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## **CORPUS APPROACHES TO LANGUAGE TEACHING: THE CASE OF INFORMAL PHRASAL VERBS IN ENGLISH**

The paper deals with the informal usage of English phrasal verbs, the in-depth analysis of which seems at this point to be rather scarce. The study is based on a corpus of phrasal verbs, marked explicitly as informal in the lexicographic resources referred to in the paper. While compiling the corpus, some semantic overlap found with such verbs has come to the foreground. In view of their semantic similarity and the various connotations of their informal use, the phrasal verbs under discussion can be classified into three groups – verbs of negative connotations, verbs of neutral connotations and verbs of positive connotations. Apart from strictly linguistic analysis, the paper also provides some tips for teaching informal phrasal verbs in relation to the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language.

**Keywords:** phrasal verbs, informal use, negative connotations, neutral connotations, positive connotations, teaching informal phrasal verbs

### **1. Introduction**

The paper aims at exploring means of expanding the traditional ways of teaching and mastering English phrasal verbs. These verbs are considered by students of English to be one of the most problematic aspects of both English vocabulary and grammar due to the variety of lexical and grammatical meanings they designate. English Studies curricula in Bulgarian universities leave room for elucidating phrasal verbs in practical English classes mainly in view of the multitude of meanings they denote, while the meanings of phrasal verbs, labelled explicitly as informal in the dictionaries, have often been disregarded. However, using Standard English vocabulary only is hardly the case with native speakers, who employ the colloquial shades of meaning of phrasal verbs extensively to add spice to communication.

At present when Standard English is gradually being replaced by Global English, which functions mostly in daily communication, the informal use of English phrasal verbs comes to the foreground. English Studies curricula in Bulgaria generally lay stress on written rather than spoken English. However, breaking the canon is imminent since mastering spoken English is considered to be the essence of acquiring near-native communication skills. It is exactly the informal use of phrasal verbs and the variety of informal meanings they denote that come under the spotlight throughout the paper. The major assumption of the paper relates to the observation that the meanings of phrasal verbs used in the informal register of Standard English are of a more limited range compared to the meanings of phrasal verbs used in the formal register of Standard English. The present research paper is grounded on the

hypothesis that there is a higher chance of semantic overlap with informal phrasal verbs due to the rather limited range of topics they apply to. The study focuses on the lexical meanings of English phrasal verbs labelled as informal in the lexicographic resources used in compiling the corpus. In everyday communicative situations there is a marked need to attract the listener's attention or to express familiarity between the speaker and the addressee, which pushes interlocutors to employ various informal phrasal verbs for similar states and activities. The hypothesis also connects with a presumed trend for the meanings of these verbs to be mostly pejorative. All these assumptions are tested against a corpus which is explored on the basis of statistical analysis methodology. The study shows how the corpus itself can be employed in foreign language teaching in order to master the informal meanings of English phrasal verbs.

The present piece of research is based on a corpus of informal phrasal verbs in English which comprises 1500 phrasal verbs extracted from the *Cambridge Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* (2006), the *Oxford Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* (2006), the *Longman Phrasal Verbs Dictionary* (2014), the *British National Corpus (BNC)*, the *Corpus of Contemporary American English (COCA)*, the *WebCorp*, and the *WordNet*. The phrasal verbs labelled as informal in the above-mentioned dictionaries have been extracted together with their meanings and processed following the corpus linguistics approach provided by Lindquist (2009: 51–70) and Meyer (2004: 30–54). After that the processing of the corpus has continued in accordance with the main goal of the paper to at least partially unveil the informal use of English phrasal verbs. The verbs have been grouped on the basis of their meanings, thus making it possible both to elucidate the most common informal meanings of English phrasal verbs and to list the number of verbs that express the respective meanings. It is believed that shifting the traditional perspective and putting meaning first would facilitate the acquisition of informal phrasal verbs by non-native students of English.

