

A DESCRIPTIVE STUDY ON MULTI-WORD VERBS BASED ON THE ANALYSIS OF
ENGLISH TEXTBOOKS RECOMMENDED BY THE BRAZILIAN TEXTBOOK
NATIONAL PROGRAM - PNLD 2012¹

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ABSTRACT: This paper focuses on the analysis of textbooks used in regular schools and language institutes in order to contribute to an overview of the current situation of the EFL material provided to language students in Brazil. It presents the results of a language aspect, that is, the *multi-word verbs*. This research aimed at an analysis of how *multi-word verbs* are presented and discussed in English textbooks from the Brazilian Textbook National Program (PNLD 2012), and at an investigation, by means of a short questionnaire, of the way English teachers, mainly, but not only, from public schools, help their students master this linguistic aspect of the target language. The purpose was, first, to check whether a distinction between the *adverb/ preposition* particles is made in relation to such verbs, as well as to check the use of terminology for an appropriate syntactic discussion. The results from the textbook analysis and from the questionnaires were compared to help visualize the current situation of the *multi-word verbs* teaching.

Keywords: textbook, multi-word verbs, teaching and learning

RESUMO: Este artigo centra-se na análise de livros didáticos adotados pelas escolas regulares e escolas de idiomas, a fim de contribuir para uma visão geral da situação atual dos materiais destinados ao ensino e aprendizagem de línguas estrangeiras fornecidos aos estudantes de idiomas no Brasil. Neste trabalho, faz-se a apresentação dos resultados de uma investigação relacionada a um aspecto linguístico, isto é, os *multi-word verbs*. O objetivo desta pesquisa é analisar como os *multi-word verbs* são apresentados e discutidos em livros didáticos de inglês do Programa Nacional do Livro Didático (PNLD 2012) e investigar, por meio de um pequeno questionário, a maneira como os professores de inglês, principalmente, mas não somente os de escolas públicas, ajudam seus alunos a dominar tal aspecto linguístico da língua-alvo. O objetivo foi, a princípio, verificar se uma distinção entre as partículas advérbio / preposição é feita em relação a tais verbos, bem como verificar a terminologia empregada para uma discussão sintática apropriada. Os resultados da análise dos livros didáticos e dos questionários foram comparados para auxiliar na visualização da situação atual do ensino dos *multi-word verbs*.

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Palavras-chave: livro didático, *multi-word verbs*, ensino e aprendizagem

INTRODUCTION

In Brazil, the English language has been taught in regular schools for over a century and it is part of the obligatory curriculum for students in primary, secondary and high school levels. Language teaching, however, is not treated as a priority and, in most schools, students are offered only 100 minutes of English classes a week, in opposition to 250 minutes of Portuguese and Math. According to the Brazilian National Curriculum Parameters for High School (PCNEM)⁴, students are mostly expected to be able to read and comprehend written texts, and lessons by acquiring reading strategies, such as “skimming”, “scanning” and “prediction”. Considering this argument, it may be stated that the teaching of English, as well as other foreign languages, is, then, predominantly, based on *Grammar-Translation Method*, because the other linguistic competencies, such as listening, writing and speaking, tends to be disregarded by regular schools.

It is then common for students – especially those from upper class families – to look for alternatives in order to reach fluency and be able to manage experiences with foreigners. Most of them are enrolled in language institutes and take English as an extra class subject. These language institutes vary within a wide range of prices and offer English for different purposes, although most of them promise to lead students to fluency and full comprehension of the language.

Most language institutes tend to use textbooks in order to have a well-established course plan and avoid the creation of an entire curriculum, so it is not unusual to find regular schools using textbooks to support their classes. And textbooks are not a privilege of students attending English classes at language institutes. In Brazil, the government program named PNLD (Brazilian Textbook National Program) selects textbooks to be used in public schools.

4 In Portuguese, PCNEM, Parâmetros Curriculares Nacionais para o Ensino Médio.

Multi-word verbs is an issue that demands closer attention in teaching because it seems to be one of the biggest fears for learners in Brazil, due to their “infinite” options and the approach given to their study by EFL textbooks in Brazil.

This paper is then an investigation of how textbooks deal with this linguistic aspect. It is an investigation of the description provided by textbooks from the Brazilian Textbook National Program (PNLD 2012) concerning *multi-word* verbs. We analyze the material used in regular schools and cross theoretical references from grammar books with English teachers’ statements in order to investigate how the use of proper terminology might be beneficial to students.

