laufer & Eliasson 1993: 37).

Laufer and Eliasson (1993) used a multiple-choice test and a translation test to investigate whether Swedish learners of English would prefer phrasal verbs or one-part verbs. The participants were Swedish adult university students in the Departments of Scandinavian, English, and Linguistics at Uppsala University. 50 of them compiled the multiple-choice test whereas the translation test was given to 37 of them. A control group of 17 additional students compiled a supplementary comprehension test to be sure that the phrasal verbs used in the multiple-choice test and translation test were understood.

The results were then compared to the results of the Hebrew participants of the study by Dagut and Laufer (1985). Because Laufer and Eliasson (1993) found that the Swedish participants did not avoid phrasal verbs, not even figurative ones, whereas the Israeli participants did avoid phrasal verbs, the authors concluded that the only factor that necessarily induced avoidance behaviour was differences between L1 and L2. They did not exclude that the other factors (identity between L1 and L2 construed by the learner as difference; and inherent complexity of the phrasal verbs) could have an influence on avoidance of phrasal verbs, but they claimed that these factors alone did not result in avoidance.
1.2.4 Sjöholm (1995)

Sjöholm (1995) gave a multiple-choice test to learners of English that had Finnish as their native language and to learners of English who had Swedish as their native language but lived in Finland. The participants had four different levels of English proficiency. His results indicated that both language groups tended to use phrasal verbs less than native speakers, but Finnish-speaking students underused them significantly more than Swedish-speaking students, especially at the intermediate level (Sjöholm 1995; cf. Kharitonova 2013: 40; Waibel 2007: 28). Sjöholm believes that these differences are primarily attributable to structural causes, as Finnish does not have phrasal verbs whereas Swedish does. The greater avoidance of phrasal verbs on the part of the Finnish-speaking students would thus corroborate Dagut and Laufer (1985)’s hypothesis. Sjöholm furthermore also found that U-shaped behaviour could be discerned with the Swedish-speaking students but not with the Finnish-speaking students, which makes sense as U-shaped behaviour has been claimed to occur only when L1 and L2 are similar (see section 1.1.5). His results additionally suggested that Swedish-speaking students did better with ‘Swedish-based’ phrasal verbs than Finnish-speaking students. These results can again be attributed to the similarity between L1 (Swedish) and L2 (English).

Structure did not seem to be the only factor, however. Finnish-speaking students preferred opaque phrasal verbs less often than Swedish-speaking students did, especially during the early stages of learning. This seems to suggest that inherent complexity of opaque phrasal verbs also has some influence on the avoidance behaviour.

1.2.5 Liao and Fukuya (2004)

Liao and Fukuya (2004) used the same kinds of tests as Dagut and Laufer (1985) and Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), i.e. a multiple-choice test, a translation test and a recall test. Their participants were six groups of Chinese learners of English (intermediate and advanced; a total of 70). Their results, then, showed that three factors influenced the avoidance behaviour: proficiency level, test type and phrasal-verb type. Their results in fact indicated that the intermediate learners avoided using phrasal verbs significantly more than the advanced learners, who only showed a slight tendency to use phrasal verbs less than the native speakers did. They therefore claimed that phrasal verb avoidance behaviour is a manifestation of interlanguage development from avoidance to nonavoidance (see figure 1 below). They thus assume that all learners of English, regardless of their native language, will first avoid using phrasal verbs before being proficient enough to use them correctly. They suggest that this has been found not only in their study, but also in the study by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) as Liao and Fukuya (2004) state that the results of Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) indicated that the intermediate Dutch learners of English avoided phrasal verbs on the multiple-choice test whereas the advanced Dutch learners of
English did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically. It seems doubtful to me, however, whether one can claim that the intermediate Dutch learners avoided phrasal verbs based on a statistically significant difference for only one of three tests (for Hulstijn and Marchena’s (1989) study, see section 1.2.2). I think, therefore, that further research would be needed to be able to claim that Dutch learners of English, too, show a developmental shift from avoidance to nonavoidance. Liao and Fukuya (2004) further assume that the Hebrew and Swedish learners probably go through the same process even though this is not certain as the corresponding studies (Dagut & Laufer 1985; Laufer & Eliasson 1993) provided data for only one proficiency level.

Figure 1: Developmental shift from avoidance to nonavoidance of English phrasal verbs (based on Liao & Fukuya 2004: 213, figure 3)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Avoidance</th>
<th>Nonavoidance</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>(No phrasal verbs in L1)</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hebrew undergraduate</td>
<td>Chinese graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Chinese (undergraduate and graduate)</td>
<td>Chinese graduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(Phrasal verbs in L1)</td>
<td>Dutch undergraduate</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch high school students</td>
<td>Swedish undergraduate</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Liao and Fukuya (2004) stress, however, that this manifestation of interlanguage development does not contradict other factors such as structural differences between L1 and L2. It is not because a learner has difficulties with a certain construction since it is different from his native language that these learning difficulties cannot be overcome.

Furthermore, they found that the intermediate Chinese learners of English tended to avoid figurative phrasal verbs more often than literal phrasal verbs on the translation test. They believe that this could be due to L2 semantic complexity but also to a distributional bias: 11 of the phrasal verbs used in their study were literal whereas only 4 were figurative, which might have influenced the outcomes.

1.2.6 Waibel (2007)

Waibel (2007) also studied the use of phrasal verbs in learner English by German and Italian students, using corpus data rather than linguistic experiments. The native control corpus that she employed is
When comparing 72 phrasal verbs likely to be frequent in all 11\(^2\) ICLE\(^3\) sub-corpora to the native control corpus LOCNESS, she found that only learners from a Romance, Slavic or Finnish background use fewer phrasal verbs than native speakers whereas learners from a Germanic background use around the same amount of phrasal verbs as native speakers.

After a more in-depth analysis of the German and Italian ICLE sub-corpora compared to LOCNESS she found that German learners had used more phrasal verbs than the native students (+24.6\%) whereas Italian learners had used a lot less (-41.7\%). Comparing her results to the results of the previous studies, she concluded that structural differences between L1 and L2 impede the successful learning of phrasal verbs, which is in line with findings by Dagut & Laufer 1985, Laufer & Eliasson 1993, Sjöholm 1995, and Liao & Fukuya 2004. She does, however, point out that the difference between Italian and English in the case of phrasal verbs is not strictly structural since the verb type ‘phrasal verb’ as such also exists in Italian (see also section 1.3.3). Nevertheless, she mentions that the Italian ‘verbi frasali’ are only few and that they are restricted to spoken language. She therefore concludes that it seems reasonable to consider the difference between English and Italian in the case of phrasal verbs as a (partly) structural difference.

1.2.7 Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012)

Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012) applied the methodology of Liao and Fukuya (2004) - i.e. a multiple-choice test, a translation test and a recall test - to look into the use of phrasal verbs by Iranian learners of English. Their participants were 35 advanced Iranian learners of English (master students of English at the Ferdowsi University of Mashhad who studied English for at least 11 years) and 50 intermediate Iranian learners (who studied English as a bachelor student). They found that test type and phrasal verb type had an effect but proficiency level did not. Their results for the multiple-choice test furthermore indicated that Iranian learners used phrasal verbs significantly less than native speakers. There was no statistical difference between the intermediate and advanced Iranian learners of English; both groups avoided phrasal verbs to the same extent. The authors further explained that Iranian does not have phrasal verbs, so again the results could be attributed to structural difference between L1 and L2, which makes the learners prefer the more familiar one-word verb structure.

Their results also indicated that both the intermediate and the advanced learners of English preferred literal phrasal verbs to figurative phrasal verbs on all three tests. Liao and Fukuya (2004), though, had

---

\(^1\) The Louvain Corpus of Native Language Essays (LOCNESS)

\(^2\) The German, Dutch, Polish, Finnish, Bulgarian, Swedish, Russian, French, Czech, Italian, and Spanish sub-corpora

\(^3\) The International Corpus of Learner English (ICLE)
explained that native speakers, too, have this tendency to prefer literal phrasal verbs to figurative phrasal verbs. Ghabanchi and Goudarzi’s (2012) results showed, however, that the Iranian learners use figurative phrasal verbs remarkably less than the native speakers, so it can be stated that Iranian learners really avoided using figurative phrasal verbs more than the native speakers. Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012) claim that this could be due to semantic reasons since figurative phrasal verbs are harder to master.

I think the result that surprises most from this study is that proficiency level did not have any effect on the use of phrasal verbs by the Iranian learners of English. This in contrast with the hypothesis of interlanguage development from avoidance to nonavoidance (Liao & Fukuya 2004) and with the U-shaped behaviour found by Sjöholm (1995).

1.2.8 Kharitonova (2013)

Kharitonova (2013) used two multiple-choice tests to investigate into the phrasal verb usage of Russian and Norwegian learners of English. Her participants were 16 native speakers of Russian who had had 15 to 18 years of English instructions and 39 native speakers of Norwegian who had been studying English for 7 to 8 years. Kharitonova (2013) decided that these groups of leaners of English were comparable because English teaching is on a higher level in Norway than in Russia and therefore Norwegian native speakers acquire English faster than Russian native speakers. She did not compare with a group of native speakers of English. Her results indicate that both learner groups tended to avoid phrasal verbs but the Norwegian learners of English even more than the Russian learners of English. This is surprising considering that the language distance between Norwegian and English is smaller than between Russian and English. In addition, Norwegian seems to have a construction that is closer to the English phrasal verbs than the Russian prefixed verbs are. These results thus suggest that inherent complexity of the English phrasal verbs might have been a determining factor for the preference of one-word verbs by both learner groups.

Kharitonova (2013) also claims that she found evidence of negative transfer from Norwegian into English because the Norwegian participants used Norwegian-like phrasal verbs with the wrong meaning in English.

1.2.9 Barekat and Baniasady (2014)

Barekat and Baniasady (2014) also investigated into the avoidance behaviour of learners of English (in this case 44 Persian intermediate learners of English whose proficiency level was controlled by an Oxford Placement Test) using the three types of test mentioned before (multiple-choice test, translation
test and recall test, cf. Dagut and Laufer 1985; Hulstijn and Marchena 1989; Liao and Fukuya 2004). However, they took it a step further as they linked the results of these tests to writing proficiency.

The scores of their three tests indicated that the intermediate learners avoided using phrasal verbs and preferred using the one-word verbs. Barekat and Baniasady (2014) state that this avoidance could be due to several factors. First of all, the structural difference between Persian and English might have been responsible for the avoidance behaviour since Persian apparently does not really have phrasal verbs. They mention that in Persian the combination of a verb and a particle can never assume a meaning that is different from the usual meanings of the individual parts, which can be confusing for native speakers of Persian learning English (cf. Barekat and Baniasady 2014: 347). Secondly, Barekat and Baniasady (2014) refer to the difficult nature of the phrasal verbs as a possible reason for the avoidance of this type of verbs by Persian learners of English. Finally, they mention some internal factors that could be influential such as the teachers and students’ attitudes toward errors, the fear of difficulties and the play-it-safe strategy.

Based on the scores on the three elicitation tests the participants were assigned to two groups: one group with a higher amount of avoidance (group A) and one with a lower amount of avoidance (group B). The participants were then given a writing task. The results showed that the participants in group B had scored better on the writing task than the participants in group A. The authors thus concluded that there is a close association between the avoidance of phrasal verbs and writing ability: phrasal verb avoidance negatively affects the participants’ writing performance.

### 1.2.10 Summary

The studies mentioned in this section are summarized in table 1 below:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants</th>
<th>Methodology</th>
<th>Results</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dagut and Laufer</td>
<td>Hebrew learners</td>
<td>Majority prefer the one-word verb and avoid the semantically equivalent phrasal verb</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>(1985)</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test; translation test; memorizing test</td>
<td>Structural differences between L1 and L2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>Avoidance most evident with the figurative phrasal verbs, less with literal and completive phrasal verbs</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Table 1: summary of the studies of the literature review (based on Kharitonova 2013: 41-42)
<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Study</th>
<th>Learners</th>
<th>Tasks</th>
<th>Findings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Hulstijn and Marchena (1989)</td>
<td>Intermediate and advanced Dutch learners</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test; memorization test; translation test</td>
<td>Learners did not avoid phrasal verbs categorically but did avoid those they perceived as too Dutch-like. Lack of L1-L2 contrast. Play-it-safe strategy (intermediate more often than advanced).</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Laufer and Eliasson (1993)</td>
<td>(advanced) Swedish learners</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test; translation test + supplementary comprehension test to test passive knowledge of phrasal verbs</td>
<td>Swedish learners did not avoid phrasal verbs, not even figurative ones. Hebrew learners did. The greater avoidance of figurative phrasal verbs by the Hebrew learners was, however, not statistically significant. Differences between L1 and L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sjöholm (1995)</td>
<td>Mixed proficiency (4 levels) Finnish and Swedish learners</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test</td>
<td>Both language groups avoided phrasal verbs, but Finnish-speaking students significantly more than Swedish-speaking students at the intermediate level. U-shaped behaviour with Swedish-speaking students but not with Finnish-speaking students. Swedish-speaking students did better with ‘Swedish-based’ phrasal verbs than Finnish-speaking students. Structural differences/similarities between L1 and L2. Finnish-speaking students preferred opaque phrasal verbs less often than Swedish-speaking students did, especially during the early stages of learning.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Study</td>
<td>Participants</td>
<td>Tasks</td>
<td>Findings</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>-------</td>
<td>--------------</td>
<td>-------</td>
<td>----------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Liao and Fukuya (2004)</td>
<td>Advanced and intermediate Chinese learners</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test; translation test; recall test</td>
<td>Intermediate learners avoided phrasal verbs, advanced learners showed a slight tendency to use phrasal verbs less than native speakers but not significant. Developmental manifestation of interlanguage from avoidance to nonavoidance. Do not exclude L1-L2 difference as a factor. Intermediate Chinese learners of English avoided figurative phrasal verbs more often than literal phrasal verbs on the translation test.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Waibel (2007)</td>
<td>German and Italian learners</td>
<td>Corpora (ICLE and LOCNESS)</td>
<td>German students overused phrasal verbs; Italian students underused them. Difference between L1 and L2.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012)</td>
<td>Intermediate and advanced Iranian learners</td>
<td>Multiple-choice test; translation test; recall test</td>
<td>Avoided phrasal verbs. No difference linked to proficiency level. Structural difference between L1 and L2. Learners avoided figurative phrasal verbs more than literal ones. Possibly due to semantic reasons.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Kharitonova (2013)</td>
<td>Russian and Norwegian</td>
<td>Two multiple-choice tests</td>
<td>Both learner groups tend to avoid phrasal verbs but Norwegians more than Russians.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Theoretical perspective

What emerges from this literature review is that it is not yet clear what exactly induces or influences avoidance behaviour of phrasal verbs in learner English: L1-L2 structural differences, similarity between L1 and L2 that is construed by the learner as a difference, or inherent L2 complexity which also comprises semantic reasons. It is also not yet completely understood how learners improve between different levels of proficiency: do some groups of learners with a mother tongue that is closely related to English show U-shaped behaviour (cf. Sjöholm 1995) or do all display a developmental manifestation of interlanguage from avoidance to nonavoidance, as claimed by Liao and Fukuya (2004)? Furthermore, it is not yet clear whether learners of English with a non-Germanic native language will necessarily avoid phrasal verbs, as suggested by Dagut and Laufer (1985), or not.