## **2. The rise of colloquial meanings of English phrasal verbs**

Out of the large variety of lexical and grammatical meanings that function as a hallmark of English phrasal verbs, it is the range of colloquial lexical meanings that come under the spotlight in the present study. Due to the large number of meanings to be found within a single phrasal verb or phrasal verbs as a whole, the latter could be considered an economical device for encoding information, especially in their colloquial use. English phrasal verbs have been traditionally perceived as colloquial and informal language units (cf. Bolinger 1971: 62, 172, Quirk *et al.* 1985: 1152, Biber *et al.* 1999: 408–409, Claridge 2000: 197, Huddleston 2002: 284). Such an opinion might be considered an overgeneralization, though, related mostly to the lexical use of phrasal verbs. When pointing out the traditional association of phrasal verbs with informal contexts of language use, Hiltunen (1999: 161) draws an important conclusion that 'phrasal verbs [...] are capable of displaying a whole range of meanings and connotations, and can [...] easily be expanded to form new combinations'. The

latter feature invariably points to the productivity of the verb-particle construction in English. However, even with their lexical meanings phrasal verbs are to be found in formal communication such as EU texts and documentation (cf. Trebits 2009). What is more, phrasal verbs are employed not only with their lexical meanings but they also function as a means of expressing aspectual and Aktionsart distinctions, i.e. they have grammatical functions as well (cf. Claridge 2000, Walková 2013).

Ascribing informal connotations to English phrasal verbs can be partially accounted for in view of their origin. The verb elements of phrasal verbs in English are mostly monosyllabic units of native Anglo-Saxon origin, which naturally makes them a preferred choice in daily communication compared to the corresponding formal lexemes of non-native (mostly French) origin. Denison (1993: 35–39, 134–144), Claridge (2000: 83–105), Baugh and Cable (2002: 60–61, 168–169), Fischer and van der Wurff (2006: 190–193), Olteanu (2012: 7–15), Thim (2012: 74–145), Puente (2013: 103–143), to name just a few, provide in-depth analyses of the rise of phrasal verbs in English. The most detailed account of the history of phrasal verbs is provided by Thim (2012). He claims that in Old English (OE) the existing particles might either precede or follow the verb. The author highlights a relation between ‘prefix verbs’ and phrasal verbs in the history of English. Thim postulates the existence of a distinct class of OE particle verbs diachronically related to prefix verbs. He associates the development of postverbal particles with the change in word order. Verbal prefixes correspond to the earlier OV stage, while postverbal particles correspond to the later VO stage. Thus present-day phrasal verbs are considered as functional equivalents of OE prefix verbs. In view of the above, Thim concludes that there is a contiguous development between OE prefixes and the aspectual functions of spatial particles (Thim 2012: 4–5, 34, 74–75, 87–88, 145, 184). What is more, some of the OE prefixed verbs were highly idiomatic and had meanings of their own, different from the meanings of the root and the prefix taken together, which again corresponds to the non-compositionality of present-day English phrasal verbs. All those changes occurred during the transition from Old English to Middle English (ME) but were most productive in the ME period. That is why Middle English is considered to be the period of the rise of phrasal verbs, most of them used colloquially.

The increase in the use of phrasal verbs is also observed by Spasov, who claims that there has been a “steady increase in the use of phrasal verbs since Renaissance times” (Spasov 1966: 23). Horobin and Smith (2002: 75) continue in the same vein by defining phrasal verbs as ‘a characteristic English formation that developed during the ME period; [they] seem to derive from Old English verbs such as *bistandan* → *stand by*’. One possible explanation for the suggested informal use of phrasal verbs has to do with the intensive process of borrowing French verbs in Middle English, which were used mostly formally. The process of forming phrasal verbs was even more productive in Early Modern English. As Claridge (2000: 86) puts it:

[T]he rise of the phrasal verb is also connected with the fall of another construction, OE prefix verbs. The latter’s very sudden decline to almost zero

productivity and use by early Middle English left a slot to be filled by the newer analytic constructions.