The purpose of this research is to investigate how *multi-word verbs* are presented to high school students in Brazilian regular schools. In order to do so, we cross data collected from an analysis of presentations and descriptions in textbooks approved by the Brazilian Textbook National Program with information concerning teachers’ approaches to this language topic, through a questionnaire.

With respect to the research questions of this study, we present the following ones: “Do the English textbooks from Brazilian Textbook National Program (PNLD 2012) distinguish the particle (s) *adverb* and/or *preposition* when presenting *multi-word verbs*?” and “What is their approach to this language topic?”

Regarding the previous research questions, we still present others, as follows: in case the books analyzed do not deal with *multi-word verbs* and they do not distinguish those particles in the subcategorization of the phenomenon, how do English teachers deal with this issue? Do they present any distinction of these particles to their students?

1. LITERATURE REVIEW

The categorization of *multi-word verbs* depends on the type of particle(s) that follow(s) the verbs with which they make a unit, such as “get up”, “look at”, and “look down on”. These combinations of verb + particle(s) are considered to be *multi-word verbs* when they behave as a single unit. In order to understand this last statement, it is necessary to discuss the concept of “unit.” According to Downing and Locke (2006:11), “a unit is any sequence that

constitutes a semantic whole and which has a recognized pattern that is repeated regularly in speech and writing.” In other words, a unit is any part of language and/or writing that has meaning, which is recognizable by the speakers of a language. An example is the verb “to get up”, which cannot be understood separately as only “get” plus “up”, maintaining the meaning the complete unit has.

English textbooks’ authors tend to oversimplify the explanation of these types of verbs by using inappropriate terminology. These verbs are most commonly presented in textbooks as *phrasal verbs*, not taking into consideration the fact that *multi-word verbs* is an umbrella term that covers different kinds of verbs, such as *phrasal-verbs*, *prepositional verbs*, and *phrasal-prepositional verbs*. Another consequence of such oversimplification is the way the particles that accompany such verbs are treated: they can be an adverb or a preposition, and most textbooks tend not to distinguish them as such. This distinction is important so as to understand how to use these verbs and to identify them properly, taking their subcategorization into account.

Linguists such as Quirk and Crystal (1985), Downing and Locke (2006) and Carter and McCarthy (2006) provide us with similar views on these verbs. According to Quirk and Crystal (1985:1150), the main category of *multi-word verbs* consists of combinations such as “drink up”, “dispose of”, and “get away with”, which are studied under the headings of “**phrasal verb**”, “**prepositional verb**”, and “**phrasal-prepositional verb**”, respectively. Each category of *multi-word verb* will be explained in the following sections of this paper. To Downing and Locke (2006:336), “the function of many of the particles is to modify the nature of the activity expressed by the verb. The result is an extended meaning that is often quite different from the meaning(s) of the verb when it functions alone”. In other words, the particle(s) (adverb/preposition) change(s) the meaning of the lexical verb. The following examples provided by Carter and McCarthy (2006:436) illustrate this argument:

I’m **looking forward to** the weekend. (**looking forward to**: anticipating with pleasure)

Let her **get on with** it. (**get on with**: continue doing)

Carter and McCarthy (2006:429) state that “a lexical verb may combine with a particle to form a multi-word verb which behaves as a single unit of meaning. The particle may be an adverb or a preposition.” “Unit”, in this case, is interpreted according to the definition presented by Downing and Locke (2006) and previously discussed in this paper.

The table below brings the most common particles that combine with lexical verbs to form *multi-word verbs*, according to Carter and McCarthy (2006:431).

The most common particles and the verb they combine with to form multi-word verbs			
Particle	Example verbs (+particles)	Particle	Example verbs (+particles)
about	go, hang, knock, mess	Off	come, go, get, take
ahead	forge, go, keep, move	On	come, get, go, put
around	come, get, go, knock	Out	break, come, go, put
At	come, get, look, play	Over	come, get, go, turn
away	get, put, run, take	Round	come, drop, go, hang
back	come, get, go, take	Through	come, get, go, run
down	break, come, go, put	To	come, get on, go back, keep
For	care, go, look, stand	Together	get, go, pull, put
In	come, get, go, take	Up	come, open, pick, take
Into	break, get, go, run	With	deal, do away, go, put up

Carter and McCarthy (2006:431) draw our attention to the spelling of *multi-word verbs* by stating that “multi-word verbs are written as separate words, not as a single word or with hyphens.” They also provide us with the examples:

I think I'm going to **drop off** soon. (correct);

I think I'm going to **dropoff** soon (incorrect);

I think I'm going to **drop-off** soon. (incorrect).