I therefore want to investigate whether Flemish and Italian learners differ in their phrasal verb usage and why. I want to find out whether the Flemish learners indeed avoid phrasal verbs less than the Italian learners do because their mother tongue is closer to English, as suggested by Dagut and Laufer (1985). I will therefore first compare the equivalent structures in English, Italian and Dutch and then compare the preferences of the Italian learners and the Flemish learners to each other and to the preferences of the native speakers to find out what might explain the phrasal verb usage of the Italian and Flemish learners of English.

1.3 Phrasal verbs

1.3.1 General framework: phrasal verbs and language families

What clearly emerged from the literature review (section 1.2) is that in the literature on phrasal verb avoidance in learner English it has been widely assumed that Germanic languages have constructions
that correspond to English phrasal verbs whereas Romance languages do not. Dagut and Laufer (1985), on whom the later studies have been based, even claim this literally: “the phrasal verb structure is a peculiarity of the Germanic languages” (Dagut & Laufer 1985: 78). This claim reappears in the studies by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), Liao and Fukuya (2004), Waibel (2007), Ghabanchi and Goudarzi (2012), and Barekat and Baniasady (2014). Further literal claims of this are:

“verb + particle combinations are rarely found outside of the Germanic family” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 65).

“In all present-day Germanic languages there are verb-particle constructions which are similar to English PVs” (Kharitonova 2013: 35).

As an aside, I think this view might be linked to Talmy’s (1985) classification of languages with regard to their expression of the components of the motion event. A motion event is every situation containing movement or the maintenance of a stationary location (Talmy 1985: 60). Motion, on the other hand, is defined as the presence per se in the event of either motion or location and Path as the course followed during the motion of the verb (Talmy 1985: 61). Talmy describes the Romance languages as languages that express Motion and Path in their verbal stem, that is without the use of satellites, while he suggests that all the other Indo-European languages (including the Germanic ones) express Path via the use of satellites. Satellites are “certain immediate constituents of a verb root other than inflections, auxiliaries, or nominal arguments. They relate to the verb root as periphery (or modifiers) to a head” (Talmy 1985: 102). Examples of satellites are the verb particles of English and the ‘separable’ and ‘inseparable’ prefixes of German. The Germanic languages would thus have a construction that corresponds to the English phrasal verbs (by using a satellite for the expression of the Path) while the Romance languages would not have such a construction since, according to Talmy, they do not use satellites. Talmy (1985)’s description of how the Romance and the Germanic languages express motion events is shown in table 2 below.

| Language family | The particular components of a motion event characteristically represented in the: | | |
|----------------|---------------------------------|---------------------------------| |
|                | Verb Root | Satellite | |
| Romance        | Motion + Path | Ø | |
| Germanic       | Motion + Manner/ Cause | Path | |

Table 2: typology of motion verbs and their satellites (Talmy 1985: 114; cf. Iacobini-Masini 2006: 163)

Notwithstanding this generally held view, I will now take a closer look at the phrasal verbs in English and possible corresponding constructions in Italian and in Dutch. I would like to find out whether it is
actually true that Germanic languages like Dutch have constructions that are closer to the phrasal verb in English than the corresponding constructions in Romance languages like Italian.

### 1.3.2 English phrasal verbs

As mentioned in the introduction, a phrasal verb (PV) is commonly defined as a structure that consists of a verb proper and a morphologically invariable particle. The verb and the particle together function as a single unit both lexically and syntactically (Liao & Fukuya 2004: 196; Darwin & Gray 1999). An example of a phrasal verb would be ‘to let down’. It is not completely clear, however, whether the particles of phrasal verbs are adverbs or prepositions (cf. Kharitonova 2013: 33). With regard to this, Darwin and Gray (1999: 70) specify that the particles can be either prepositions or spatial adverbs.

Furthermore, the classification of phrasal verbs may be “slippery” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 67):

> “I do not believe that a linguistic entity such as the phrasal verb can be confined within clear bounds. […] being or not being a phrasal verbs is a matter of degree” (Bolinger 1971: 6).

Even though this confusion and lack of agreement may readily be tolerated among scholars, it obviously leads to confusion among students and instructors. It can even seriously impair the learning of phrasal verbs by students of English as a second language by preventing the placement of verb + particle combinations in a grammatical paradigm (Darwin & Gray 1999).

In addition, Bronshteyn and Gustafson (2015: 92) mention that it is difficult for ESL learners to master English phrasal verbs because phrasal verbs are unpredictable, polysemous, frequent and non-universal. Sjöholm (1995: 113) observes that phrasal verbs may be polysemic not only by having both an idiomatic and non-idiomatic use, but in addition both the idiomatic and non-idiomatic uses may each have more than one meaning. Phrasal verbs thus create problems for learners partly because the combination of verb and particle often seems completely random and partly because there are so many of them (Side 1990: 144).

A correct use of phrasal verbs, however, both in quantitative and qualitative terms, is very important as it makes a learner of English seem more native-like (Waibel 2007). Moreover Barekat and Baniasady’s (2014) findings suggest that there is an association between phrasal verb avoidance and writing proficiency: phrasal verb avoidance negatively affected the writing performance of their participants (see section 1.2.9). Studying phrasal verb avoidance can thus help learners of English overcome the difficulties connected to the English phrasal verb which in turn can help them sound more native-like and can improve their writing proficiency..
1.3.2.1 Terminology

A lot of different terms have been used to refer to phrasal verbs: verb-particle constructions or combinations, separable verbs, compound verbs, verb-adverb combinations, two-part verbs/words or two-word verbs, three-part verbs/words and multi-word verbs (Kharitonova 2013: 33; Waibel 2007: 15). In this regard, Kharitonova (2013: 33) explains that “this terminology has been a source of confusion and debates among researchers” (Kharitonova 2013: 33). I will therefore only use the term ‘phrasal verb’ as it is also seems to be the most dominant term (Waibel 2007: 15).

1.3.2.2 Types

A division can be made in relation to the nature of the particle. It is generally assumed that in phrasal verbs the particle is an adverb, in prepositional verbs a preposition, and in phrasal-prepositional verbs an adverb and a preposition (Waibel 2007: 15). Sjöholm (1995: 98) explains that he uses the term ‘phrasal verb’ in its widest sense, comprising genuine phrasal verbs, prepositional verbs, and phrasal-prepositional verbs. I will also use the term ‘phrasal verb’ in this way unless specified otherwise.

1.3.2.3 Syntactic tests

To eliminate confusion with regard to classification, a series of tests have been developed to prove that a verb + particle combination is indeed a phrasal verb (Darwin & Gray 1999: 71). I will first briefly describe the nine tests proposed by Bolinger (1971) and then briefly discuss the alternative classification proposed by Darwin & Gray (1999).

1) Replacement

The most general test is to replace the verb + particle combination with a simple verb. This does not always work however, as it both includes too much and too little. Bolinger (1971: 6) admits, for example, that ‘the plane took off’ should be admitted even though the simple verb ‘departed’ is not a true synonym as it is too specific. He also mentions that for example ‘to eat dinner’ should not be admitted since it is not a phrasal verb (‘dinner’ is not a particle) even though it can be replaced by the simple verb ‘to dine’, which shows that this test can also include too much.

2) Formation of passives

The second test claims that, if transitive, the combination should passivize (Bolinger 1971: 7). This test, however, also has its limitations. Some transitive phrasal verbs do not form passives (Darwin & Gray 1999: 71), as in example 1:

(1) We had in some friends.
    *Some friends were had in. (Bolinger 1971: 7-8)
Furthermore some prepositional verbs that should not be included as genuine phrasal verbs do form passives (Darwin & Gray 1999: 71), as is the case in example 2 below:

(2) The incident was alluded to. (Darwin & Gray 1999: 71)

3) **Formation of action nominals**

This test suggests that, if the combination is transitive, action nominals can be derived from it. Bolinger (1971), however, mentions that this test, too, is unsatisfactory.

(3) The running up of the hill was a matter of minutes.  
*The walking across of the bridge was a matter of minutes. (Bolinger 1971: 8)

Bolinger (1971) points out that in example 3 to *run up the hill* and to *walk across the bridge* are parallel in every respect (free combinations, cf. Darwin & Gray 1999: 72), but in only one of the cases is the action nominal acceptable.

To try to fix this problem it has been suggested that phrasal verbs do not allow separation of the verb proper and the particle in the action nominal (*the throwing of his dinner up*) whereas free combinations do (*the throwing of the ball up*) (Darwin & Gray 1999: 72). However, even this test is unsatisfactory because with the same verb + particle combination in example 4 it is both impossible (4a) and possible (4b) to have a separation of the verb proper and the particle in the action nominal, depending on whether the particle is in bare terminal position following a noun direct object (4a) or following a personal pronoun (4b):

(4) a. *The handing of the merchandise over.*  
   b. The handing of it over. (Bolinger 1971: 10)

Furthermore, some transitive verb + particle combinations that would generally be considered genuine phrasal verbs do not form acceptable action nominals, as in example 5 (Darwin & Gray 1999: 72):

(5) I came across an old photograph.  
*The coming across of an old photograph

4) **Object movement**

With transitive phrasal verbs, the particle can be placed either before or after the direct object (Darwin & Gray 1999: 72). This fourth test can eliminate, as potential particles, pure adverbs (see example 6) and pure prepositions (see example 7), but it leaves an area of doubt with certain adpreps like *over*, as is the case with example 8 (see “?”) (Bolinger 1971: 10-11):

(6) He sold the business regretfully.  
*He sold regretfully the business.

(7) I stood in the doorway.
I stood the doorway in.  
(I) I walked over the hill.  
?I walked the hill over.  
I walked that hill all over from top to bottom without finding a trace of the ring I had lost.

Furthermore, the nature of the object noun phrase also makes a difference (Bolinger 1971: 11). If we change the noun phrase of the object in example 6, the sentence suddenly becomes acceptable, as is the case in example 9 below where the noun phrase of the direct object is longer than in example 6:

(9) I would sell regretfully any business in which I had been engaged for half a lifetime. (Bolinger 1971: 11)

Moreover Darwin & Gray (1999: 72) mention that some transitive phrasal verbs are inseparable, like for example ‘to come across’ in example 10 below:

(10) They came across a problem.  
* They came a problem across.

Apart from that, they also notice that in some cases object movement causes changes in meaning (Darwin & Gray 1999: 72). In example 11 below run down means ‘review’ when the direct object follows the verb + particle combination whereas it means ‘find’ when the direct object is placed in between the verb proper and the particle.

(11) Why don’t you run down the list? (review)  
Why don’t you run the list down? (find) (Darwin & Gray 1999: 72)

So even though Bolinger (1971: 10) calls this test quite reliable, it certainly has its flaws, just like the previous tests did.

5) Pronoun placement

This test states that if the combination is transitive, then pronouns will usually precede the particle (Bolinger 1971: 11). This explains why in the following examples (12a) and (13a) are acceptable whereas (12b) and (13b) are, respectively, questionable and unacceptable (Bolinger 1971: 11):

(12) a. How did you find that out?  
   b. ?How did you find out that?  
(13) a. You’re putting him on!  
   b. *You’re putting on him!

These examples already show that this test, too, does not always yield clear results (see ‘?’ vs. ‘*’). In addition, Darwin and Gray (1999: 73) mention that some inseparable transitive phrasal verbs prove to be exceptions to the rule, like the phrasal verb in example 10 from the previous test. Furthermore, “in some odd cases, such as phrasal verbs with reflexives and multiple objects, object pronouns are not
placed before the particle”, as in examples 14 (reflexive) and 15 (multiple objects) (Darwin & Gray 1999: 73):

(14) Excuse me, Mr. Robber, should we tie up ourselves?
(15) No, I’ll tie up you and the rest.

6) Adverbial insertion

This sixth test distinguishes phrasal verbs from other combinations by showing that, with phrasal verbs, adverbs cannot be inserted between the verb proper and the particle (Bolinger 1971: 11-12; Darwin & Gray 1999: 73). Darwin & Gray (1999: 73) specify that this is usually a good indication with adverbs that end in –ly. However, they also state that some examples are questionable, like example 16 below:

(16) ?The mine caved quickly in. (Darwin & Gray 1999: 73)

Apart from these questionable examples there are also a few types of adverbials that act as intensifiers of the particle, which are usually acceptable violations of the predictions of this test (Darwin & Gray 1999: 73). (17) and (18) below are some examples of this (Darwin & Gray 1999: 73).