Evidently, the rise of English phrasal verbs in Middle English was also influenced by the tendency of forming analytic constructions to replace the older synthetic ones.

Concerning the predominant assumption that phrasal verbs are mostly informal, Marks (2005) claims that in view of their lexical meanings ‘some phrasal verbs are informal, and some are formal, but most are neutral; in this respect they are not different from other categories of vocabulary’. Thim (2012: 45) expresses a similar opinion stating that ‘in many instances phrasal verbs are stylistically neutral’. He also advances the general claim that ‘the common stylistic evaluation of phrasal verbs throughout the history of English must be regarded with a considerable degree of caution’ (ibid.: 197) and that phrasal verbs ‘are not irregular, colloquial, or informal’ (ibid.: 252). Thim recognises the potential of any phrasal verb to be used informally since verb-particle language units actually ‘belong to the common core of the English lexicon’ (ibid.: 252). So, on the one hand, the researcher is faced with the traditional perception of phrasal verbs as colloquial or informal but, on the other, with the more recent view that phrasal verbs belong to the core vocabulary of English and their informal meanings are the result of native speakers’ use of monosyllabic verb-particle units in daily communication.

The present study discusses phrasal verbs in the light of the more recent point of view, namely that informal meanings are just some of the manifold meanings of English phrasal verbs. This point of view is evidenced by a large number of phrasal verbs such as *break down* (stop functioning), *break in* (to enter a building by force), *call off* (**cancel**), *check in* (**register**), *check out* (**leave**), *come across* (**find by chance**), *find out* (discover), *give in* (surrender), *give up* (stop trying), *grow up* (become an adult), *hand in* (submit), *look after* (take care of), *put off* (postpone), *put up with* (tolerate), *wake up* (stop sleeping), etc., the meanings of which are rather neutral. There are phrasal verbs such as *account for* (explain), *add up* (calculate), *bring about* (cause), *come about* (happen), *carry out* (accomplish), *look into* (research), *point out* (show), *put forward* (propose), *see to* (arrange), *touch (up)on* (mention), etc., which are clearly formal. All the examples listed so far employ a sample of widely used phrasal verbs which belong to the core vocabulary of English. The aim of providing the above examples is to show that neutral and formal meanings are common among English phrasal verbs and, together with their informal meanings, constitute the large paradigm of meanings of English phrasal verbs.

### 3. Informal connotations of English phrasal verbs

The discussion of the informal connotations of English phrasal verbs is based on the statistical analysis of the corpus discussed earlier in the paper. As far as informal connotations of phrasal verbs are concerned, a general trend can be outlined,

namely that such connotations are predominantly negative. This trend is substantiated by the analysis of the meanings of informal phrasal verbs below some of which come up as a result of metaphorical extension. While similar negative connotations can be expressed by a host of phrasal verbs in English, neutral or positive connotations are rare and can be found in a limited number of phrasal verbs. The study has been narrowed to the top thirty most widely used informal meanings of English phrasal verbs, represented by 677 out of all 1500 verbs in the corpus.

In order to test the research hypothesis that there is semantic overlap with informal phrasal verbs, major groups of verbs, which share similar meanings, have been identified following the approach provided by Spasov (1996: 261–309). The verbs from the corpus have been classified into three categories – negative, neutral and positive on the basis of the subjective evaluation of the extralinguistic situation denoted by the verbs. The appendix provides the complete list of the meanings of informal phrasal verbs in English, following the statistical analysis of the corpus. Each group in the appendix features the percentage of verbs in the corpus employed with each meaning, starting from the most popular to the least popular ones. It should be noted, however, that even the last informal meaning, discussed as number thirty, can be expressed by ten phrasal verbs in the corpus, which again indicates the intricacies of mastering English phrasal verbs due mainly to their polysemy. Considering the fact that phrasal verbs, both formal and informal, are highly polysemous, one and the same informal phrasal verb might be listed in more than one group in the classification provided below.

The current section of the paper features the semantic analysis of the corpus while the appendix features the statistical analysis of the corpus. Both types of analysis are considered applicable to foreign language teaching methodology in view of the number of classes and the envisaged highlights of the course.

