

Research Article

Peculiarities of Phrasal Verbs in the English Language (by the Example of Newspaper Materials)

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Abstract: This article explores the peculiarities of phrasal verbs in the English language, focusing specifically on their usage in newspaper materials. Phrasal verbs are an integral part of everyday language, yet their significance in journalistic writing has not been fully examined. The study aims to identify and analyze the most commonly used phrasal verbs in different sections of English-language newspapers, such as news, opinion, business, sports, and entertainment, and to investigate how their meanings and functions shift depending on the context. The research examines how phrasal verbs contribute to the tone, style, and overall effectiveness of newspaper articles, considering their ability to convey action, emotion, and emphasis in both formal and informal contexts. The study draws on a corpus of contemporary newspaper articles from a range of English-language sources, utilizing qualitative methods of analysis to identify patterns in phrasal verb usage. The findings show that phrasal verbs are frequently employed to enhance expressiveness, capture attention, and create a conversational tone, especially in sections like opinion and entertainment. In more formal contexts, such as business and politics, phrasal verbs are used to maintain clarity and precision while still keeping the text accessible to a broad audience. The article concludes by emphasizing the importance of understanding the contextual variability of phrasal verbs in journalistic writing and their role in shaping readers' perceptions of formality, informality, and tone. This research highlights the need for greater attention to phrasal verb usage in language studies and journalism.

Keywords: context; structure; function; newspaper section; reader's perception

1. Introduction

The language used in newspapers is crafted to be effective, concise, and engaging, tailored to communicate information clearly and attractively to a diverse readership (Orazimbetova, 2021). It combines simplicity with impact, ensuring that even complex topics are accessible to a broad audience. Headlines often employ catchy phrases, rhetorical devices, and action-oriented verbs to immediately capture attention (Hadidi et al., 2022). The body of articles typically balances brevity with depth, using precise vocabulary and well-structured sentences to convey facts, opinions, and narratives (Alghazo et al., 2023). Additionally, the use of stylistic elements such as phrasal verbs, idiomatic expressions, and figurative language enhances readability and relatability (qizi Johid & Masharipovna, 2022). This strategic blend of clarity, brevity, and expressiveness makes newspaper language a powerful tool for informing, persuading, and engaging readers.

Phrasal verbs are among the most commonly used expressions in the English language, serving as essential building blocks of both spoken and written communication (Yablonska, 2023). Their widespread usage stems from their versatility, as they can convey a wide range of meanings, often with nuances that single-word verbs cannot easily express. Found in casual conversations, literature, and even formal contexts like business and journalism, phrasal verbs enhance the dynamic and flexible nature of English (Liu & Myers, 2020). For instance, phrases like *take off*, *put up with*, and *break down* are integral to everyday speech and writing, allowing speakers to articulate ideas with precision and emphasis. Their idiomatic nature often adds color and relatability to language, making them indispensable in creating a natural and fluent tone. This prevalence highlights the importance of mastering phrasal verbs for effective communication in English.

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Phrasal verbs are frequently employed in newspaper materials due to their ability to convey complex ideas with brevity and impact (Fahira et al., 2023). Their use contributes to the expressiveness of the language, helping to capture the reader's attention while maintaining clarity and precision. In the fast-paced world of journalism, phrasal verbs allow writers to present information efficiently, often encapsulating actions or events in a more dynamic and engaging way than standard verbs (Tsaroucha, 2020). Additionally, phrasal verbs serve a functional role in shaping the tone of articles, whether formal or informal, by adding variety and nuance to the narrative. They are particularly effective in headlines and leads, where space is limited and immediate reader engagement is crucial (Hadidi et al., 2022). Through their versatile nature, phrasal verbs help create a conversational flow, making the language of newspapers more accessible and relatable to a wide audience.