(17) They set right off for home.
(18) You messed it all up.

7) Stress

Darwin and Gray (1999: 74) mention that noting stress can be very useful when one wants to distinguish particles from prepositions since prepositions, as they are not content words, do not receive stress. Because of this, in (19a) ‘at’ does not receive stress since it is a preposition whereas in (19b) ‘up’ does receive stress since it is a particle:

(19) a. He’s not the person I was looking at.
   b. He’s not the person I was looking up. (Bolinger 1971: 14)

However, this test again has some exceptions. First of all, any word can receive primary sentence stress if, for some reason, it is emphasized or contrasted with another word (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74). Example (20) is thus perfectly acceptable in the right context:

(20) I said, “What are you looking UP, not what are you looking AT”. (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74)

In addition, some prepositions are weightier than others (Bolinger 1971: 14): bisyllabic prepositions (such as after, upon, around, and over) do receive some degree of stress and can thus not be completely reduced (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74), as is the case with the bisyllabic preposition ‘after’ in example (21) below:

(21) He’s not the person I was looking at. (Bolinger 1971: 14)
Furthermore this test cannot satisfactorily account for free combinations: in verb + adverb combinations, the adverbs (being content words) cannot be completely reduced and thus may have stress patterns similar to those of true phrasal verbs (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74), as in example (22) below:

(22) The elevator WENT UP. (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74)

### 8) Definite noun phrase

This eighth test is a refinement of test 4 and states that “if the combination is transitive, the particle can precede a simple definite noun phrase (a proper name or the plus a common noun) without taking it as its object” (Bolinger 1971: 15). Bolinger (1971: 15) furthermore notices that this refinement of test 4 is useful because the second half of test 4 (“the particle can follow the noun object”) is of little or no use anyway, since almost any adverb can follow” (Bolinger 1971: 15). Test 8 shows that ‘see yesterday’ (example 23) and ‘do neatly’ (example 24) are not phrasal verbs since ‘yesterday’ and ‘neatly’ cannot precede the simple definite noun phrase (‘John’ in (23) and ‘the work’ in (24)).

(23) *I saw yesterday John.  
   I saw John yesterday.
(24) *He did neatly the work.  
   He did the work neatly. (Bolinger 1971: 15)

Because of test 8, then, the examples in (25) are acceptable which shows that *to push in* and *to bring over* are phrasal verbs, whereas the examples in (26) are unacceptable and therefore *to push inward* and *to bring here* are not phrasal verbs (Bolinger 1971: 15; Darwin & Gray 1999: 74):

(25) They pushed in the door.  
    Why don’t you bring over John?  
(26) *They pushed inward the door.  
    *Why don’t you bring here John? (Bolinger 1971: 15-16)

Darwin and Gray (1999: 74) furthermore notice that even though the test seems to be very reliable in distinguishing between particles and adverbial adjuncts, the results are less clear in making the distinction between particles and prepositions. The definite noun phrase *the word*, for example, appears in the same position in both *look up the word* and *focus on the word* even though only *look up* is a genuine phrasal verb (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74).

### 9) Listing

The final “test” that Bolinger (1971) reports, is a simple list of possible phrasal verbs. However, as Bolinger (1971) points out, there are two obvious faults to this method (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74). The first fault is that the phrasal verb is one of the most productive ways to create new lexical items in English which means that the list would be out-of-date before it was even created (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74). The second problem is that of regional differences: native speakers of British English and native
speakers of American English may find each other’s phrasal verbs odd (Darwin & Gray 1999: 74). In addition, it is difficult to make a list of phrasal verbs if there are no clear criteria or tests that establish univocally which verb + particle combinations are phrasal verbs and which are not.

From these tests it thus seems clear that none of them are completely unproblematic. Darwin and Gray (1999: 74) note that “the result is a problematic lack of agreement among those who study phrasal verbs as to exactly which verb + particle combinations are or are not included in this category”, which I have already noted at the beginning of section 1.3.2. Because of this, Darwin and Gray (1999) propose an alternative approach where “rather than excluding a verb + particle combination from the phrasal verb category until it is proven to belong” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 75-76), as suggested by Bolinger (1971), “linguists should consider all verb + particle combinations to be potential phrasal verbs until they can be proven otherwise” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 76).

Darwin and Gray (1999) further note that this alternative approach has two advantages. The first advantage is that it would add a degree of definiteness since “[a]lthough combinations in the phrasal-verb category will range widely, from loosely connected to tightly bound, idiomatic to literal, one can say that those outside the category are definitely not phrasal verbs for such and such a reason”. The second advantage according to them is that this approach would eliminate some of the curriculum-based confusion students have with phrasal verbs. Darwin and Gray (1999: 76) state that “developing a set of criteria and a list of phrasal verbs based on the throw-it-out approach will decrease greatly – in fact virtually eliminate- the number of exceptions”. I think that the biggest advantage, however, is that “one needs only a single test showing a division between a potential verb proper and particle to eliminate it instead of having to use several tests and an educated guess to determine if a verb + particle combination should be included in the phrasal-verb category”. If a particular test would yield unclear results, however, it should be discarded for another test that provides better results. The alternative tests that Darwin and Gray (1999) propose are the following:

1) Particle repetition

This test claims that with true phrasal verbs, the repetition of the particle without its verb proper is not acceptable except in rare cases that call for contrast. This would be due to the dependence of the meaning of the particle on its inclusion in the phrasal verb (Darwin & Gray 1999: 77). Prepositions and adverbs, on the other hand, can be repeated without the verb proper, which is why examples (27) are not acceptable whereas example (28) is (Darwin & Gray 1999: 77-78).

(27)*I looked up, up, up your name.
    *I looked up your name, up her name, and up his name.
(28)I looked up, up, up to the very highest point.
I think that also this test can be ambiguous specifically because contrast can undermine the results of it by making constructions with phrasal verbs acceptable when they should not be acceptable.

2) Where questions

This second test asserts that after a ‘where’ question, if the particle retains its non-phrasal-verb meaning (which is necessary to answer the ‘where’ question), the particle is not part of a genuine phrasal verb. Because of this in the following examples *to look up* is a phrasal verb (example 30) whereas *to run up* is not (example 29) (Darwin & Gray 1999: 78):

(29) He ran up the alley.
   Where?
   *Up the alley.
(30) I looked up the address.
   Where did you look?
   *Up the address.

3) Fronting

This test suggests that the particle of a phrasal verb cannot be placed in front of the verb proper whereas prepositional phrases and adverbs can be placed either before or after the verb. Following this test *to make up* (example 31) can stay in the class of phrasal verbs whereas *to go up* (example 32) should be removed (Darwin & Gray 1999: 78-79).

(31) He made up a story.
   *Up he made a story.
   *Up a story he made.
(32) Up the tree he went.

4) Verb insertion

This test is based on the insertion of an additional verb between the original verb proper and the potential particle. If the original combination is a phrasal verb, then both verbs cannot share the same particle and the combination with the additional verb is not acceptable. If, however, there is no problem when the additional verb has been inserted, then the original combination is not a genuine phrasal verb (Darwin & Gray 1999: 79). Following this test *to pull on* and *to jerk on* can be removed from the class of genuine phrasal verbs (example 33) whereas *to mess up* and *to foul up* (example 34) can stay because the sentence is not acceptable anymore when the additional verb is added (Darwin & Gray 1999: 79-80):

(33) He pulled on the lever, but it was stuck.
   He pulled and jerked on the lever, but it was stuck.
(34) I really messed up on my test.
   *I really messed and fouled up on my test.
5) Adverb insertion

To make the test of adverbial insertion proposed by Bolinger (1971) more useful, Darwin and Gray (1999) propose to only use adverbs ending in \-ly\ and to use two adverbs instead of one. If the sentence is still acceptable after adding two adverbs ending in \-ly\, then the combination is not a genuine phrasal verb. This should eliminate many doubts still left with the test proposed by Bolinger (1971). Following this reasoning, \textit{to come across} can remain in the class of phrasal verbs (example 35) whereas \textit{to creep down} should be removed (example 36) (Darwin & Gray 1999: 80):

(35)* I \textit{came} suddenly and unexpectedly \textit{across} an interesting article.
(36) They \textit{crept} slowly and silently \textit{down} the hall.

Personally, I think that example 35 can be acceptable in spoken language if one pauses slightly before and after the adverbs. Thus, even this correction of the test by Bolinger (1971) might not eliminate all doubts.

6) Stress

This is the same test as the test used by Bolinger (1971).

7) Intonation units

This test suggests that a pause, which would mark an intonational unit boundary, cannot be placed between the verb proper and the particle of a genuine phrasal verb without creating an adverse effect on prosody and comprehension. On the other hand, the insertion of a pause is acceptable, if not necessary, between verbs and prepositions or adverbs (Darwin & Gray 1999: 81). When applying this test, it becomes clear that \textit{to pass out} can remain in the class of true phrasal verbs (example 37) whereas \textit{to hide behind} should be removed (example 38):

(37)*I \textit{passed / out} in the doctor’s office.
(38) I \textit{hid / behind} the door.

In conclusion it is clear from this section on syntactic tests that there is still no complete consensus on how to recognise which verb + particle combinations are genuine phrasal verbs. It would be interesting to see whether tests like these also exist for the corresponding constructions in Italian and in Dutch, and whether those tests also hint at a lack of consensus or not.
1.3.2.4 Semantics

In terms of semantics different types of phrasal verbs can be distinguished. Kharitonova (2013: 33) mentions that phrasal verbs can be classified as transparent or non-idiomatic and non-transparent or idiomatic. The meaning of a transparent phrasal verb is derived from the combination of the meanings of its components (the verb and the particle) which makes it easy to understand, even without context. With idiomatic phrasal verbs, on the other hand, this is not the case: their meanings cannot be derived from the sum of the meanings of the components.

Laufer and Eliasson (1993), however, see this as a tripartite distinction rather than as a dichotomy: they set apart semantically transparent phrasal verbs, semitransparent phrasal verbs and figurative or semantically opaque phrasal verbs. Dagut and Laufer (1985) and Darwin and Gray (1999), however, suggest another tripartite distinction. Dagut and Laufer (1985), on the one hand, distinguish between figurative or idiomatic phrasal verbs, literal phrasal verbs and completive phrasal verbs. They define completive phrasal verbs as phrasal verbs “in which the particle describes the result of the action” (Dagut & Laufer 1985: 74). Examples of completive phrasal verbs are to cut off and to burn down (Dagut & Laufer 1985: 74). Darwin and Gray (1999), on the other hand, mention the distinction between literal phrasal verbs, idiomatic phrasal verbs and aspectual phrasal verbs. They comment that in terms of transparency, aspectual phrasal verbs are in between idiomatic phrasal verbs and literal phrasal verbs as they are more transparent than idiomatic phrasal verbs but less transparent than transparent phrasal verbs. This is because the verb proper of the aspectual phrasal verbs can be understood literally whereas the particle contributes meanings that are not commonly understood about the verb’s aspect (Darwin & Gray 1999: 68). As an example they mention that the particle up in They ate up all the chips and drank up all the soda signals that the actions are complete (Darwin & Gray 1999: 68). Darwin and Gray (1999) and Dagut and Laufer (1985) thus basically make the same tripartite distinction but use another name for the third type of phrasal verbs (‘aspectual’ vs. ‘completive’).

Lastly Waibel (2007) seems to suggest a continuum rather than a dichotomy or tripartite distinction. She notes that even though the end points of a scale of transparency are fairly clear-cut with literal phrasal verbs at one end and opaque/idiomatic phrasal verbs at the other, the “intermediate stages consist of too many shades of grey which are impossible to define clearly” (Waibel 2007: 19). About those shades of grey in the middle of the scale she claims that whether certain phrasal verbs are seen as more or less transparent depends greatly on language skill, the ability to detect and translate images and figurative language, and personal opinion (Waibel 2007: 20). She therefore concludes that “an unambiguous differentiation between literal and idiomatic meanings of phrasal verbs is difficult and in some ways also futile” (Waibel 2007: 20). I agree with her in that I think that viewing transparency of phrasal verbs...
as a continuum would be better than thinking of it in terms of a strict dichotomy between transparent and non-transparent.

1.3.2.5 Register

Generally it has been thought that phrasal verbs are more typical of spoken English than of written English (Liao & Fukuya 2004: 214; Kharitonova 2013: 31). Phrasal verbs would thus frequently be used in everyday conversation whereas one-word verbs would be reserved for more formal occasions (Ghabanchi & Goudarzi 2012: 44).

Some researchers, however, have refuted this generally held view. Darwin and Gray (1999), for example, mention that “although they were once thought to be common only in speech and informal writing, it is now accepted that phrasal verbs are found in all registers, from comic books and street slang to the most academic forms of the language” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 66). Waibel (2007), too, mentions that phrasal verbs are omnipresent and that they can also be academic instead of purely informal or colloquial (Waibel 2007: 89). She gives **carry out** and **point out** as examples of phrasal verbs that are common in academic prose (Waibel 2007: 89). In conclusion, the registers in which phrasal verbs are used seem to be wider than generally thought: they are not restricted to colloquial speech but are omnipresent in all registers, even in academic prose.

1.3.2.6 Frequency and productivity

Linked to the omnipresence of phrasal verbs in all registers is their high frequency (Waibel 2007; Bronshtein & Gustafson 2015; Kharitonova 2013: 30-31; Sjöholm 1995). Bronshtein and Gustafson (2015: 92), for example, mention that Gardner and Davies (2007: 347) have found that on average, learners will encounter one phrasal verb construction in every 150 words of English that they are exposed to.

Apart from being high in frequency, phrasal verbs are also high in productivity (Darwin & Gray 1999; Waibel 2007). Darwin and Gray (1999: 66), for example, note that the understanding, albeit unconscious, of the meaning and use of particles allows native speakers of English to create, almost at will, new phrasal verbs. English phrasal verbs are thus high in frequency as well as in productivity.