### ***3.1. Phrasal verbs with negative connotations***

The informal phrasal verbs in English that exhibit negative connotations rank high in the statistical analysis of the corpus. Semantically they can be classified as follows:

- OBSCENE CONTENT – *chat up, eye up, fool around with, get off with, play around with, run after, etc.*;
- TO STOP TALKING, LEAVE, GO AWAY, RUN AWAY – *belt up, bugger off, buzz off, clam up, clear off, dry up, naff off, etc.*;
- MONEY – *cough up, fork out, lash out on, rake in, rip off, set back, shell out, splash out, etc.*;
- TO COMPETE, ATTACK, FIGHT, HIT, KILL, MURDER – *bash up, bump off, do away with, do over, duff up, lay onto, slog it out, etc.*;
- TO DO SOMETHING VERY BADLY OR UNSUCCESSFULLY – *cut up, louse up* (American English (AE)), *mess up, muck up, stink up, etc.*;

- NERVOUS, ANXIOUS, ANNOYED, ANGRY – *be brassed off with/about, be cheesed off with/about, creep out, gross out, hack off, be/get steamed up, etc.*;
- TO OVERWORK – *peg away, plug away, slave away, slog away, toil away, etc.*;
- TO WASTE TIME – *faff around, fiddle around, footle about, frig about, mess about, muck about, piddle around, etc.*;
- TO TELL SOMEONE TO GO AWAY AND STOP ANNOYING, TOUCHING OR UPSETTING YOU – *bug off, butt out, buzz off, clear off, lay off, pack it in, etc.*;
- TO BETRAY, ACCUSE FALSELY, TELL THE POLICE, NOT DO AS PROMISED – *dob in, fink on, grass on, tatttle on (AE), tell on, rat on, snitch on, squeal on, etc.*;
- TO ADVISE, CRITICISE – *dish out, dump on (AE), get (on) at, jump on, rag on, slag off, pick at (AE), etc.*;
- TO TALK CONTINUOUSLY ABOUT SOMETHING IN A BORING OR ANNOYING WAY, COMPLAIN – *bang on (about), drone on, go on (about), jabber away, rabbit on (about), ramble on, rattle on (about), etc.*;
- LAZY – *bum around, doss about/around, loaf about/around, mope about/around, skive off, slob about/around, veg out, etc.*;
- TO DRINK, BE DRUNK – *knock back, put away, stoke up, swill down, be/get tanked up, etc.*;
- TO STEAL, ROB, BURGLE – *go off with, make away/off with, rip off, run off with, stick up, walk off with, etc.*;
- TO TRICK, DECEIVE – *fall for, lead on, take in, etc.*;
- TO BREAK, HURT, HARM, DAMAGE, INJURE – *bang up, bash in, carve up, duff up/in/over, knock about/around, etc.*;
- TO FORCE, INTRUDE – *barge in, boot out, chuck out, etc.*;
- TIRED, EXHAUSTED – *be burned out, crap out, be done in, fag out, be spaced out, be worn out, etc.*;
- TO DEFEAT – *ace out (AE), beat out, walk all over, etc.*

The use of some of those verbs might be illustrated by the following examples:

- (1) *We would have to **cough up** for the enormous expenditure of an extra building.* (BNC JSG)
- (2) *There's always the worry that my clients might get **cheesed off** and take their business elsewhere.* (BNC JXX)
- (3) *Pets don't **drone on** about overbooked hotels, or insist on playing Scrabble to pass the time.* (BNC ARB)