Linguistic competence in English requires a high level of proficiency with phrasal verbs, as they are an integral part of the language. Mastery of phrasal verbs is essential for effective communication, given their widespread use in both everyday speech and written texts across various registers (Nguyen, 2024). These multi-word expressions often convey specific meanings that cannot be directly replaced by single verbs, making them crucial for expressing nuances, emotions, and actions accurately. A deep understanding of phrasal verbs enables speakers and writers to sound natural, fluent, and culturally attuned, as these expressions are commonly found in idiomatic phrases, informal dialogues, and professional contexts (Al Nasarat, 2018). Furthermore, knowledge of phrasal verbs helps learners interpret English more easily, especially when encountering more complex or figurative meanings in literature, media, or academic materials (Bhinder, 2019). As such, linguistic competence is not only about grammar and vocabulary but also about understanding how phrasal verbs function and contribute to the richness and flexibility of the language (Agarwal, 2023).

The aim of this study is to explore the peculiarities of phrasal verbs in the English language, specifically within the context of newspaper materials, examining their frequency, function, and contribution to the expressiveness and clarity of journalistic writing.

The research questions are the following:

- (1) What are the most common types of phrasal verbs used in English-language newspaper materials, and how do they vary across different sections (e.g., news, opinion, sports)?
- (2) How do phrasal verbs function stylistically in newspaper headlines and leads, and what role do they play in capturing readers' attention?
- (3) To what extent do phrasal verbs contribute to the tone and register of English newspaper writing, and how do they affect the reader's perception of formality or informality?

2. Materials and Methods

The primary methodology used in this study is a corpus-based analysis of English-language newspaper materials (Khaghaninejad et al., 2021; Redzimska, 2020). A carefully selected sample of newspapers, including both print and online publications, was chosen to represent a broad spectrum of journalistic styles and topics. The corpus includes a variety of sections, such as news articles, opinion pieces, feature stories, and editorials, to ensure a comprehensive understanding of how phrasal verbs function across different contexts. The time frame for the data collection spans the last two years to ensure the analysis reflects current linguistic trends and language use in journalism. This methodology allows for an in-depth investigation into the frequency, variety, and stylistic functions of phrasal verbs in newspaper writing.

In order to identify and analyze the phrasal verbs, a systematic approach was used (Labinska et al., 2020; Popova, 2022), where all occurrences of phrasal verbs in the selected newspaper articles were extracted and cataloged. This was achieved through a combination of manual reading and automated tools designed for text analysis, which helped identify multi-word verb phrases. Each instance of a phrasal verb was categorized based on its grammatical function (e.g., transitive or intransitive) and its semantic role within the sentence. This approach facilitated the classification of the phrasal verbs into different types, such as directional, separable, and inseparable, allowing for a deeper understanding of their structural and functional properties in the context of journalistic writing.

To explore the stylistic role of phrasal verbs, the study examined how they contribute to the tone, register, and overall expressiveness of newspaper texts. Special attention was paid to how phrasal verbs were used in headlines and leads, where brevity and attention-grabbing language are essential. A qualitative analysis of these texts revealed the extent to which phrasal



verbs help journalists convey complex ideas in a concise yet engaging manner. The study also looked at the interaction between phrasal verbs and other linguistic features, such as tone, sentiment, and lexical choice, to understand their broader impact on reader engagement and comprehension.

The materials for the study were sourced from a range of reputable English-language newspapers, both national and international, to capture a diverse linguistic spectrum. This included publications such as *The New York Times*, *The Guardian*, *The Washington Post*, and *The Times of India*. By including both British and American English sources, the study also aimed to explore potential differences in the usage of phrasal verbs across various English dialects. The combination of a rich corpus and a robust analytical framework ensures that the study provides a thorough examination of the peculiarities of phrasal verbs in English-language newspapers, shedding light on their role in modern journalistic language.

3. Results and Discussion

The most common types of phrasal verbs used in English-language newspaper materials are those that convey actions, processes, or events, and they typically fall into categories such as directional, separable, and inseparable phrasal verbs (Yablonska, 2023). Directional phrasal verbs (e.g., *bring up*, *carry on*, *go on*) are frequently used in newspaper materials to describe movements, transitions, or progressions in events or narratives. Separable phrasal verbs (e.g., *take over*, *pick up*, *turn down*) are often used to express actions with clear objects or intentions, while inseparable phrasal verbs (e.g., *run into*, *get over*, *look after*) convey more complex or idiomatic meanings that require a specific context for proper understanding.