Multi-word verbs are, as previously mentioned, an umbrella term that involves subcategories that vary from author to author. Such distinction and discussion of subcategories is important to provide us with a solid basis to relate the grammar book exploration of the language topic and compare it to the approach in the English textbooks approved by the PNLD 2012.

To Carter and McCarthy (2006:431), **Phrasal verbs** are constituted by a lexical verb and an adverb particle. They can be intransitive or transitive. **Intransitive phrasal verbs** do not require an object. For example:

The radio alarm **went off** at the same time as usual. (**went off**: rang);

Hang on. Let me write all this down. (**hang on**: wait).

On the other hand, **transitive phrasal verbs** require a direct object. This can be exemplified by means of the following sentences:

You're not going to **sort out** your problems in a month. (**sort out**: solve);

We decided to **put** the meeting **off** for a couple of weeks. (or: We decided to **put off** the meeting for a couple of weeks.) (**put off**: postpone).

The particle can be used before or after the *direct object* if the object is not an *object pronoun*. However, if there is occurrence of an object pronoun, the pronoun always comes before the particle.

I couldn't **wake** her **up**.

According to Carter and McCarthy (2006:433), if an *object pronoun* is coordinated with a full noun phrase or another pronoun, the objects may occur before or after the particle.

The noise **woke** me and my wife **up**. (or: The noise **woke up** me and my wife.);

He didn't **phone** her or me **up**. (or: He didn't **phone up** her or me.)

However, objects that are longer tend to come after the particle.

Yesterday we were just **finishing off** looking at the structure and the land use of city and town.

Yesterday we were just **finishing** looking at the structure and the land use of city and town **off**. (inappropriate use).

In this case, it is not possible to move the object to the position before the particle "off", as in the other examples.

Carter and McCarthy (2006:432) also list the most frequent phrasal verbs which are usually followed by the direct object:

blow up	give up	sort out
break down	hand in/out	take back
bring up	hold up	take over
Carry on	leave out	take up
check out	look up	tell off
close down	make up	throw away
drink up	phone up	try on
drop off	put off	turn down
eat up	put on	wake up
fill up	ring up	work out
find out	rub out	write down

finish off	save up	
give away	shut down	

Concerning the subcategories of *multi-word verbs*, Quirk and Crystal (1985:1155) state that “a **prepositional verb** consists of a lexical verb followed by a preposition with which it is semantically and/or syntactically associated.” In other words, a prepositional verb is constituted by a verb and its accompanying particle, which is always a preposition that precedes its complement. Consider the following examples:

Look at these pictures;
 I don't **care for** Jane's party;
 His eyes **lighted upon** the jewel.

The verbs “look at”, “care for” and “light upon” are prepositional verbs since their particles are prepositions, as opposed to *phrasal verbs*, which are followed by an adverb particle. Prepositional verbs do not follow the same rules that apply to phrasal verbs, since, mostly, the object pronoun cannot precede a preposition. For example:

I couldn't sell my car. I just couldn't **do without** it. (couldn't do without: need/have to have).

A list of prepositional verbs is presented by Carter and McCarthy (2006:434):

Common prepositional verbs		
approve of	cope with	get over
break into	deal with	go into
call on	depend on	lead to
care for	do without	listen to
check into	get into	look after
come across	get on	look at
come upon	get off	look for

According to Carter and McCarthy (2006), an important characteristic of these verbs is the fact that some prepositional verbs allow an adverb or discourse marker to be used between the verb and the preposition. For example:

It **depends** entirely **on** what's going on at the time; I **agree**, I think, **with** most of his reasons.

Besides the verbs “agree with” and “depend on”, other verbs such as the following ones can be included in this category: “apologize for”, “approve of”, “ask for”, “belong to”, “break

with”, “care for”, “depend on”, “glance with”, “keep to”, “laugh at”, “look for”, “look at”, and “cope with”.

Carter and McCarthy (2006:435) also draw our attention to another characteristic of these verbs when they state that “some prepositional verbs take a direct object after the verb as well as an object of the preposition.” In other words, some prepositional verbs accept the movement of their preposition behaving similarly to phrasal verbs.