The large group of informal phrasal verbs in English having negative connotations includes twenty out of the thirty meanings discussed in the corpus analysis. Most of these verbs are highly marked and make the communication flow vivid and vibrant. The group of verbs which feature obscene content have sexual connotations, mostly denoting sexual relationships, promiscuity, enjoyment, etc. The fact that obscene connotations of phrasal verbs rank first in terms of usage in the corpus is hardly any surprise because that is just how people use language in informal settings. The use of phrasal verbs with obscene connotations, as far as human relations and relationships are concerned, is quite popular and adds spice to communication. Since money seems to be a popular but tricky topic of discussion in informal situations, it is just natural to have informal phrasal verbs which share common reference to money such as giving money, paying money, spending money, wasting money, taking money (illegally), being flush with money, etc. Another popular informal meaning with negative connotation has to do with X verbally or physically affecting or killing Y. It might also imply a case of aggressive or violent behaviour. The meaning of failure seems to be another common topic of discussion in informal situations, denoting an ironic or mocking attitude of the speaker towards the addressee. Laziness, drinking, deception are also often talked about in casual conversation in informal settings expressed by means of the corresponding informal phrasal verbs.

### 3.2. *Phrasal verbs with neutral connotations*

The neutral connotations of informal phrasal verbs in English can be expressed by the following groups of verbs:

- TO DISMISS, PUT AN END TO, ABANDON – *chuck in, conk out, drop out, jack in, pack in, shrug off*, etc.;
- TO EAT (QUICKLY OR GREEDILY) – *bolt down, chow down, dive in, pig out, pork out, stoke up, wolf down*, etc.;
- TO SLEEP, FALL ASLEEP, GO TO BED – *conk out (AE), crash out, doss down, doze off, flake out, kip down, zonk out (AE)*, etc.;
- TO VISIT – *call in/round, drop by/in, look in (on), pop in/round, stop by*, etc.;
- TO NEED, WANT – *be gagging for, hit up for, itch for, long for, stick out for*, etc.;
- TO SEARCH – *grub about/around (for), nose around, pat down, poke around/about, sniff around*, etc.;

The use of some of those verbs might be illustrated by the following examples:

- (4) *She intended to **jack in** her job at the insurance brokers.* (BNC HW8)
- (5) *At other times the two of them would **wolf down** a whole packet of After Eight mints with no apparent difficulty.* (BNC HR9)

- (6) *It was a beautiful beach, and Breeze's fingers **itched for** a paintbrush.* (BNC BMU)

The group of informal phrasal verbs in English having neutral connotations, or connotations which cannot be considered overtly negative, includes six out of the thirty groups of meanings explored in the study. In line with the other verbs discussed in the paper, informal phrasal verbs with neutral connotations have a salient communicative effect on the addressee in accordance with the communicative intention of the speaker. Among the most widely used meanings in this group are informal phrasal verbs denoting abandoning, visiting, wanting, etc.

### 3.3. Phrasal verbs with positive connotations

The positive connotations of informal phrasal verbs in English can be illustrated by the following groups of verbs:

- TO WORK HARD AT SOMETHING – *bang away* (AE), *beaver away*, *buckle down*, *grind away*, *knuckle down*, etc.;
- TO BE/BECOME FRIENDS WITH, SPEND TIME WITH – *chill out*, *chum up/around with*, *hang about/around/out with*, *hit it off with*, *rub along*, *run around with*, etc.;
- TO IMPROVE SOMETHING – *beef up*, *jazz up*, *spiff up*, *spruce up*, *vamp up*, etc.;
- TO ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT – *cheer up*, *gee up*, *root for*, *stand by*, *stick up for*, etc.;
- EXCITED/EXCITEMENT – *carry on*, *hot up*, *be hyped up*, *lap up*, *turn on*, etc.

The use of some of those verbs might be elucidated by the following examples:

- (7) *All through the morning they stared at the kneeling figure who **ground away** at the rust around the bolt.* (BNC CJT)
- (8) *This option allows you to go several steps further in an effort to **jazz up** your documents.* (BNC CTX)
- (9) *Thousands of suppliers and sub-contractors must also be **geed up** which requires organising people from one end of the earth to the other.* (BNC HSF)

The group of informal phrasal verbs in English with positive connotations includes five out of the thirty groups of meanings discussed in the corpus. The verbs in this group exemplify a rare case of informal phrasal verbs, the meaning of which can be considered positive denoting mostly hard work, improvement, and support.