The use of phrasal verbs varies significantly across different sections of newspapers (Fahira et al., 2023). In the news section, phrasal verbs are often used to simplify complex actions or events, making the language more accessible and dynamic. For example, verbs like *break out*, *take off*, and *step down* are commonly found in articles covering breaking news, crises, or political events, as they convey urgent actions or significant changes. In opinion pieces, phrasal verbs tend to be more subjective and expressive, used to highlight personal perspectives or complex societal issues (Tsaroucha, 2020). Phrasal verbs such as *take issue with*, *bring up*, and *go against* are often employed to articulate arguments or criticisms in a more conversational tone.

In the sports section, phrasal verbs are used extensively to describe actions, movements, and strategies, adding energy and immediacy to the narrative (Wagner & Sveinson, 2024). Verbs like *carry on*, *come back*, and *drop out* are frequently used to illustrate athletic performance, team dynamics, and ongoing events. Sports journalism relies on phrasal verbs to create a sense of action and motion, essential for maintaining the reader's engagement (Rojas-Torrijos & Nölleke, 2023). Overall, phrasal verbs in newspapers serve to make the language more vivid and dynamic, allowing journalists to capture the essence of events in a concise, direct, and engaging manner. Their frequency and use depend heavily on the specific tone and function required by each section of the newspaper. Table 1 analyzes the use of phrasal verbs across different newspaper sections.

Table 1. The use of phrasal verbs across different newspaper sections.

Section	Section purpose	Examples of sentences with phrasal verbs
News	Features breaking news, reports on current events, political coverage, and significant global, national, and local stories.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) Protests <i>broke out</i> in several major cities following the controversial policy announcement. 2) The government is expected <i>to step up</i> security measures in response to the rising threat of terrorism. 3) Investigators are trying <i>to track down</i> the suspects involved in the cyber attack. 4) As the crisis unfolded, officials had <i>to scale back</i> their initial plans to deal with the disaster. 5) The conflict <i>has taken a toll</i> on the region's economy, with many businesses struggling to stay afloat.
Opinion	Includes editorials, op-eds (opposite editorials), and columns where writers express their viewpoints, discuss issues, or provide commentary on current affairs.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The writer argues that the administration must <i>step up</i> its efforts to address climate change before it's too late. 2) In the latest debate, several experts <i>pointed out</i> the flaws in the proposed healthcare reforms. 3) It's time for the nation <i>to stand up</i> against corruption and demand transparency from our leaders. 4) Critics have <i>spoken out</i> against the government's lack of action on