1.3.3 Italian construction corresponding to English phrasal verbs

I would now like to look at the Italian equivalent of the English phrasal verb in order to see in what ways it is different and in what ways it is similar.
1.3.3.1 Terminology

As is the case for English phrasal verbs, also for the Italian counterpart different names have been used. Some examples of English terms for this construction are simply *phrasal verb* (Masini 2006: 1), *verb-particle combination* (Masini 2006: 1) and *verb-particle construction* (Iacobini & Masini 2006, 2007). Some Italian names, then, are *verbo sintagmatico* (Simone 1996: 49), *verbo frasale* (Waibel 2007) and *verbo analitico* (Masini 2006, Schwarze 2008, Amenta 2008, Iacobini & Masini 2006, Hansen 2004). In order to be consistent and to avoid confusion, I will generally keep using the term *phrasal verb* for the Italian construction too. When I want to stress the contrast with English phrasal verbs, however, I will use the term *verbo frasale*.

1.3.3.2 Syntactic tests

Interestingly syntactic tests have been suggested for Italian phrasal verbs, as was also the case for English phrasal verbs. The syntactic criteria to identify Italian phrasal verbs and to distinguish them from verb + adverb combinations and from verb + preposition combinations (which are not considered to be genuine phrasal verbs) described by Masini (2005) are, however, different from those described by Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999) for English phrasal verbs. Moreover Masini (2005) only mentions 4 syntactic criteria instead of the 9 and 7 criteria respectively of Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999).

1) Insertion of material between V and P and object shift

This test suggests that only light, non-argumental constituents can be inserted between the verb proper and the particle of Italian phrasal verbs. This means that ‘light’ constituents, like the adverb *subito* ‘immediately’, can be inserted between the verb and the particle (39c) whereas heavy constituents, like the adverb *con accanimento* ‘with tenacity’, cannot be inserted between the verb and the particle (39d). Even more important, in terms of differences with the English phrasal verb, is Masini’s (2005) observation that this also means that with transitive phrasal verbs, like *lavare via* ‘to wash away’, the direct object normally follows the whole phrasal verb (as in 39a), so object shift (as in 39b) is impossible. The object, *la macchia* ‘the stain’, is apparently considered a constituent that is too heavy to be able to be inserted between the verb proper and the particle. With verb + prepositional phrase combinations (see example 40) and verb + adverbial phrase combinations (see example 41), on the other hand, order changing does not cause any grammaticality problems (as opposed to with genuine phrasal verbs).

(39)a. Luca ha *lavato via* la macchia.
   Luca have.3sg wash.part.parst. away the stain
   ‘Luca removed the stain (by washing)’
   b. *Luca ha lavato la macchia via*.
   c. Luca ha *lavato subito via* la macchia.
   d. *Luca ha lavato con accanimento via* la macchia.
(40) a. Luca ha lavato la macchia con il sapone
    Luca have.3sg wash.part.past the stain with the soap
    ‘Luca washed the stain with the soap’
b. Luca ha lavato con il sapone la macchia
    Luca have.3sg wash.part.past with the soap the stain

(41) a. Luca ha lavato la macchia subito
    Luca have.3sg wash.part.past the stain immediately
    ‘Luca washed the stain immediately’
b. Luca ha lavato subito la macchia (Masini 2005: 149)

Masini (2005) notes that the impossibility of object shift distinguishes Italian phrasal verbs from English phrasal verbs as object shift is possible with English phrasal verbs, which is shown in example 42 below:

(42) I looked the information up.
    I looked up the information. (Masini 2005: 148, footnote 9)

However, Masini (2005) also mentions that, because the adverbial constituent-like origin of the particle of Italian phrasal verbs is still visible at certain levels, there is a scale of acceptability with regard to the object shift of Italian phrasal verbs. She gives example 43 as a counterexample to the impossibility of object shift with Italian phrasal verbs:

(43) a. Metti su la borsa.
    Put.imperative up the bag
    ‘Put up the bag’
b. Metti la borsa su.
    Put.imperative the bag up
    ‘Put the bag up’ (Masini 2005: 148, footnote 9)

Masini (2005: 149, footnote 9) notes that this possibility of object shift seems to involve borderline cases in which the particle of the Italian phrasal verb can be interpreted both as a direction marker and as the goal of the motion, as in example 43. She suggests that in these cases the object shift might be a strategy to stress the latter interpretation, like in 43b.

She also hints at another explanation, though, as she claims that information structure has a role too. One of her reviewers apparently noted that la macchia ‘the stain’ is the focused information of the sentence, which is why it needs to occur in final position. This would be supported by the fact that by adding dai jeans ‘from the jeans’ to 39b, the example becomes perfectly acceptable:

(44) Luca ha lavato la macchia via dai jeans. (Masini 2005: 149, footnote 9)

However, Masini (2005: 149, footnote 9) mentions that there are reasons to think that via da ‘away from’ forms a separate construction (a complex locative relator) which might be why in example 44 the object can be inserted between the verb proper and the particle, as this makes sure that via and da are placed next to each other.
Waibel (2007: 38), on the other hand, seems to have a different view as she claims that, as with English phrasal verbs, the particle of Italian phrasal verbs can be separated from the verb and the (pronominal) object can be inserted in between the verb and the particle. I personally think Masini (2005)’s claim of a scale of acceptability seems more reasonable and less simplistic than Waibel’s short and simple claim that (pronominal) object shift with Italian phrasal verbs is possible. I therefore focus more on Masini (2005)’s account of the comparison between the syntactic behaviour of Italian phrasal verbs and English phrasal verbs than on Waibel (2007)’s account of it.

In conclusion, what is interesting about this test is the fact that object shift is apparently not possible with Italian phrasal verbs whereas it is possible with English phrasal verbs. There is a scale of acceptability though, which makes us think of the tests mentioned by Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999) since for these tests there was also often some doubt or a scale of acceptability.

2) **Left dislocation and topicalization**

This test suggests that prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases can normally undergo extraposition, whereas particles of phrasal verbs cannot be freely dislocated with constructions such as è...che... ‘it is... that...’ (which is why 45b is unacceptable) nor can they be freely topicalized (which is why 45c is unacceptable) (Masini 2005: 150-151).

(45)a. Maria *manda avanti* l’azienda di famiglia
   Maria send.3sg forward the business of family
   ‘Maria runs the family business’
   b. *È avanti* che Maria manda l’azienda di famiglia
   c. *Avanti* Maria manda l’azienda di famiglia

Again, however, there seems to be a scale of acceptability. An example about which there is some doubt is the following (Masini 2005: 150):

(46)a. È *andato dentro*
   be.3sg go.part.past inside
   ‘He went in’
   b. ??È *dentro* che è andato
   c. ?*Dentro* è andato

Masini (2005: 150) suggests that the doubt surrounding this example might be due to the fact that *andare dentro* ‘to go inside’ is a borderline case between a genuine phrasal verb and a verb + adverbial phrase combination. *Dentro* ‘inside’ can have a double interpretation in the example: it indicates the path of the generic verb of motion *andare* ‘to go’, but the transparent semantics of the combination *andare dentro* and the ambiguous nature of the particle *dentro* ‘inside’ can favour the concrete endpoint interpretation (which is the standard interpretation for verb + adverbial phrase combinations) (Masini 2005: 150).
In conclusion this test, too, supports the idea of a continuum of constructions and a scale of acceptability, which was also often the case for the syntactic criteria listed for the English phrasal verbs.

3) Coordination

This test suggests that particles of phrasal verbs cannot be coordinated as freely as prepositional phrases (example 47) and adverbial phrases (example 48) since prepositional phrases and adverbial phrases, as opposed to particles, behave like separate constituents. However, the example with the particle of a phrasal verb (example 49) also shows that, again, things are rarely clear-cut since (49b) and (49c) are questionable rather than completely unacceptable (Masini 2005: 152).

(47) Marco sta dietro a Giovanni e davanti a Sandra
   Marco stay.3sg behind to Giovanni and in front of to Sandra
   ‘Marco is behind Giovanni and in front of Sandra’

(48) Marco ha pulito la casa dentro e fuori
   Marco have.3sg clean.part.past the house inside and outside
   ‘Marco has cleaned the house inside and outside’

(49) a. *Sara ha portato fuori la bici e poi su la spesa
   Sara have.3sg take.part.past out the bike and then up the shopping
   ‘Sara took out the bike and then up the shopping’
b. ??Sara ha portato fuori la bici e Luca dentro la spesa
   Sara have.3sg take.part.past out the bike and Luca in the shopping
   ‘Sara took out the bike and Luca in the shopping’
c. ?Sara ha messo dentro la bici e fuori la spazzatura
   Sara have.3sg put.part.past in the bike and out the trash
   ‘Sara put the bike in and the trash out’

So yet again this test confirms the existence of a scale of acceptability (Masini 2005: 152).

4) Nominalization

The fourth test suggests that when a verb is followed by a prepositional phrase, the verb can normally transform into either a nominal infinitive (50b) or a deverbal nominal (50c) (Masini 2005: 153):

(50) a. La gente è corsa fuori dallo stadio
    the people be.3sg run.part.past out from the stadium
    ‘The people ran out of the stadium’
b. Il correre della gente fuori dallo stadio
    the run.inf of the people out from the stadium
c. La corsa della gente fuori dallo stadio
    the run of the people out from the stadium

When the verb is part of a phrasal verb, on the other hand, it is not possible to transform the verb into the corresponding deverbal nominal (see example 51b). One can only nominalize the whole phrasal verb by means of the nominal infinitive (see example 51c) (Masini 2005: 153):
(51) a. Gianni è corso via subito dopo la partita  
   Gianni be.3sg run.part.past away immediately after the game  
   ‘Gianni ran away immediately after the game’  
b. *La corsa via di Gianni subito dopo la partita  
   the run away of Gianni immediately after the game  
c. Il correre via di Gianni subito dopo la partita  
   the run.inf away of Gianni immediately after the game  

Masini (2005: 154, footnote 14), however, again notes that some counterexamples can be found even though they seem to be less frequent than the counterexamples found with the other syntactic tests she lists. She claims, for example, that “a limited set of nominalizations such as la venuta giù ‘the coming down’ or l’andata giù ‘the going down’ sound weird but not completely unacceptable” (Masini 2005: 154, footnote 14). When carrying out an informal Google search, however, she apparently found no results for these and other potential counterexamples (Masini 2005: 154, footnote 14).

In conclusion, the syntactic tests listed by Masini (2005) for the Italian phrasal verbs seem similar to the syntactic tests listed by Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999) since they often include a scale of acceptability. This results in a lack of agreement when it comes to knowing exactly which verb + particle combinations can be considered true phrasal verbs and which ones should not. On the other hand, Masini (2005) only lists four tests (as opposed to the nine and seven tests listed respectively by Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999)) and these four tests are also different from the ones used for the English phrasal verbs. It is thus interesting to notice that for the Italian phrasal verbs, too, syntactic tests have been used, which also imply a scale of acceptability, even though they are different from the tests used by Bolinger (1971) and Darwin and Gray (1999) for the English phrasal verbs.
1.3.3.3 Semantics

Waibel (2007: 38) states that with Italian phrasal verbs, one can observe the same cline from transparent to opaque as with the English phrasal verbs. She also gives some examples to illustrate the existence of this cline in Italian: in example 52, (a) is more literal than (b), which is in turn more literal than (c).

(52)a. Butta giù la chiave dal balcone.
    He throws the key down from the balcony.
  b. Butta giù qualche parola.
    He writes down some words in a hurry.
  c. La morte di sua moglie gli butta giù davvero.
    His wife’s death afflicts him terribly. (Waibel 2007: 38)

Masini (2005), on the other hand, provides a more detailed semantic classification of Italian phrasal verbs. She identifies three main semantic classes, the first being intensification. The particles of the phrasal verbs that belong to this first semantic class intensify a piece of information that is already contained in the verb itself, like the path or direction of the motion. Some examples are (Masini 2005: 154):

(53)uscire fuori lit. to exit out ‘to go out’
    entrare dentro lit. to enter in ‘to go in’
    scappare via lit. to escape away ‘to escape’

I think this semantic type of phrasal verb is a lot less frequent, if not non-existent, in English.

The second semantic class that Masini (2005: 154) mentions is the class of direction marking. In this class the particle, when added to generic (especially manner) verbs of motion, functions as a direction marker. Examples can be found in (54) below (Masini 2005: 155):

(54)mettere giù lit. put down ‘to put down’
    tirare su lit. pull up ‘to pull up(wards)’
    saltare dentro lit. jump inside ‘to jump in’

As can already be noted from the literal translation of the example above (54), this semantic type of phrasal verbs seems a lot more similar to existing phrasal verbs in English than the previous one.

The third semantic class Masini (2005) lists is the class of phrasal verbs with metaphorical meaning. She divides this semantic class into three subgroups of which the first one is the group with transparent metaphors. In this subgroup the relationship between the locative phrasal verb (example 55a) and its metaphorical counterpart (example 55b) is transparent and easily recognizable, as can be observed in the following example (Masini 2005: 155):
The second subgroup is the one with opaque metaphors, which means that the relationship between the two meanings of the phrasal verb is more opaque, but still somehow recognizable, as in example 56 below (Masini 2005: 155):

(56) Portare avanti
    Lit. bring forward
    a) ‘to bring forth’ and
    b) ‘to run (a business)’

The third subgroup, lastly, is the one with completely idiomatic forms where the phrasal verb has a completely idiomatic meaning, like for example in (57) below (Masini 2005: 155):

(57) Fare fuori
    Lit. do out
    ‘to kill’

I think this last semantic class of phrasal verbs with metaphorical meaning can be linked to the cline of transparency proposed by Waibel (2007) as I believe that the three subgroups put forward by Masini (2005: 155) might be situated on this cline rather than being three completely distinct and separate subgroups.