You don't **bombard** them **with** new stuff;

Just **remind** me **of** your surname again.

The following verbs belong to this category: “associate ... with”, “bombard ... with”, “protect ... from”, “thank ... for”, etc.

According to Quirk and Crystal (1985:1151), “the most obvious difference between the preposition and the spatial adverbs is that where prepositions require a following noun phrase as a prepositional complement, there is no such requirement for adverbs.” In fact, this is a simple difference between *phrasal* and *prepositional verbs*. As previously explained, some *prepositional verbs* allow the movement of their particle. The question that arises in this point is: what can be done to distinguish the particle (adverb/preposition) and to identify the category that a given *multi-word verb* belongs to? First of all, the person must be aware of the features of each category of *multi-word verb*. This way, it might be properly analyzed. Apart from that, it is advisable to always analyze these verbs in a sentence, not out of context, in order to avoid confusion concerning their similar features. As to how these verbs should be analyzed, we recommend some strategies, as follows: (1) identify the particle(s) that follows the lexical verb (1)⁵; (2) analyze if the lexical verb is transitive or intransitive; (3) check if the particle was moved.

Regarding such strategies to analyze *multi-word verbs*, we provide the following examples:

- (i) The dog went for me (prepositional construction),
- (ii) *The dog went for (adverbial construction);
- (iii) Jack fell down the hill (prepositional construction),
- (iv) Jack fell down (adverbial construction).

⁵ It is important to pay attention to the quantity of particles that accompany the lexical verbs; if the quantity is one, it may be either a phrasal or a prepositional verb. However, if the lexical verb is followed by two particles (adverb and preposition), it is a “phrasal-prepositional verb”, which is to be described in later sections of this paper.

Notice that in (iii) and (iv), the constructions are accepted, and they are dependent on the use of the particle. The particle “down” is as a preposition in (iii) and a spatial adverb in (iv). The terminology “spatial” is discussed by Downing and Locke (2006:547), who state that “when we express spatial relationships we use mental picture or image schema for each type of relationship.” In other words, it refers to the way people experience things in the world and their world knowledge. In sentence (iii), it is noticeable that the figure is “Jack” and the place is “the hill”. However, in sentence (iv) “Jack fell down” (adverbial construction), the figure is the only accessible piece of information – as the event itself – but the place is not mentioned.

The last category of *multi-word verbs* is “**phrasal-prepositional verbs**” which contains an adverb and a preposition. According to Quirk and Crystal (1985:1160), these types of verbs are restricted to informal English. These authors provide us with few examples:

The new job hasn't **come up to** her expectations. (come up to: meet);

Don't **look down on** me. You're not better than anybody else. (look down on: disdain).

And a table with the most common phrasal-prepositional verbs:

Common phrasal-prepositional verbs	
catch up on	get on with
catch up with	listen out for
come up against	look forward to
do away with	look down on
face up to	look in on
get away with	look out for
get along with	look up to

Carter and McCarthy (2006:436) state that “a small number of verbs take a direct object after the verb as well as an object of the preposition”. In other words, not a significant quantity of such verbs allow a direct object after its lexical verb and an object after the two particles.

She was just **taking** her frustration **out on** me, shouting at me and stuff. (take... out on: cause someone to suffer)

This theoretical description related to *multi-word verbs* in “Literature Review” is applied to the section “Analysis” in which seven textbook collections from the cited Brazilian program were analyzed regarding their explanations of such types of verbs.

2. METHODOLOGY

By trying to answer the two research questions, the following methodology was adopted: (1) seven textbook collections from the cited Brazilian program, whose total number of the books is 21, were analyzed regarding their explanations of *multi-word verbs*, (2) a short questionnaire was designed for English teachers, in order to investigate how they deal with this topic and how they teach such verbs, considering the terminology used by them, (3) the questionnaires were sent to teachers who answered it; after that, they were collected, and compared to the information in theoretical texts and the analysis of the textbooks. A further step taken refers to the contrasting of the information provided by public and private school teachers in their questionnaires. This analysis aimed at investigating different points of view from different realities and at contributing for a more critical reflection on the teaching and learning of English in Brazilian schools.