		environmental issues. 5) The columnist believes we should <i>look into</i> alternative solutions to the rising unemployment problem.
Sports	Covers news related to various sports, including match results, player profiles, team dynamics, and upcoming events in the world of sports.	1) After a difficult season, the team has finally <i>pulled together</i> and secured a playoff spot. 2) The star player was forced <i>to drop out</i> of the championship game due to an injury. 3) The athletes are determined <i>to bounce back</i> after their disappointing performance last week. 4) The coach <i>has called for</i> a change in tactics to turn the game around.
Business	Focuses on financial news, stock market updates, economic trends, business-related stories, and profiles of companies and entrepreneurs.	1) Investors are hoping the stock market <i>will pick up</i> in the coming months after a slow year. 2) Many startups <i>are breaking through</i> the competition with innovative new products. 3) The CEO has decided <i>to scale down</i> operations in light of the global economic slowdown.
Entertainment	Features articles about the entertainment industry, including movie reviews, celebrity news, TV show updates, music, theater, and celebrity interviews.	1) The movie's release date <i>has been pushed back</i> due to production delays. 2) Fans were excited when the singer <i>showed up</i> unannounced at the concert. 3) The director is set <i>to bring out</i> a new film that explores complex social issues. 4) The theater production <i>sold out</i> within hours, with tickets going for twice their original price.
Lifestyle	Covers topics related to daily living, health, fitness, fashion, food, travel, and human interest stories.	1) The expert suggested we <i>cut down</i> on processed foods for a healthier diet. 2) The new fitness trend <i>has really caught on</i> , with gyms offering classes every day. 3) <i>To keep up</i> with the latest fashion trends, many are following influencers on social media.
Culture	Deals with art, literature, cultural events, exhibitions, and broader discussions of cultural trends and movements.	1) Critics are beginning <i>to catch on</i> to the importance of diversity in contemporary art. 2) The author's new novel <i>takes off with</i> a storyline set in a distant future. 3) The cultural event <i>kicked off</i> with a grand opening ceremony attended by prominent figures.
Technology	Focuses on the latest developments in the tech industry, new gadgets, software, digital trends, and issues related to the tech world.	1) The company <i>has just rolled out</i> a new update for its popular app, fixing several bugs. 2) Engineers are working <i>to fix up</i> the issues related to data privacy in the new system. 3) The new smartphone model is expected <i>to take over</i> the market within the next few months. 4) Several tech companies <i>have teamed up</i> to develop a new generation of artificial intelligence tools.
Science	Covers scientific discoveries, research, health, environmental issues, and technological innovations.	1) Researchers <i>have come up with</i> a groundbreaking method for diagnosing certain types of cancer early. 2) Scientists are trying <i>to figure out</i> the cause of the unusual patterns in the climate data. 3) Experts are working <i>to track down</i> the origin of the virus that caused the global outbreak. 4) The team is hopeful that their experiments will <i>pay off</i> and lead to new insights in quantum physics.
Classifieds	Includes advertisements for job openings, real estate, services, and personal ads.	1) The company is looking <i>to fill in</i> several positions in the customer service department. 2) The apartment listing <i>went up</i> online just a few days ago and has already attracted numerous inquiries. 3) The job offer <i>has been taken up</i> by several qualified candidates. 4) The team <i>is currently seeking out</i> a reliable contractor for home renovations. 5) The homeowner is looking to rent out a fully furnished apartment in the city center.



Weather	Provides local and national weather forecasts, including predictions for the day and any significant weather events.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) The storm is expected <i>to pick up</i> in intensity later this evening, bringing heavy rain and winds. 2) As the cold front <i>moves in</i>, temperatures are expected <i>to drop off</i> significantly. 3) Weather forecasters are warning that conditions may <i>turn around</i> quickly, with clear skies returning by tomorrow. 4) The hurricane <i>turned into</i> a massive storm, causing widespread damage along the coast. 5) The heat wave <i>broke down</i>, giving way to cooler temperatures over the weekend.
Editorials	Reflects the official stance of the newspaper on various political, social, or economic issues.	<ol style="list-style-type: none"> 1) It's time for society <i>to speak out</i> against the growing inequality in education. 2) In recent years, many issues <i>have fallen through</i> the cracks, and it's time to address them head-on.

The philosophical conceptualization of knowledge potential aligns with the analysis of newspaper materials, as both rely on uncovering deeper meanings and drawing connections between ideas, often requiring readers to pick up on subtle nuances and implied messages (Cheban et al., 2023). The effective use of proper language, including phrasal verbs, in newspapers demonstrates how practical linguistic choices can break down complex philosophical concepts into accessible insights, bridging abstract thought with everyday communication. Phrasal verbs play a significant role in newspaper headlines and leads by making language more dynamic, concise, and engaging (Fahira et al., 2023). In headlines, where space is limited and clarity is paramount, phrasal verbs provide a succinct way to convey key ideas. Phrasal verbs like *break out*, *blow up*, and *ramp up* are often used to capture the essence of an event or issue quickly, allowing readers to grasp the core of the story at a glance. These verbs condense complex actions into a few words, creating impact and intrigue, which is essential in a competitive media environment where headlines must stand out among many others.