In conclusion, in terms of semantics the Italian phrasal verbs seem quite similar to the English phrasal verbs. I think all of the semantic classes and subgroups proposed by Masini (2005) also exist in English, apart from the semantic class of intensification, which I believe does not exist in English or only to a lesser degree. Furthermore, the cline from transparent to opaque phrasal verbs proposed by Waibel (2007) can easily be applied to both English and Italian phrasal verbs.

1.3.3.4 Register

When it comes to register, Italian phrasal verbs do seem to differ quite a bit from English phrasal verbs. Whereas researchers have claimed that English phrasal verbs are omnipresent and not limited to colloquial English (see section 1.3.2.6), Italian phrasal verbs are apparently limited to spoken language (Waibel 2007: 38; Masini 2005; Jansen 2004; Cerruti 2008).
However, Masini (2008) has demonstrated that phrasal verbs are already present in the texts written by Dante\(^1\) whereas Amenta (2008) has shown the presence of phrasal verbs in texts written in ancient Sicilian. Whether or not Italian phrasal verbs are (strictly) limited to colloquial, spoken Italian might thus need further research, as is also suggested by Masini (2005: 160).

### 1.3.3.5 Frequency and productivity

Linked to the claim that Italian phrasal verbs are restricted to spoken, colloquial Italian is the claim that Italian phrasal verbs are less numerous and less productive than English phrasal verbs (Waibel 2007: 38). Simone (1996) seems to subscribe to this view since he claims that even though the Italian phrasal verbs are very similar to the English phrasal verbs, they are different from them in terms of quantity. He explains that, notwithstanding the fact that the Italian phrasal verbs still form a “quantitatively respectable class” (my translation, Simone 1996: 51), they are not as numerous as is the case for English phrasal verbs and phrasal verbs of the Germanic languages in general. However, he also states that this is part of a paradox since even though Italian phrasal verbs are not as numerous, they play an important role in terms of frequency (Simone 1996: 53). Italian phrasal verbs thus seem to be frequent despite being less numerous.

As already noted, it has also been claimed that Italian phrasal verbs are less productive than their English counterpart (Waibel 2007: 38). However, Masini (2005: 147-148) mentions that most of the new verbs with locative meaning in Italian are phrasal verbs and that Italian has a quite productive and rich system of phrasal verbs (even though it is far less rich and productive than in English). Italian phrasal verbs thus seem to be productive and frequent even though they are less numerous and less productive than the English phrasal verbs.

In conclusion Italian phrasal verbs are definitely very similar to English phrasal verbs in some respects, most notably in terms of semantics and syntax. They seem different, though, in terms of register, frequency and productivity because they appear to be restricted to spoken Italian (whereas English phrasal verbs are claimed to not only be restricted to colloquial speech) and because they are less frequent and less productive than English phrasal verbs.

### 1.3.4 Dutch construction corresponding to English phrasal verbs

As already noted, it is widely claimed that in all Germanic languages phrasal verbs exist (see section 1.3.1), so this should also be the case for Dutch. Unfortunately in the literature the Dutch construction

---

\(^1\) A famous Italian writer who lived from 1265-1312.
corresponding to the English phrasal verb has not been described and compared to the English counterpart as well as has been done for the Italian phrasal verbs. Masini (2005), however, does show a more detailed picture as she states that for Germanic languages two main patterns can be distinguished. She opposes ‘particle verbs’ or ‘phrasal verbs’ (present in English, Swedish, Norwegian, Icelandic and Danish) to ‘separable complex verbs’ (SCVs) present in German and Dutch. Instead of consisting of a verb and a modifying particle, separable complex verbs consist of a verb and a separable prefix or preverb.

From Masini’s (2005) contrast between particle or phrasal verbs (e.g. English) and separable complex verbs (e.g. Dutch), it seems clear that Dutch does not simply have phrasal verbs because it is a Germanic language. The picture is clearly more complex and Dutch separable complex verbs can thus not simply be equated to English phrasal verbs. The main difference, as has already been noted, is that in Dutch one finds a combination of a verb and a separable prefix or preverb instead of a particle that is always separate from the main verb as is the case in English. Masini (2005: 165) therefore even states that the Italian verb-particle combinations are much more similar to the English type than the separable complex verb pattern found in Dutch, an observation she apparently owes to Geert Booij, who has done some research into Dutch separable complex verbs.

1.3.4.1 Types

Booij (1990: 49) mentions that there is a small set of separable complex verbs of which the first constituent is either an adjective (example 58a), a noun (example 58b), or a morpheme that does not exist as an independent word (example 58c) (examples from Booij 1990: 49).

\[(58)\]
\[
a. \text{goed-keuren ‘to approve’} \\
b. \text{adem-halen ‘to breathe’} \\
c. \text{gade-slaan ‘to watch’} \\
\text{vol-houden ‘to go on’} \\
\text{stof-zuigen ‘to vacuum clean’} \\
\text{feest-vieren ‘to have a party’} \\
\]

This is not possible with English phrasal verbs as “multiword combinations that seem to be acting as verbs but have what are usually considered nouns, personal pronouns, adjectives, or verbs in the particle position are not considered phrasal verbs” (Darwin & Gray 1999: 69). Set straight would thus not be considered a phrasal verb whereas combinations of verb + adjective are possible with Dutch SCVs (for example (58a) goedkeuren ‘to approve’). This is an important difference, which again indicates that the picture is more complex than just every Germanic language having phrasal verbs.

1.3.4.2 Syntax

Booij (1990: 47) has proposed two syntactic criteria to recognise the separability of SCVs. The first one is concerned with the way in which the past participles are formed. In Dutch, past participles are normally composed by simultaneously prefixing ge- and suffixing –t/d to the verbal stem. In SCVs,
however, *ge-* occurs in between the ‘particle’ and the verb, as in for example *op-ge-beld* (‘called’) (Booij 1990: 47).

The second syntactic criteria that demonstrates the separability of SCVs has to do with the occurrence of the infinitival particle *te*, which appears before verbal infinitives (see 59a below). In infinitival forms of SCVs, *te* appears in between the two parts, as in example 59b (Booij 1990: 47):

(59) a. John belooft te komen ‘John promises to come’
    b. John belooft op te bellen ‘John promises to ring’

These syntactic criteria demonstrate the separability of SCVs, whereas the syntactic tests proposed for English and Italian phrasal verbs actually demonstrate the higher unity of phrasal verbs as opposed to free combinations with a preposition or an adverb. Furthermore, the syntactic criteria proposed by Booij (1990: 47) do not establish whether a multi-word combination is a separable complex verb or not. Booij’s (1990) syntactic criteria therefore seem, to me, much more limited than the syntactic tests proposed to recognise phrasal verbs in English and in Italian.

With regard to syntax, some other important observations should be made. With Dutch SCVs, the ‘particle’ can either be agglutinated to the verb or it can follow the verb, whereas in English the particle can only follow the verb. Waibel (2007) explains this quite clearly for German particle verbs, of which she states that it is only a superficially similar verb type because phrasal verbs do not exist in German. She points out that in non-finite forms of German particle verbs the particle is agglutinated to the verbal stem in preverbal position. The particle only occurs in post-verbal position in finite verb forms when prefix and stem are separated (infinitive: *anziehen*; finite (present): ich ziehe *an*; non-finite (present perfect): ich habe *angezogen*; Waibel 2007: 39). What appears to be an independent particle in finite verb forms is thus in fact a detached prefix. Waibel (2007: 40) therefore concludes that even though there is a seeming correspondence between German and English (*ich ziehe an* - *I put on*), one has to be cautious with assuming that German particle verbs and English phrasal verbs are prime candidates for cross-linguistic transfer. I think Waibel’s (2007) observation and conclusion are also valid for Dutch SCVs (infinitive: *aantrekken*; finite (present): ik trek *aan*; non-finite (present perfect): ik heb *aangetrokken*).

Masini (2005), furthermore, explains that with Dutch and German SCVs, the separable prefix or preverb is separated from the main verb under certain syntactic conditions, like for example verb second movement in main clauses. She illustrates this with the following example based on the Dutch verb *opzoeken* (literally *up search* ‘to look up’) (Masini 2005: 146):

(60) a. dat John de informatie opzoekt ‘that John looks up the information’
    b. John zoekt de informatie op
‘John looks up the information’

It is thus clear that with Dutch SCVs, the separable prefix or preverb can either be agglutinated to the main verb (60a) or follow the main verb (60b), whereas with English phrasal verbs the particle can only follow the main verb.

Waibel (2007: 39) indicates yet another syntactic difference between English phrasal verbs and German particle verbs, namely that object shift is impossible with German particle verbs whereas it is possible with English phrasal verbs. I think that the impossibility of object shift is also valid for Dutch SCVs, as is illustrated in example 61 below (based on Waibel 2007: 39):

(61) a. I put the trousers on. Ich ziehe die Hose an. Ik trek de broek aan.
    b. I put on the trousers. *Ich ziehe an die Hose. *Ik trek aan de broek.

In conclusion, the following are all important differences between Dutch separable complex verbs and English phrasal verbs: the fact that one has a separable prefix or preverb instead of a particle, the fact that this prefix or preverb can either follow the verb or be agglutinated to it, the absence of true syntactic tests, and the impossibility of object shift.

1.3.4.3 Semantics

Like English phrasal verbs and German particle verbs (Waibel 2007: 40), Dutch separable complex verbs can have either idiomatic meaning (62a), non-idiomatic meaning (62b) or completive meaning (62c) (examples based on Waibel 2007: 40-47):

(62) a. give up aufgeben opgeven
    b. throw away wegwerfen wegwerpen
    c. eat up aufessen opeten

In this respect Dutch separable complex verbs are thus similar to English phrasal verbs.

1.3.4.4 Productivity

Booij (1990: 59) states that the class of SCVs with ‘particles’ is very productive and that it can be extended unintentionally, with transparent meaning. He illustrates this by giving examples with the particle door, which can be used with all kinds of action verbs with the predictable meaning of ‘to go on V-ing’, as shown by example 63 below (Booij 1990: 59):

(63) doenschrijven ‘to go on writing’
doorkopen ‘to go on buying’
door tikken ‘to go on typing’
doordrinken ‘to go on drinking’
The class of SCVs with nominal or adjectival first constituents, on the other hand, is not productive. Dutch separable complex verbs with a ‘particle’ as their first constituent are thus similar to English phrasal verbs in terms of productivity.

1.3.5 Conclusion

Both the Italian and the Dutch construction show some similarities and differences when compared to the English phrasal verbs. Italian verbi frasali are similar to English phrasal verbs in terms of syntax and semantics (even though they have the semantic type of intensification, which I think is not frequent at all with English phrasal verbs). In terms of register, Italian verbi frasali seem to be restricted more to spoken language than is the case for English phrasal verbs. However, Italian verbi frasali have also been found in written Italian, for example in the works by Dante (Masini 2008). A clearer difference, then, is the fact that Italian verbi frasali are less frequent and productive than the English phrasal verbs.

The Dutch construction that most closely resembles the English phrasal verb, is generally quite different from the English phrasal verbs. Complex separable verbs consist of a verb and a separable prefix or preverb rather than a verb and a particle as is the case with English phrasal verbs. Furthermore there are also complex separable verbs of which the first constituent is a noun or an adjective, which is not possible with English phrasal verbs. In terms of syntax, then, complex separable verbs are quite different from English phrasal verbs. First of all, the separable prefix or preverb can either follow the verb or be agglutinated to the verb, whereas with English phrasal verbs the particle can only follow the verb. Secondly, object shift is not possible with complex separable verbs. Thirdly, there are no true syntactic tests to understand whether a multiword combination is a complex separable verb or not. In terms of semantics and productivity, however, Dutch complex separable verbs with particles are similar to English phrasal verbs.

In conclusion, even though in the literature on phrasal verb avoidance it has often been claimed that Dutch has phrasal verbs whereas Italian does not, it seems like the opposite is actually true. Italian seems to have a construction that is closer to the English phrasal verb than the pattern that Dutch has. However, more research is needed to be able to claim this very confidently.

1.4 English as a foreign language in Italy and Flanders

Before moving on to the experimental section, I would like to have a quick look at what the situation of the English language is like in Italy and in Flanders. In Italy, English is taught as a foreign language
from the age of 6 (MIUR: Insegnamento della lingua straniera; d.lgs. 19 febbraio 2004, n. 59) or, depending on the school, even before that, in kindergarten, i.e. when they are between 3 and 5 years old. In Flanders, on the other hand, pupils only start at the age of 13 (OVSG: leerplannen secundair onderwijs). This does not mean, however, that the level of English proficiency of Italians is higher than the level of English proficiency of their Flemish peers with the same age.

This could be due to the fact that Italians often dub movies, TV series, etc., whereas Flemish people tend to resort to subtitles (Micola, Bris & Banal-Estañol 2009). Flemish learners of English are therefore exposed more to natural English input than Italian learners of English, who hear everything translated from English into Italian.

In conclusion, the situation of the English language in Italy and in Flanders is not very comparable since Italians start earlier with English classes but dub more than Flemish people, who tend to resort to subtitles. This could have an effect on the potential avoidance behaviour of Flemish and Italian learners of English. Due to practical reasons, however, I could not control this potential factor completely.

1.5 Research question and hypothesis

The research question I want to solve with this dissertation is the following: is there a difference in the usage of English phrasal verbs between Italian and Flemish learners of English and how can this be explained?

The literature on phrasal verb avoidance suggests that learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with a Romance mother tongue because phrasal verbs exist in all Germanic languages whereas they do not exist in Romance languages. This dissertation tries to establish whether this widely held assumption is true. The hypothesis is thus that the Italian students of English will avoid or underuse English phrasal verbs more than the Flemish students of English. Following this hypothesis, one would expect to find that, for most of the 15 verb pairs that have been used, there is a statistically significant association that shows that the Italian students have preferred the non-phrasal option significantly more than the native speakers of English and than the Flemish students of English.