3. ANALYSIS

Examples of multi-word verbs from the English textbooks (PNLD 2012)

Seven textbooks approved by the Brazilian Textbook Program (PNLD 2012) were analyzed in order to provide a view on how *multi-word verbs* are presented to students of regular schools. A brief discussion of the results of the investigation of each textbook is here presented:

Textbook 1: In this material, there is no mention of *multi-word verbs*; this grammar topic is treated as *phrasal verbs*. It is said that such verbs are followed by particle(s) (adverb/preposition):

Phrasal verbs: são locuções compostas de um verbo e uma partícula (preposição ou advérbio) que têm um significado próprio. Em muitos casos, o significado dessas locuções acompanha o dos elementos que a formam. Assim, jump significa “pular, saltar”; up significa “para cima”; e em jump up a

partícula adverbial apenas reforça o sentido do verbo. Muitas outras phrasal verbs, no entanto, têm um significado não previsível que precisa ser memorizado (...). (p. 169)⁶

Such definition of *multi-word verbs* is rather simplified. *Phrasal verbs* are, as covered in the section *Literature Review*, verbs that consist of a lexical verb and a particle (adverb) and can be transitive or intransitive. Stating that several phrasal verbs have unpredictable meaning, it is ok to consider the different degrees of idiomaticity of *multi-word verbs* (even specifically *phrasal verbs*): some of them are semi-idiomatic while others are full-idiomatic.

Downing and Locke (2006:341), refer to idiomaticity connected to phrasal verbs, stating that semi-idiomatic phrasal verbs are those in which “the lexical verb generally keeps its literal or metaphorical meaning”, while the particle is used as an aspectual marker of various kinds. By stating this, they refer to the way a particle can express different meanings such as completion, beginning-point, end-point or high intensity of an event. For example:

Heat up the milk but don't let it boil over. (The bringing of an activity to an end or get to a certain limit).

The meaning of verbs such as the one in the example above may be predicted, and that is why they are *semi-idiomatic*. However, the *full-idiomatic* “are those in which the meaning of the whole is not easily deduced from the parts, although it may be well deduced from the context.” (Downing and Locke, 2006:342). This means that the meaning of full-idiomatic verbs cannot be easily predicted. The phrasal-prepositional verb below is a full-idiomatic verb:

The government has decided to **crack down on** antisocial behavior. (impose sanctions).

Textbook 1 also proposes exercises to help students schematize and practice the use of *multi-word verbs* (*phrasal verbs* in their terminology). On page 146, we find:

Now complete the sentences with phrasal verbs with put.
4) Please **put away** your clothes. Don't leave them on the floor.

6 We have reproduced the information from the textbooks the way it was provided, keeping the Portuguese language when it was the case.

This extract can be translated into English as follows: *Phrasal verbs are locutions consisting of a verb and a particle (preposition / adverb) which carry proper meaning. In many cases, the meaning of such locutions accompany that of the elements of which they are constituted. Therefore, jump means “spring off the ground or other base”, up means “to a higher position”, and in jump up the adverbial particle only reinforces the meaning of the verb. Several other phrasal verbs, however, have unpredictable meaning that needs to be memorized.*

5) *I think he is foolish and stupid. I can't **put up with** that guy.*

The exercise uses inappropriate terminology, if we consider the reference grammar books revised in this research, when it refers to both “put away” and “put up with” as phrasal verbs. “Put away” is, indeed, a phrasal verb. “Put away” consists of a lexical verb, which is “put”, and an adverb particle “away”, which can be moved, as in the example:

(4) Please **put** your clothes **away**. Don't leave them on the floor. (put away: organize). (Here it is a transitive verb whose direct object is “your clothes.”)

However, “put up with” is a phrasal-prepositional verb, which consists of a lexical verb “put” and two particles: “up” (adverb) and “with” (preposition). It might be stated that this is a full-idiomatic verb.

Textbook 2: The second textbook analyzed presents all *multi-word verbs* as *phrasal verbs*. On page 105, a definition of *phrasal verbs* is presented by the author, but there is no discussion about the particles that help compose these types of verbs; they are only referred to as “small words.” The following is the definition provided by the author: “*Some verbs in English are made up of a verb + a small word (e.g., look for, look at, turn on). They are called phrasal verbs and their meanings are different from the original verb.*” On page 137, a list of “phrasal verbs” is presented without any further explanation.

The major problems considering the approach of *multi-word verbs* in textbook 2, relative to our analysis are: (1) “small words” could have been distinguished and are not; (2) because they name all *multi-word verbs* as “phrasal verbs”, some of the examples of “phrasal verbs” provided in the material cannot be considered “phrasal verbs” in our analysis, such as “come up with”, “get along with” and “look at”; all of them are phrasal-prepositional, except for “look at”, which is prepositional.