In leads, phrasal verbs continue to serve as attention-grabbing devices, often introducing action right at the start of an article. Verbs like *step down*, *take off*, and *call off* establish a sense of immediacy and movement, pulling readers into the story. By using phrasal verbs, journalists can set the tone and pace for the rest of the article (Gvishiani, 2020). For example, *The CEO stepped down amid controversy* uses a simple phrasal verb that conveys both action and the underlying drama, prompting readers to continue reading to understand the full context of the situation. This stylistic choice is particularly effective in stories that involve ongoing events or breaking news, where readers seek immediate understanding (Rodriguez-Puente & Obaya-Cueli, 2022).

Phrasal verbs also contribute to the conversational tone often found in newspaper writing (Alangari et al., 2020). Unlike more formal verbs, phrasal verbs are generally perceived as informal, creating an accessible style that feels closer to natural speech. This approach helps make articles more relatable and engaging for a broader audience. In the context of opinion pieces or feature stories, phrasal verbs like *bring up*, *pick up*, and *back down* can add emphasis or reflect personal perspectives, creating a more informal and persuasive tone that draws readers into the writer's viewpoint (Losi & Rosida, 2022). Using phrasal verbs, journalists can make their writing feel more direct and approachable, encouraging readers to stay engaged with the text.

Finally, phrasal verbs can enhance the expressiveness of headlines and leads by adding emotional or descriptive weight to a story (Tsaroucha, 2020). For instance, verbs like *beat up*, *fall apart*, or *stand out* evoke strong imagery and create a sense of drama or tension. This stylistic use of phrasal verbs helps newspapers to not only inform but also entertain and engage readers, making the content more memorable. Whether describing a political scandal, a sports event, or a cultural phenomenon, phrasal verbs enable journalists to present their stories in a way that captures attention and sparks curiosity, leading to greater reader engagement. Figure 1 summarizes the functions of usage of phrasal verbs in English language newspaper materials.



Figure 1. Functions of usage of phrasal verbs in English language newspaper materials.

Phrasal verbs play a significant role in shaping the tone and register of English newspaper writing, contributing to the overall style of an article. According to Halliday's Systemic Functional Linguistics (SFL), language choices in journalism, including the use of phrasal verbs, can determine how readers perceive the formality or informality of a text (Asad et al., 2019). In formal newspaper sections, such as business, politics, or international news, phrasal verbs are often employed strategically to create a balance between accessibility and professionalism. Phrasal verbs like *carry out*, *set up*, and *bring about* are commonly used in these contexts because they convey actions with clarity and precision, without sounding too casual. For example, *The company carried out extensive market research* maintains a formal tone while still being concise and effective. These phrasal verbs enhance the informative quality of the article without compromising its serious tone, appealing to a more professional readership.

In contrast, informal sections of newspapers, such as lifestyle, entertainment, and opinion pieces, use phrasal verbs to establish a more conversational and approachable tone. According to the theory of register variation, the choice of phrasal verbs in these sections helps to connect with a broader audience by introducing a relaxed, familiar language style (Gilquin, 2023). Phrasal verbs like *pick up*, *break up*, and *hang out* are frequently used to evoke personal experiences, emotions, and everyday scenarios. For instance, in an entertainment article, *The movie picked up several awards* not only communicates the success of the film but does so in a way that feels natural and relatable to the reader. These phrasal verbs contribute to the informal register, making the content more engaging and less authoritative, encouraging readers to feel a personal connection with the material (Yablonska, 2023).

Furthermore, phrasal verbs contribute to the dynamic tone of newspaper writing, adding energy and immediacy to the text (Borysova, 2023; El-Dakhs, 2016). In a theory of textuality, dynamic verbs like *take off*, *blow up*, and *speed up* are often employed to convey action and change, especially in headlines or leads (Spring, 2018). Such phrasal verbs have a vivid, action-



oriented quality that serves to capture the reader's attention quickly. For example, *Protests blow up across the city* instantly communicates a sense of urgency and conflict, while also keeping the language accessible and immediate. This use of phrasal verbs in attention-grabbing contexts establishes a more informal tone, emphasizing fast-paced action, which is crucial in news reporting where the primary goal is to engage the reader from the outset (Ruminda, 2016).