4 I owe this observation to Beatrice Grifoni e Francesca Costanza Dall’Oca.
5 http://www.ovsg.be/leerplannen/secundair-onderwijs
If the results show that this hypothesis does not hold, then it will prove that the assumption is not correct. This would be in line with what I have found in section 1.3, namely that phrasal verbs do exist in Italian as well as in Dutch (with certain similarities and dissimilarities). Another reason for this hypothesis to not hold, would be that the levels of English proficiency of the Flemish and Italian students are too high: the students could be past the stage of avoidance of phrasal verbs. The Italian and Flemish students could be at the last stage of a U-shaped behaviour, where the target construction reappears, or they could simply not avoid the English phrasal verbs anymore because they have learnt how to use them.
2

Methodology

2.1 Participants

Three groups of participants were selected for this study: native speakers of British English (who function as a control group), Flemish learners of English and Italian learners of English. To make sure that the group of Flemish learners of English was somewhat comparable to the group of Italian learners of English, I have chosen participants who study English translation and interpretation because the competences one tries to reach with this discipline seem quite similar. I have selected students who were doing their master’s degree since this would again increase comparability, as the competences reached by then should be more similar than the competences reached during the years of their bachelor’s degree. This also means, however, that I could not compare between different levels of English proficiency within the groups of learners.

The mean age of the 39 native British English speaking participants is 25 (minimum = 18; maximum = 60; median = 22). The mean age of the 36 participants with a Flemish mother tongue, on the other hand, was 21 (minimum = 18; maximum= 33; median = 21) whereas the mean age of the 44 participants with an Italian mother tongue was 24 (minimum = 21; maximum = 29; median = 24).

Of the 39 native speakers of British English, 23 were female and 16 were male. 27 Flemish participants, on the other hand, were female whereas 9 Flemish participants were male. Of the 44 Italian participants, 41 were female and 3 were male.
2.2 Tasks and procedure

Many studies on phrasal verb avoidance have used three types of tests: a multiple-choice test, a recall test, and a translation test (see section 1.2). The present study deploys the multiple-choice test. This is mainly because of practical reasons.

For this multiple-choice test I have selected the test sentences used by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) because they have also given these sentences to Dutch participants. This makes it possible to compare their results to mine when needed. This study is thus partly a replication study. Furthermore, because of practical reasons, I wanted to use native speakers of British, rather than American, English as a control group. Because of this, it was impossible to use the test sentences adopted by, for example, Liao and Fukuya (2004) since these are test sentences adapted to an American context whereas the test sentences of Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) are adapted to a British context.

In addition, I also adopted the options Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) had given to their participants, which included the correct phrasal verb, the correct one-word near-synonym and two distractor answers. To those options I added the answers a British friend of mine had given when I asked him to fill in the blanks without looking at the options. In this way, chances were higher that all natural-sounding answers were part of the options. The phrasal verbs and their one-word near-synonyms that I have used can be found in table 3 below.

Table 3: The 15 pairs of phrasal verbs and their one-word near-synonyms (cf. Hulstijn and Marchena 1989)

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Phrasal verb</th>
<th>One-word near-synonym</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>1. Turn up</td>
<td>Appear/arrive</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2. Brush up</td>
<td>Improve</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3. Let down</td>
<td>Disappoint/betray</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>4. Give up</td>
<td>Stop/quit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>5. Get through to</td>
<td>Reach</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>6. Get up</td>
<td>Rise</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>7. Go on</td>
<td>Continue/resume</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>8. Break out</td>
<td>Start</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>9. Go off</td>
<td>Explode</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---</td>
<td>---</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>10.</td>
<td>Bring up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>11.</td>
<td>Hang on/hold on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>12.</td>
<td>Put out</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>13.</td>
<td>Make up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>14.</td>
<td>Give in/give up</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>15.</td>
<td>Turn down</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The test sentences, on the other hand, and the possible answers that could be used to fill in the gaps in these sentences, can be found below. The words in between the brackets are the options the participants could choose from to fill in the gap.

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, arrive)

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)

3) We were really astonished when John did not keep his promise: we hadn’t thought that he would ever ___ his friends.
   (let down, solve, disappoint, carry on, betray)

4) When you are a chain-smoker it is incredibly difficult to ___ smoking.
   (fall down, stop, give up, elect, quit)

5) I spent one hour trying to ring my mother from a phone booth but didn’t manage to ___ her.
   (earn, get through to, reach, mix up)

6) When the weather is nice I love to ___ early.
   (release, look after, get up, rise)

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, resume)

8) When the war was just about to ___ in 1940, my father must have been about 15-years-old.
   (break out, look down on, start, satisfy)

9) Luckily there would be no one in the embassy-building when the bomb was to ___.
   (go off, explode, tune in, reply)

10) According to my grandfather it is very difficult, nowadays, to ___ one’s children well.
Methodology

11) “Hello Suzy? How nice of you to call me! But someone has just rung the doorbell: could you ___ a second?”
   (capture, hang on, wait, fall down, hold on)

12) She did it again! She always forgets to ___ the fire when she leaves!
   (put out, foresee, extinguish, break into)

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, follow, lie down, invent)

14) The fight between Robert and Paul stopped when Paul twisted his ankle and had to ___.
   (realize, surrender, look up to, give in, give up)

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, cheer up, refuse)

Furthermore, I also added distractor questions (with distractor answers) to the multiple-choice test in between the questions with phrasal verbs to avoid a habituation effect (Cornips and Poletto 2005: 954). This effect implies that when a given sentence type is offered repeatedly, the acceptability of it tends to increase. To try to break the habituation effect, I have first found distractor verbs and near-synonyms on the following website: http://usefulenglish.ru/vocabulary/verb-synonyms. After that, I have found, in the British National Corpus (BNC), natural contexts where both the distractor verb and the distractor near-synonym could be used. Lastly, I have added two random distractor verbs as possible answers to fill in the blank of the distractor question so that these questions would not have less options to choose from than the questions with actual phrasal verbs. The distractor questions (and the corresponding answers) that I have used are the following:

1) He seems in no hurry to ___ a family of his own and is shy about discussing beautiful Kristy, who he has been linked with romantically.
   (stare, begin, annoy, start)

2) Can I ___ this window Dave?
   (shut, heat up, close, call)

3) He felt the referee did not have a particularly good game and I think he’s going to ___ to the League about that.
   (speak, stay up, close down, talk)

4) Most street sellers will drop to at least half price if you ___ and wave as much as them.
   (crave, shout, yell, go up)

5) “Your bedroom may look pretty safe. But if you leave a child for a few minutes he may ___ the pills you keep in the bedside drawer and poison himself.”
(find, buy, discover, assume)

6) Last week the society took the incredibly high-handed decision to ___ a cheque for 50,000 because it came from the profits of the famous Dianagate tapes.
   (reject, refuse, grow, jump over)

7) For security and safety reasons stores should be kept exclusive and the provisions of hygiene regulations usually ___ cleaning materials being stored with food.
   (forbid, take out, prohibit, become)

8) The battling couple have frequently traded insults in books and through magazine interviews. Sonny said: ‘She has to ___ living in the past’.
   (stop, offer, quit, cook)

Again following Hulstijn and Marchena (1989), then, I have added the question “Were there, within the options you could choose from, any words you didn't know?” after each question that contained either a phrasal verb or only distractor verbs. Hulstijn and Marchena (1989: 246) did this to rule out ignorance, rather than avoidance, as an alternative explanation for non-use of phrasal verbs. In addition I have also written the following sentences in the introduction to the multiple-choice test: “To fill in this survey please 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.” These sentences were again modelled on similar instructions given by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989: 245). To complete the survey I have added questions about age, sex and the amount of years the participants have been studying English.

2.3 Data analysis

For the analysis of my data, I will first look at each question containing a phrasal verb separately. For each of these 15 questions I will provide a table with the frequency of the answers depending on the mother tongue of the participants and a bar graph showing these frequencies. To the table I will also add, between brackets, the standardized residuals when applicable.

Furthermore, I will have a look at whether mistakes had been made (i.e. choosing a distractor verb instead of the correct phrasal verb or the correct one-word near-synonym) and by whom, specifically which mother tongue those participants had. In addition, I will also check if participants indicated that they did not know one or more of the relevant options they had been given and, again, which mother tongue those participants have.
Methodology

After having eliminated the mistakes from the given answers, then, I will check, by using a chi-square test, whether there is a statistically significant association between mother tongue of the participants and the answers they have given. If the chi-square test indicates that there is a significant association, I will look at Cramér’s V to determine how strong this association is.

Afterwards I will summarise these results in a table showing the verb pairs for which there was a significant association and what this means in terms of preferences. Using this methodology, I hope to find out whether there is a difference in the usage of English phrasal verbs between Italian and Flemish learners of English.

2.4 Results

2.4.1 Turn up vs. appear/arrive

For the first question the correct phrasal verb was ‘turn up’ whereas the correct one-word synonyms were ‘appear’ and ‘arrive’. The frequencies of the answers given depending on the mother tongue of the participants (and the standardized residuals) can be found in the following table:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>appear Count</th>
<th>Turn up vs. appear/arrive</th>
<th>arrive Count</th>
<th>look up Count</th>
<th>turn up Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>8 (+1.24)</td>
<td></td>
<td>3 (-0.19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>25 (-0.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>7 (+0.58)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (+0.19)</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>28 (-0.32)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>2 (-1.69)</td>
<td></td>
<td>4 (0)</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>37 (+0.73)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

In addition, the frequencies of the table are visualized in the following bar graph:
The table and the bar graph clearly show that the three groups of participants responded quite similarly, preferring the phrasal verb ‘turn up’ to the one-word near-synonyms ‘appear’ and ‘arrive’. One Italian participant, however, made a mistake by choosing ‘look up’, which was not correct in this context (see test sentences in section 2.2). In addition, two Italian participants indicated, interestingly, that they did not know ‘turn up’ whereas all Flemish participants indicated that there were no words that they did not know.

After having eliminated the mistake ‘look up’, we find the following results with the chi-square test: $\chi^2(4) = 5.46; P$-value $= 0.23$. This means that, at a 5% significance level, there is no statistically significant association between the mother tongue of the participants and the choice between the correct phrasal verb ‘turn up’ or the correct one-word near-synonyms ‘appear’/’arrive’.

### 2.4.2 Brush up vs. improve

For the second question, the answers given according to mother tongue can be found in the following table and bar graph:

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Brush up</th>
<th>Improve</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>24 (+1.99)</td>
<td>12 (-1.78)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>6 (-2.73)</td>
<td>33 (+2.44)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>23 (+0.77)</td>
<td>21 (-0.69)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table and bar graph indicate that the answers given by the native speakers of English are quite different from the answers given by the Flemish and Italian students: the native speakers of English preferred the one-word verb ‘improve’ whereas the Flemish and Italian students showed a preference for the phrasal verb ‘brush up’. This preference for the phrasal verb, however, was only minimal in the case of the Italian students. In addition, it is immediately visible from the bar chart that no mistakes were made.

When asked whether any words were unfamiliar, 1 Flemish student and 3 Italian students pointed out that they did not know the phrasal verb ‘brush up’. One native speaker of English, then, interestingly noted: “Unless I was being very formal, I’d go with ‘brush up’ in both speech and writing instead of ‘improve’; it’s a universally understood and used phrase in Britain”. This goes against the preference of the native speakers for the one-word verb ‘improve’ as seen in the results.

The results suggest a statistically significant association between mother tongue and preference for the phrasal verb ‘brush up’ or the one-word verb ‘improve’ ($\chi^2 (2) = 21.62; \text{P-value} < 0.0001$). Cramér’s $V$, however, indicates that the strength of this association is only moderate ($V = 0.43$). The standardized residuals, then, reveal that the native speakers showed a statistically significant deviation by preferring the one-word equivalent ‘improve’ (-2.73; +2.44). The standardized residuals for the Flemish students, on the other hand, indicate a deviation that is almost statistically significant (+1.99; -1.78) whereas those of the Italian students reveal a deviation that is not statistically significant (+0.77; -0.69).
### 2.4.3 Let down vs. disappoint/betray

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Let down</th>
<th>disappoint</th>
<th>betray</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>12 (+0.34)</td>
<td>6 (+0.24)</td>
<td>18 (-0.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>18 (+1.81)</td>
<td>4 (-0.78)</td>
<td>17 (-0.93)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>6 (-2)</td>
<td>8 (+0.52)</td>
<td>30 (+1.22)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph for question 3 show that the Italian students clearly preferred the phrasal verb ‘let down’ to the one-word near-synonyms. The English native speakers, on the other hand, preferred the choice of a one-word verb (either ‘betray’ or ‘disappoint’, the former being more popular). The Flemish students, then, showed a preference for the phrasal verb ‘let down’. However, if we add the counts of the one-word near-synonyms ‘betray’ and ‘disappoint’, there is no preference for a phrasal verb or a one-word verb in the case of the Flemish students. Furthermore no mistakes were made. One Italian student, however, expressed that she did not know the phrasal verb ‘let down’.

One English native speaker explained why he chose ‘betray’: “‘Let down’, ‘disappoint’, and ‘betray’ are all valid here [...]. The choice of word would really depend on what John had done, or failed to do. I went with betray as the most extreme option as astonished is a fairly extreme choice as well”. The context of the test sentence could thus explain why the English native speakers tended to prefer the one-word verb ‘betray’.

The results showed that there is an association between mother tongue and the choice of the phrasal verb ‘let down’ or the one-word verbs ‘betray’ and ‘disappoint’ ($\chi^2 (4) = 10.82$; P-value = 0.03). Cramér’s V,
However, indicates that the effect is only moderate ($V = 0.21$). The standardized residuals show that the only significant deviation is constituted by the low amount of Italian students who chose ‘betray’ (-2). The preference of the English native speakers for ‘betray’, on the other hand, is almost a significant deviation (+1.81). This means that the Italian students underused the one-word verb ‘betray’.