Textbook 3: On page 81, the description offered by the author is, in certain way, similar to that presented in Textbook 2. Inappropriate terminology is used when *multi-word verbs* are treated as *phrasal verbs*. As previously discussed, it cannot be stated that all *multi-word verbs* are “phrasal verbs” since *phrasal verbs* is a subcategory of the former. Verbs presented are “give up”, “get back”, “pay off” – which are, indeed, “phrasal verbs”; “get caught up in” and “come up with” – which are phrasal-prepositional verbs. Moreover, no textbook from this

collection mentions the distinction of the particles (adverb and preposition) that constitute *multi-word verbs*. Here is a fragment from an exercise in textbook 3:

4) *These phrasal verbs were used in this unit. Use them to complete the advice letter. Make the necessary adjustments.*

get caught up in, pay off, come up with, give up and get back

Dear A.F.G.,

*I'm very proud of you because you **have given up** using those pills! (...)*

*Anyway, it's better to try new and safe ways than just let yourself **get caught up in** this thing of pleasing girls (...)* (p. 81)

Textbook 4: On page 83, there is an exercise in which *multi-word verbs* are used. There is no explanation related to them in the section “Language in use”. By consulting the teacher’s guide at the end of this book, it is possible to find information concerning the goal of the section, which is: to study the grammar implicitly (p. 12).

Textbook 5: On page 56, the particles that constitute *multi-word verbs* are mentioned, but not distinguished. Also, “phrasal verb” is the only terminology used to refer to these groups of verbs. On page 160, the following definition can be found:

“phrasal verbs são verbos seguidos de uma partícula (preposição ou advérbio) com um significado especial”.⁷

On page 198, all the *multi-word verbs* in the list provided are treated by the label “phrasal verbs”; however, among those items there are occurrences of phrasal-prepositional verbs such as “get along with”, “look down on”, “look up to” and “stand up for”.

Textbook 6: On page 74, “phrasal verb” is the only terminology used to refer to these types of verbs. The verbs are not analyzed at the syntactic level, but only semantically.

Textbook 7: *Multi-word verbs* are not mentioned or applied to any activity. However, they appear in exercises. In level 2 textbook, a list of *multi-word verbs* is provided by the authors (p. 168) under the heading “phrasal verbs”. As previously discussed, such classification fails to categorize verbs such as “get by on” and “go on with”, for instance.

⁷Translation: “phrasal verbs” are verbs followed by a particle (preposition or adverb) with a special meaning”

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

Analysis of the English textbook (PNLD 2012)

The seven collections of textbooks analyzed in this research had similar approaches to *multi-word verbs*. The terminology “phrasal verb” is used in all of these seven collections of textbooks analyzed instead of the heading “multi-word verbs”. Two of the textbooks do not mention the particles (adverb / preposition); four textbooks mention the particles (adverb / preposition), but do not distinguish them; and one textbook does not present the definition of *multi-word verb*. According to the reference material revised for this research, including outstanding grammarians of the English language, phrasal verbs is a subcategory or the umbrella term *multi-word verbs* and the distinction between a preposition and an adverb is important for this subcategorization, and also for understanding this grammar topic in its complexity. Presenting all occurrences of *multi-word verbs* as “phrasal verbs” leaves students with superficial and somehow inaccurate information concerning the language topic.

Data collected from public and private school teachers

34 English teachers answered the questionnaire, being 30 from public schools and 04 from private ones. They have provided us with valuable information, such as to how they treat multi-word verbs in the EFL classroom. 98% of teachers do not use the terminology “multi-word verbs” and do not distinguish the particles (adverb / preposition): they use the terminology “phrasal verbs”. Only 2% of them distinguish the particles (adverb / preposition) and use the terminology “multi-word verbs”. 1% of them does not consider relevant the distinction of the particles. 99% of them did not inform if they consider important or not to distinguish the particles. These two last results were reached by means of the third question of the questionnaire, as follows: “Is the distinction between a preposition and an adverb relevant for your explanation? If yes, how?”, because the English teachers said they do not explain the distinction between a preposition and an adverb, however, most of them did not mention if such distinction is relevant or not for their explanation, being 99%. It may be necessary to say that only 1 English teacher answered that it is not important the distinction between such particles to his/her explanation which corresponds to 1%. Regarding their opinions in relation

to what could be done to improve the teaching of such verbs, there were suggestions such as *using a dictionary to study the different meanings of these verbs, studying them by taking the context into consideration, studying them in isolation*, etc. Therefore, their suggestions were diverse.