However, the use of phrasal verbs can also influence the reader's perception of formality through subtle shifts in register. While phrasal verbs are often considered informal compared to their more formal single-word counterparts, their role in newspaper writing is not purely casual. Their versatility allows them to navigate between formal and informal registers depending on the topic, purpose, and target audience. For instance, while phrasal verbs like *call off* or *give up* might suggest informality in casual conversation, they are entirely appropriate in conveying the cancellation of a meeting or the abandonment of a project in a business context. Carefully selecting phrasal verbs, journalists can modulate the level of formality, ensuring that the tone of the article aligns with the expectations of different reader demographics (Fahira et al., 2023; Yunusova, 2024). Thus, phrasal verbs serve as a flexible tool in adjusting the perceived formality or informality of a text, making them essential in crafting the appropriate register for various newspaper sections.

4. Conclusions

This research highlights the significant role of phrasal verbs in the English language, particularly within the context of newspaper materials. Throughout the study, it became evident that phrasal verbs are not only a common feature of English language use but also a crucial tool for journalists in conveying meaning, tone, and style across various sections of a newspaper. The investigation into the most commonly used phrasal verbs in English-language newspapers revealed that their usage is both versatile and context-dependent, serving a range of functions depending on the section of the newspaper and the subject matter.

Phrasal verbs are especially prevalent in more informal sections such as entertainment, opinion, and lifestyle, where they help to establish a conversational, engaging, and accessible tone. Their ability to convey emotion, action, and personal experience makes them an ideal choice for creating an intimate connection with readers. On the other hand, in formal sections like business, politics, and news, phrasal verbs are employed with precision, often replacing more complex verbs without sacrificing clarity. This flexibility allows phrasal verbs to function as an effective linguistic tool for journalists, adapting to the formality or informality of the topic being covered.

Moreover, the study revealed that the meanings and usages of phrasal verbs are highly context-sensitive, with the surrounding linguistic environment playing a crucial role in shaping their interpretation. This contextual variability reinforces the need for careful selection and understanding of phrasal verbs in journalistic writing. The research also underscores the importance of phrasal verbs in shaping the register and tone of newspaper articles, as they contribute to the balance between readability and professionalism.

The implications of this research on the peculiarities of phrasal verbs in the English language, particularly as seen in newspaper materials, are significant for both linguistic studies and journalistic practice. Firstly, the study contributes to the understanding of the dynamic role phrasal verbs play in the structure and style of journalistic writing. It highlights the need for language researchers and educators to pay closer attention to these versatile expressions, which are often overlooked in traditional grammar instruction. The findings suggest that teaching phrasal verbs in language courses, especially in the context of professional writing such as journalism, can improve students' understanding of language flexibility and style. By incorporating contextual usage, educators can help learners grasp how phrasal verbs function to shape tone, register, and meaning in different genres, thus enhancing both their writing and reading comprehension skills.

Additionally, the research has practical implications for journalists and media professionals. Understanding the stylistic impact of phrasal verbs can aid journalists in crafting articles that are more engaging, relatable, and effective in conveying messages to a wide audience. The use of phrasal verbs allows for more accessible language, making complex topics easier to digest for general readers while still maintaining the required clarity and precision in formal contexts. For media outlets, this study serves as a reminder of the power of phrasal verbs in capturing attention, setting tone, and tailoring content to specific reader demographics. Thus, journalists can enhance their communicative strategies by carefully selecting phrasal verbs that match the desired level of formality, engagement, and emotional



impact, improving the overall quality of newspaper writing.

This study contributes to the growing body of research on phrasal verbs by emphasizing their relevance in contemporary journalistic discourse. It encourages further exploration of phrasal verbs in various types of writing, particularly in the digital age, where informal language and conversational styles are increasingly prevalent. The findings call for greater attention to the role of phrasal verbs in both language teaching and journalistic practices, recognizing their influence on communication and reader engagement.

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