### 2.4.4 Give up vs. stop/quit

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>give up</th>
<th>quit</th>
<th>Stop</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>8 (-0.8)</td>
<td>27 (+1.74)</td>
<td>1 (-2.05)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>10 (-0.43)</td>
<td>13 (-1.74)</td>
<td>16 (+3.69)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>17 (+1.13)</td>
<td>24 (+0.07)</td>
<td>3 (-1.62)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph clearly show that the Flemish and Italian students preferred the one-word verb ‘quit’ whereas the English native speakers preferred the one-word verb ‘stop’. Again no mistakes were made. Only one Italian participant indicated that there was an unfamiliar word, namely the filler “fall down”. Ignorance of the phrasal verb ‘give up’ could thus be ruled out completely.

For this verb pair too, the results indicated that there is a statistically significant association between the mother tongue and the answers given by the participants ($\chi^2 (4) = 28.58$; P-value < 0.0001). Cramér’s V, however, shows that the effect is again only moderate ($V = 0.35$). The standardized residuals reveal
that the significant deviations are the high amount of British native speakers who chose ‘stop’ (+3.69) and the low amount of Flemish students who chose ‘stop’ (-2.05).

One native English speaker, then, explained his choice: “‘Stop’, ‘give up’ and ‘quit’ are all valid, however again, ‘quit’ here would sound more American, and colloquially you would go with the minimal word option of ‘stop’ instead of ‘give up’ even though ‘give up’ would be the more accurate choice as ‘stop’ could be read as referring to ceasing the current cigarette only”. This could explain the answers given by the British native speakers quite well.

### 2.4.5 Get through to vs. reach

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>get through to</th>
<th>reach</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>9 (-1.64)</td>
<td>27 (+1.42)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>26 (+2.27)</td>
<td>13 (-1.97)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>16 (-0.66)</td>
<td>28 (+0.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and the bar chart of question 5 show that the Flemish and the Italian students preferred the one-word verb ‘reach’ whereas the native speakers of English preferred the phrasal verb ‘get through to’. One native speaker of English, though, mentioned that “‘get through to’ is too wordy in speech”, which goes against the results. Again, none of the participants made a mistake. Two Italian students, however, indicated that they did not know the phrasal verb ‘get through to’.
Not surprisingly, the results show that there is a significant association between the mother tongue of the participants and their choice of the phrasal verb ‘get through to’ or the one-word verb ‘reach’ ($\chi^2 (2) = 14.47; P\text{-value} = 0.0007$). Cramér’s V again indicates that this effect is only moderate ($V = 0.35$). The standardized residuals reveal that only the high preference of the native English speakers for the phrasal verb ‘get through to’ is a statistically significant deviation (+2.27) whereas their low preference for the one-word near-synonym ‘reach’ is almost a statistically significant deviation (-1.97).

This shows that the Flemish and Italian students underused the phrasal verb ‘get through to’ a bit when compared to the choices of the native speakers. I do not think that this underuse can be explained by stating that ‘get through to’ is too similar to the native language of the Flemish and Italian students since no clear equivalents exist in Italian or Dutch. ‘Get through to’ could thus not be considered too Dutch-like or too Italian-like. I assume that a more plausible explanation would be that ‘reach’ is more general than ‘get through to’ and that the Flemish and Italian students were thus adopting a play-it-safe strategy.

### 2.4.6 Get up vs. rise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Get up Count</th>
<th>Rise Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>35</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>37</td>
<td>2</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>43</td>
<td>1</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
The table and bar graph of this question very clearly indicate that all three groups of participants preferred the phrasal verb ‘get up’ over the one-word near-synonym ‘rise’. One native speaker of English explained his preference for ‘get up’ by stating that “‘get up’ is far more commonly used than ‘rise’”. No mistakes were made and no participants indicated that there were any unfamiliar words.

Since the counts for ‘rise’ are smaller than 5 for all three groups, I executed a Fisher Exact test instead of a Chi Square test. The results showed, not surprisingly, that there is no statistically significant association between mother tongue and choice of ‘get up’ or ‘rise’ (P-value = 0.83).

### 2.4.7 Go on vs. continue/resume

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Count continue</th>
<th>Count go on</th>
<th>Count resume</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>28 (+1.64)</td>
<td>2 (-1.88)</td>
<td>6 (-0.85)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>26 (+0.79)</td>
<td>8 (+0.17)</td>
<td>5 (-1.38)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>14 (-2.22)</td>
<td>13 (+1.54)</td>
<td>17 (+2.07)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

From this table and bar graph, it emerges that the Flemish students and the English native speakers had a clear preference for the one-word verb ‘continue’ whereas the Italian students showed a slight preference for the one-word verb ‘resume’. Again no mistakes were made. Four Italian students indicated that they did not know the fillers (‘flush’ and ‘cheer up’). Ignorance of the correct phrasal verb could thus be ruled out.
The results show that there is a statistically significant association between the mother tongue of the participants and the answers they have chosen ($\chi^2 (4) = 21.07; \text{P-value} = 0.0003$). Cramér’s V, however, indicates that the strength of the effect is only moderate ($V = 0.30$). When looking at the standardized residuals, then, one finds that the only statistically significant deviations are the low amount of Italian students who chose ‘continue’ (-2.22) and the high preference of Italian students for ‘resume’ (+2.07). This means that there was no avoidance or overuse of the phrasal verb ‘continue’; the Italian students only preferred another one-word verb (‘resume’ instead of ‘continue’).

### 2.4.8 Break out vs. start

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>Italian</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>break out</td>
<td>30 (+0.8)</td>
<td>20 (-1.41)</td>
<td>35 (+0.59)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>satisfy</td>
<td>0</td>
<td>1</td>
<td>0</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Start</td>
<td>6 (-1.28)</td>
<td>18 (+2.26)</td>
<td>9 (-0.94)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and the bar graph of question 8 show that all three groups preferred the phrasal verb ‘break out’ over the one-word near-synonym ‘start’. This preference was less clear, though, with the native speakers of English. One mistake has been made, oddly enough by a native speaker of English. Furthermore, only 2 Italian students indicated that they did not know the filler ‘look down on’. Ignorance of the phrasal verb ‘break out’ could thus be ruled out.
After having removed the mistake made by the native speaker who chose ‘satisfy’, the Chi Square test showed that there is a statistically significant association between mother tongue and choice between the phrasal verb ‘break out’ and the one-word verb ‘start’ ($\chi^2 (2) = 10.62; P$-value = 0.0049). Cramér’s $V$ again indicated that the strength of the effect is only moderate ($V = 0.3$). The standardized residuals, then, revealed that the only statistically significant deviation is the high amount of native speakers of English who have chosen ‘start’ (+2.26). The Flemish and Italian students thus slightly overused the phrasal verb ‘break out’ when compared to the choices of the native speakers.

### 2.4.9 Go off vs. explode

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Dutch</th>
<th>22 (+1.86)</th>
<th>14 (-1.56)</th>
<th>English</th>
<th>10 (-1.51)</th>
<th>29 (+1.26)</th>
<th>Italian</th>
<th>17 (-0.26)</th>
<th>27 (+0.22)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

The table and the bar graph of this 9th question show that the native speakers of English and the Italian students preferred the phrasal verb ‘go off’ whereas the Flemish students showed a preference for the one-word verb ‘explode’. No mistakes were made. One Italian student, however, mentioned that she knew neither the filler ‘tune in’ nor the phrasal verb ‘go off’.

58
The results indicated that there is a statistically significant association between mother tongue and the choice of ‘explode’ or the phrasal verb ‘go off’ ($\chi^2 (2) = 9.91; P\text{-value} = 0.007$). Cramér’s $V$, however, signals that the strength of this effect is only moderate ($V = 0.29$). The standardized residuals show that there are no statistically significant deviations. The closest to a statistically significant deviation, however, is the high amount of Flemish students who chose the one-word verb ‘explode’ (+1.86).

One native speaker of English had explained why he chose ‘go off’: “Again with horrific things we tend to avoid strong words like ‘explode’ and go for more gentle euphemistic words and phrases like ‘go off’”. A lesser tendency to be euphemistic could explain why the Flemish people did not prefer ‘go off’ like the native speakers and the Italian students did. However, I think a more plausible reason might be that the Flemish students try to avoid the use of an expression that is felt to be too Dutch-like to be transferred into English (“de bom ging af”). This is in accordance with what Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) have found.

### 2.4.10 Bring up vs. raise

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Count $\pm$ (Standardized Residual) $\chi^2$ (2)</th>
<th>P-value</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>3 (-1.24) 33 (+0.56)</td>
<td>9.91</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>7 (+0.17) 32 (-0.08)</td>
<td>0.007</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>10 (+0.96) 34 (-0.43)</td>
<td>0.29</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Note: The $\chi^2$ test evaluates the goodness of fit between observed and expected frequencies.*

![Graph showing the comparison between 'bring up' and 'raise' with counts for each mother tongue group.](image-url)
The table and bar graph of this question clearly show that all three groups preferred the one-word verb ‘raise’ to the phrasal verb ‘bring up’. One native speaker of English explained that he chose the more formal ‘raise’ because of the use of ‘one’s’ in the test sentence, which is very formal. This could explain why there is such a strong preference for ‘raise’ for all three groups.

Furthermore, no mistakes were made. One Italian student, however, indicated that she did not know the phrasal verb ‘bring up’.

The results showed, not surprisingly, that there is no statistically significant association between mother tongue and the choice between the phrasal verb ‘bring up’ and the one-word near-synonym ‘raise’ ($\chi^2(2) = 2.99; P$-value $= 0.22$).

2.4.11 **Hang on/hold on vs. wait**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>hang on</th>
<th>hold on</th>
<th>Wait</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>24 (+0.83)</td>
<td>10 (-0.98)</td>
<td>2 (-0.08)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>26 (+0.86)</td>
<td>10 (-1.24)</td>
<td>3 (+0.47)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>17 (-1.56)</td>
<td>25 (+2.05)</td>
<td>2 (-0.37)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph of this question show that all three groups clearly preferred the phrasal verbs (‘hang on’/’hold on’) over the one-word near-synonym ‘wait’. One native speaker of English gave an explanation for this preference: “‘hold on’ and ‘hang on’ both work here, but ‘hold on’ is more common...”
Methodology

to someone who’s on the phone. ‘Wait’ is normally used to someone physically there you’re talking to, e.g. “Could you wait a second; I’m on the phone?””. Furthermore no mistakes were made and ignorance of the correct phrasal verbs could be ruled out.

The results show that there is a statistically significant association between native language and choice between the correct options ($\chi^2 (4) = 10.92$; P-value = 0.03). Cramér’s V, however, indicates that the strength of this association is only moderate (V = 0.21). The standardized residuals, then, show that the only statistically significant deviation is the high amount of Italian students who chose ‘hold on’ (+2.05). This means that the Italian students did not avoid using a phrasal verb, but that they preferred a different phrasal verb (‘hold on’ rather than ‘hang on’, the last one being the preferred option of the Flemish students and the native speakers).

2.4.12 Put out vs. extinguish

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>extinguish</th>
<th>Count</th>
<th>put out</th>
<th>Count</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td></td>
<td>5</td>
<td></td>
<td>31</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td></td>
<td>2</td>
<td></td>
<td>37</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td></td>
<td>4</td>
<td></td>
<td>40</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

This table and bar graph show that all three groups clearly preferred the phrasal verb ‘put out’ to the one-word near-synonym ‘extinguish’. No mistakes were made. Two Italian students mentioned that they
did not know the filler ‘break out’ and the phrasal verb ‘put out’. One Flemish student, on the other hand, said that she knew neither the filler ‘foresee’ nor the one-word verb ‘extinguish’.

Again too many cells had an expected frequency which was smaller than 5, so I executed a Fisher Exact test instead of a Chi Square test. The results showed that there is no statistically significant association between mother tongue and the choice between ‘extinguish’ and ‘put out’ (P-value = 0.49).

2.4.13 Make up vs. invent

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>invent Count (Expected)</th>
<th>make up Count (Expected)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>1 (3.63)</td>
<td>35 (32.37)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>9 (3.93)</td>
<td>30 (35.07)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>2 (4.44)</td>
<td>42 (39.57)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph of this 13th question clearly show that the three groups preferred the phrasal verb ‘make up’ to the one-word near-synonym ‘invent’. No mistakes were made and ignorance of the correct phrasal verb ‘make up’ could be ruled out.

The frequencies for ‘invent’ were too low for a Chi Square test, so I executed a Fisher Exact test which showed that there is a statistically significant association between mother tongue and the choice of ‘invent’ or the phrasal verb ‘make up’ (P-value = 0.0079). The expected values (in brackets) can be found in the table above with the counts of the answers chosen according to mother tongue. The table
shows that the amount of English native speakers choosing ‘invent’ was significantly higher than the expected value while the amount of English native speakers choosing ‘make up’ was significantly lower than the expected value. This indicates that the Flemish and Italian students of English actually tended to overuse the phrasal verb ‘make up’ when compared to the native speakers.

2.4.14 Give in/give up vs. surrender

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Mother tongue</th>
<th>Count (Std)</th>
<th>Count (Std)</th>
<th>Count (Std)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>3 (-1.95)</td>
<td>20 (+0.82)</td>
<td>13 (+0.74)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>16 (+2.11)</td>
<td>14 (-0.95)</td>
<td>9 (-0.73)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>10 (-0.22)</td>
<td>21 (+0.15)</td>
<td>13 (+0.02)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph of this question show that the Flemish and the Italian students preferred the phrasal verb ‘give up’ whereas the English native speakers slightly preferred the phrasal verb ‘give in’. One native speaker of English explained why ‘give in’ might be preferred in this context: “‘Surrender’ is more formal, and has military connotations e.g. ‘the army surrendered’, ‘the boxer gave in’. ‘Give up’ is used when stopping an activity; not yielding to another e.g. ‘he had to give up smoking’, ‘he had to give in to the bully’”. Furthermore no mistakes were made. One Italian student pointed out, however, that she knew neither ‘surrender’ nor the phrasal verb ‘give in’.