The data collected from the private school English teachers and the public school English teachers were analyzed together, since there was no significant distinction between the perspective in them.

FINAL CONSIDERATIONS

Textbooks are not only guidelines to the students' learning process, but they may be considered as key components to language acquisition regarding the fact that students can use them to study independently. An efficient teacher provided with high quality material is able to perform better and reach results that he/she would most likely not reach on their own. Textbooks are then weapons acting as maintainers of quality and standardizers of instructions.

Several teachers – both from language institutes and regular schools – have a tendency to rely on textbooks making them their course plan and taking them as the most reliable source of information. However, as presented in this research, textbooks from different sources and publishing houses, different authors and purposes, may fail to provide students with enough scientific basis.

In the research presented, not only textbooks, but also teachers were investigated as to how they treat the so-called *multi-word verbs*. It may be stated that English teachers' point of view, related to such verbs, collected by means of a short questionnaire was very important for us not only to compare information from the analysis of the textbooks to the theoretical explanation of these verbs, but also to be aware about the current situation of the teaching and learning of *multi-word verbs*. The textbooks fail in basic definitions – when presenting the *multi-word verbs* under the heading *phrasal verbs* – and in providing students with information such as the distinction between an adverb and a preposition in the context of this grammar topic. Such distinction, though might be considered confusing by some people, help students comprehend the linguistic topic in its complexity and proper syntactic behavior.

Apart from not discussing the fact that the particles can be prepositional or adverbial, few of the materials discussed idiomaticity more seriously.

It is not the aim of this article to prove how effective such terminology – *phrasal*, *prepositional* or *phrasal-prepositional verbs* when dealing with *multi-word verbs* – could be if employed by EFL teachers, but to discuss how textbooks are somewhat deficient in relation to syntactic analysis and discussion. A few questions are left unanswered to further research such as: would students learn better and more effectively if exposed to syntax terminology? What are some of the implications of teaching such terms? Does analyzing the language aspect as part of discourse instead of only at the sentence level facilitate L2 syntax acquisition?

It is important to state here that textbooks – no matter how qualified or validated – may present flaws when dealing with certain language topics and that improvement is required. The situation is not very different in regular schools – private or public –, whose books are mostly produced in the country, or language institutes, whose books are usually imported from major authors and publishing houses. It is crucial then to develop strategies to update teachers and to improve materials in order to provide students with ever better tools when learning a second language, which is important for success in the globalized world.

APPENDICES

A - *English textbooks approved by the Brazilian Textbook Program (PNLD 2012), in alphabetical order, not in the order discussed in the analysis.*

- *English for all*, by Eliana Aun, Maria Clara Prete de Moraes and Neuza Bilia Sansanovicz, 2010.
- *Freeway*, organized by Richmond Educação, 2010.
- *Globetrekker*, by Marcelo Baccarin Costa, 2010.
- *On Stage*, by Amadeu Marques, 2011.
- *Prime*, by Reinildes Dias, Leina Jucá e Raquel Faria, 2009.
- *Take over*, by Denise Santos, 2010.
- *Upgrade*, organized by Richmond Educação, 2010.

B - Questionnaire provided for English teachers

The following questionnaire was sent to English teachers from public and private schools in order to obtain data to provide us with a clear view of the current situation of EFL teaching in regular schools in Brazil.

The aim of this questionnaire is to collect data for an undergraduate research concerning English textbooks approved by the Brazilian Textbook Program (PNLD 2012) for high school. This research is carried out at the Federal University of Minas Gerais (UFMG) under the supervision of Professor Adriana Tenuta. **It is not our aim to evaluate or investigate any teacher's knowledge about language. It is not required personal identification and we would like your school to remain unnamed.** We would like you, however, to provide us with the title of the textbook adopted in your classes and the grade/level you are currently teaching.

Textbook title: _____ Grade: _____

1) How do you **call** verbs such as “put away”, “look at”, “look down on” and “find out”, for instance?

2) How do you **define** or **explain** this group of verbs to your students?

3) Is **the distinction between a preposition and an adverb** relevant for your explanation? If yes, how?

4) In your opinion, what can be done to **improve** the teaching of these verbs?

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