The results indicated that there is a statistically significant association between mother tongue and choice of ‘give in’, ‘give up’ or ‘surrender’ ($\chi^2 (4) = 10.97$; P-value  = 0.03). Cramér’s V showed that the strength
of this effect was only moderate ($V = 0.21$). The standardized residuals specify that the only statistically significant deviation is constituted by the high amount of native speakers of English who chose the phrasal verb ‘give in’ (+ 2.11). The low amount of Flemish students who chose ‘give in’, on the other hand, is almost a statistically significant deviation (-1.95). This shows that the Flemish and Italian students did not really avoid the phrasal verb, they just chose another one (‘give up’ instead of ‘give in’). This might be because they lack the knowledge specified by one native speaker, i.e. that ‘give in’ is used for yielding to another while ‘give up’ is used when stopping an activity.

### 2.4.15 Turn down vs. refuse

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Turn down vs. refuse</th>
<th>Refuse</th>
<th>turn down</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Count</td>
<td>Count</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Mother tongue</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Dutch</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>33</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>English</td>
<td>3</td>
<td>36</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Italian</td>
<td>5</td>
<td>39</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The table and bar graph of this verb pair show that all three groups clearly preferred the phrasal verb ‘turn down’ to the one-word near-synonym ‘refuse’. One native speaker of English explained why the context made him prefer ‘turn down’: “‘Turn down’ is non-judgemental whereas ‘refuse’ is definitely doesn’t want which wouldn’t fit with simply having too little time to accept”. No mistakes were made. One Italian student, however, indicated that she did not know the phrasal verb ‘turn down’.
The expected frequencies for ‘refuse’ were too low for a Chi Square test so I executed a Fisher Exact test, which showed that there is no statistically significant association between mother tongue and the choice of ‘refuse’ or the phrasal verb ‘turn down’ (P-value = 0.86).

2.5 Discussion

A summary of the results from the individual analysis of the test items can be found in table 4 below, which shows for which verb pairs there was a statistically significant association and what these associations mean in terms of preference of the three groups of participants. A ‘/’ means that there was no significant preference for this group of participants.

Table 4: Summary of individual analysis: significant associations and corresponding preferences

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Verbs</th>
<th>Native speaker preference</th>
<th>Flemish preference</th>
<th>Italian preference</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Brush up vs. improve</td>
<td>Non-phrasal ‘improve’</td>
<td>Phrasal ‘brush up’</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Let down vs. disappoint/betray</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Give up vs. stop/quit</td>
<td>Non-phrasal ‘stop’</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Get through to vs. reach</td>
<td>Phrasal ‘get through to’</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go on vs. continue/resume</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Non-phrasal ‘resume’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Break out vs. start</td>
<td>Non-phrasal ‘start’</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Go off vs. explode</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Hang on/hold on vs. wait</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>Phrasal ‘hold on’</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Make up vs. invent</td>
<td>Non-phrasal ‘invent’</td>
<td>/</td>
<td>/</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
What stands out most is the fact that, for four verb pairs, the native speakers preferred a non-phraseal option significantly more than the Flemish and the Italian students of English. The first of these verb pairs is ‘brush up’ versus ‘improve’. The native speakers showed a strong preference for ‘improve’ whereas the Flemish students showed a strong preference for ‘brush up’. The Italian students, on the other hand, did not show a strong preference. This means that for this verb pair, the Flemish students of English actually overused the phrasal verb ‘brush up’ rather than avoid it.

The second verb pair for which the native speakers showed a significant preference for a non-phraseal option, is ‘give up’ vs. ‘stop’ or ‘quit’. The native speakers of English slightly preferred ‘stop’ to the other options, and this preference is significantly high when compared to the Flemish and the Italian students, who preferred ‘quit’. This means that all three groups preferred a one-word verb, but the native speakers just significantly preferred a different one (‘stop’ as opposed to ‘quit’).

The third verb pair is ‘break out’ versus ‘start’. For this verb pair, all three groups actually preferred the phraseal option ‘break out’. This preference is much smaller, however, with the native speakers than with the Flemish and Italian students: 20 native speakers chose ‘break out’ whereas 18 native speakers chose ‘start’. This means that even though in general the native speakers slightly preferred ‘break out’, the high amount of native speakers who chose ‘start’ is significant when compared to the other two groups of participants.

The fourth and last verb pair is ‘make up’ versus ‘invent’. For this verb pair, too, all three groups preferred the phraseal option ‘make up’. The amount of native speakers who chose ‘invent’, however, is significantly higher than the amount of Flemish and Italian students who chose this option. For two of the four verb pairs the amount of native speakers who chose the non-phraseal option was thus significantly higher than the other groups even though for these verb pairs, in general, all three groups, the native speakers included, preferred the phraseal option.

For two other verb pairs, however, the native speakers of English preferred the phraseal option significantly more than the Flemish and Italian students. In the case of ‘get through to’ vs. ‘reach’, the native speakers showed a clear preference for ‘get through to’ whereas the Flemish and Italian students showed a clear preference for the non-phraseal option ‘reach’. I think that the explanation for the underuse of the phraseal option by the Flemish and Italian participants cannot be similar to the one given by Hulstijn and Marchena (1989): ‘get through to’ cannot have been underused because it was perceived
as too Dutch-like or too Italian-like, since there are no similar equivalents in Dutch or in Italian. A more plausible explanation would be that the Flemish and Italian students have avoided choosing ‘get through to’ because they saw ‘reach’ as a safer, more general option, therefore applying a play-it-safe strategy.

In the case of ‘give in/give up’ vs. ‘surrender’, on the other hand, the Flemish and Italian participants did not avoid using a phrasal verb, they just chose a different phrasal verb (‘give up’ instead of ‘give in’ as preferred by the native speakers). This might be because they lack the relevant knowledge specified by one native speaker of English, namely that ‘give in’ is used when yielding to another while ‘give up’ is used when stopping an activity.

The significant preferences of the native speakers are very interesting since they show that even though the native speakers preferred the phrasal option for 12 out of the 15 verb pairs (see the tables and bar graphs of the individual analysis), this preference was only significantly higher than the Flemish and the Italian students’ preference for 2 verb pairs. In addition the native speakers even preferred the non-phrasal option significantly more than the Flemish and Italian students for 4 verb pairs. This shows that the preference for phrasal verbs by native speakers might not be as high as the studies on phrasal verb avoidance might suggest. In these studies (for example Hulstijn & Marchena 1989), the verb pairs for which the native speakers did not prefer the phrasal option were eliminated. I used the same verb pairs as Hulstijn and Marchena (1989) but I did not further eliminate the verb pairs for which I did not find a preference for the phrasal option by the native speakers. I think the methodology used in this study therefore shows a more detailed picture. Further corpus research might help to determine how strongly native speakers really prefer phrasal verbs.

Furthermore, a comparison of the results of the Flemish and Italian students reveals that these two groups of participants showed quite similar behaviour. Both the Flemish and the Italian students preferred a phrasal option significantly more than the other groups for one verb pair. For the Flemish students this phrasal verb was ‘brush up’. I assume that the explanation for this high preference of ‘brush up’ might be an attempt to sound more native-like by (over)using the English phrasal verb. The native speakers, however, significantly preferred ‘improve’, so in reality the Flemish students failed to sound more native-like by preferring the phrasal option ‘brush up’.

For the Italian students, on the other hand, the phrasal verb was ‘hold on’. They did not, however, prefer a phrasal verb whereas the other groups preferred the one-word equivalent: they only preferred a different phrasal verb (‘hold on’ instead of ‘hang on’ as preferred by the native speakers and by the Flemish students). I do not know what the reason could be for their preference of ‘hold on’ rather than ‘hang on’. Further research might look into this.

The Italian students, however, also preferred the non-phrasal option significantly more than the other groups for the verb pair ‘go on’ versus ‘continue’ or ‘resume’. The Italian participants preferred ‘resume’
significantly more than the Flemish participants and the native speakers, who preferred ‘continue’. This means that the Italian students did not avoid using a phrasal verb, they just chose a one-word option that was different from the one chosen by the native speakers. The Italian participants might have done this because they perceived ‘continue’ as too close to ‘continuare’, i.e. as too Italian-like.

In conclusion, the research question I wanted to solve with this study was whether there is a difference in the usage of English phrasal verbs between Italian and Flemish learners of English. The answer is clearly that there is no significant difference between their usages of English phrasal verbs, as has been made clear in this discussion. Neither group of students over- or underused the English phrasal verbs significantly more than the other group.

This might be due to the fact that the proficiency of the participants was already quite high. Further research might try to clarify whether there is a significant difference between the usage of English phrasal verbs of Italian and Flemish learners of English at an intermediate level of proficiency. This could be done by comparing participants with different mother tongues (like Italian and Dutch) but also comparing different proficiency levels for each mother tongue. One could thus have four groups of participants: Flemish intermediate learners, Flemish advanced learners, Italian intermediate learners and Italian advanced learners. It would, for example, be interesting to find out whether these participants show U-shaped behaviour or an interlanguage development from avoidance to nonavoidance.

Another explanation for the fact that no significant differences have been found in the usages of English phrasal verbs by Flemish and Italian learners of English might be that both languages have a construction that is similar to the English phrasal verb (see section 1.3). This goes against the assumption in the existing literature on phrasal verb avoidance that all Germanic languages have phrasal verbs whereas Romance languages do not. Following this assumption, the existing studies suggested that learners of English with a Romance mother tongue would avoid phrasal verbs more than learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue. This, however, goes against the results of the present study, which is not surprising since the assumption does not hold for Italian and Dutch because Italian, which is a Romance language, does have phrasal verbs as does Dutch, which is a Germanic language.

When keeping this correction in mind, the fact that no significant differences in phrasal verb usage of Flemish and Italian learners of English have been found, makes sense since both have corresponding constructions. I therefore argue to update or even discard the generally held assumption that phrasal verbs exist in all Germanic languages but not in Romance languages and that, consequently, learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with a Romance mother tongue. Further research that focuses on the ways in which the Romance languages and the Germanic languages have constructions that are similar or dissimilar to English phrasal verbs, might help to find out whether this widely held assumption should be just updated for some languages or discarded altogether.
Conclusion

I have started this dissertation with the explanation of some theoretical notions to then move on to the literature review, which showed that it is not yet clear what exactly induces avoidance behaviour of phrasal verbs (L1-L2 distance, L1-L2 similarity or inherent complexity of the L2 construction). It also emerged from the literature review that it is widely claimed that the phrasal verb structure is a peculiarity of the Germanic languages. Following this claim, it is assumed that learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with a different (for example Romance) mother tongue because the distance between L1 and L2 for that construction is smaller for learners with a Germanic mother tongue.

With this dissertation, I wanted to find out whether there is a difference in the phrasal verb usage of Flemish and Italian learners of English. Linked to this, I tried to establish whether the assumption that the learners of English with a Dutch mother tongue will avoid phrasal verbs less than the learners of English with an Italian mother tongue, is correct or not. To do this, I compared the equivalent structures in English, Italian and Dutch and I conducted an experiment.

First of all, the comparison showed that Italian does actually have phrasal verbs and that the Italian phrasal verbs are in fact closer to the English phrasal verbs than the Dutch separable complex verbs. This is because the Dutch SCVs consist of a verb and a separable prefix or preverb rather than a verb and a particle like in English and in Italian. Furthermore, with the Dutch SCVs the first constituent can be a noun or an adjective, which is not possible with English phrasal verbs. The syntax is also quite different: with Dutch SCVs the separable prefix or preverb can follow the verb or be agglutinated to the verb whereas in English and in Italian it can only follow the verb. In addition, object shift is not possible with Dutch SCVs and no true syntactic tests exist that can clarify whether a multiword combination is a complex separable verb or not. The comparison of English and Italian phrasal verbs and Dutch separable complex verbs thus indicated that the widely held view that Germanic languages have a phrasal verb structure whereas other languages do not, is not entirely correct.

For the experiment, then, I used a multiple-choice test, which I sent to 39 native speakers of British English, 36 Flemish students and 44 Italian students. I chose the 15 verb pairs used by Hulstijn and
Marchena (1989) so this study was partly a replication study. In addition, I selected students who were enrolled in the master’s degree of English translation and interpretation since this would make the results more comparable. Unfortunately, however, this also made it impossible to compare between different levels of proficiency, i.e. intermediate and advanced learners of English with the same mother tongues. Comparing different mother tongues and different proficiency levels for each mother tongue would be interesting for further research.

The results of the experiment indicated that the native speakers only preferred the phrasal option significantly more than the Italian and Flemish students for two of the fifteen verb pairs. This casts some doubt on how strongly native speakers really prefer phrasal options. The existing studies have left out the verb pairs for which there was no preference for the phrasal option by the native speakers, which might be a bit misleading by suggesting that native speakers prefer phrasal options more than they actually do. Further corpus research might clarify to what extent native speakers really prefer phrasal verbs.

More importantly, the results also indicated that there is no significant difference in the phrasal verb usage between Flemish and Italian students of English. This shows that the assumption that learners of English with a Germanic mother tongue will necessarily avoid phrasal verbs less than learners of English with another mother tongue, is incorrect. This is not surprising since the comparison between the equivalent structures in English, Italian and Dutch already showed that the underlying claim, i.e. that Germanic languages have phrasal verbs whereas Romance languages do not, is also incorrect. I therefore think that further research should point out whether this claim should be discarded altogether or just be updated for some Romance and Germanic languages.
Bibliography