The statistical analysis of the meanings of informal phrasal verbs shows that 65% of the meanings have negative connotations, 20% of their meanings have neutral connotations while only 15% of their meanings have positive connotations, which verifies the hypothesised trend set as a starting point of analysis earlier in the study. As far as mastering informal phrasal verbs in English is concerned, it is not only polysemy that makes them difficult. Although one and the same meaning can be expressed by a number of phrasal verbs, each of the verbs has different connotations, thus adding flavour to communication.

#### **4. Tips for teaching informal phrasal verbs**

The findings related to the research hypothesis, put forward and tested in the paper, are applicable to the area of teaching the language to English Studies university students. In Bulgarian higher education traditions phrasal verbs have been included in practical English classes with emphasis on their multi-faceted meanings, tested mostly by the fill-in-the-blanks type of exercises. However, the informal use of phrasal verbs has often been overlooked either due to the time constraints of the course or to the additional shades of meanings such verbs designate.

The corpus approach to the study of informal phrasal verbs presented in the paper can easily be transferred in relation to their acquisition. Starting with the assumption that the meanings of these verbs exhibit mostly negative connotations, the method should include students' exposure to the various lexical meanings outlined in the paper and the major verbs featuring each meaning. University students of English tend to readily avail themselves of opportunities to acquire essential communication skills. Elucidating the meanings of some widely used informal phrasal verbs is expected to provide a stimulus for the students to develop their language skills required for proper communication in informal settings.

The appendix provided at the end of the paper, which shows a sample of the corpus analysed statistically, can itself be used in English language classes in higher education. From a methodological point of view, the approach presented provides a shift in the perspective of teaching phrasal verbs in general and informal phrasal verbs in particular. Grouping the verbs on the basis of their shared meanings, instead of listing all grammatical and lexical meanings of a given phrasal verb following the dictionary pattern, is expected to facilitate their acquisition. Teaching such verbs should also be supplied with appropriate context of use, which could be extracted from corpora of written or spoken English.

The approach presented can be employed in teaching English predominantly to advanced students of the language. Communication skills being part and parcel of fluency in English, acquired in native or near-native educational settings, invariably include mastering informal phrasal verbs. Such verbs are pertinent to communication, and are considered to be especially suited for undergraduates of English Studies aspiring to achieve proficiency in English.

## 5. Conclusion

Starting from their historical development and focusing on the semantics of informal phrasal verbs in English through the corpus analysis of the top thirty most common meanings of such verbs, the study has exemplified the initial assumption that most of the connotations of such verbs are negative. The high frequency of certain topics discussed in daily communication, together with the need for expressivity on behalf of the speaker, results in the possibility of semantic overlap among such verbs. Such semantic overlap can be seen within the groups of verbs outlined in the paper, the verbs in each group differing in shades of their colloquial meanings, referring to states and activities, experienced or performed in daily routine. Given the principle of language economy, the phrasal verbs used in informal communication consist mostly of monosyllabic units, which contributes to their being highly marked, structurally simple and having a strong communicative effect on the addressee. They function as ready-made linguistic units which bond the speaker and the addressee and make communication much more vivid, expressive and lively. The fact that one and the same verb can be found in more than one group (*bust out, buzz off, eat up, hang about, knock back, mess up, push off, etc.*) is indicative of the polysemy and semantic complexity of informal phrasal verbs in English. Most of these verbs denote broad and general meanings, which are further disambiguated by context.

The corpus approach applied in the present study has not only made the findings concerning the use of phrasal verbs in communication possible but has also illustrated how such findings might be beneficial to the methodology of teaching English as a foreign language. Such an approach can be applied in developing strategies of exposing university students to widely used patterns of informal communication with the aim of enhancing the acquisition of phrasal verbs.

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## DICTIONARIES, CORPORA AND WEB RESOURCES

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## APPENDIX<sup>1</sup>

rank	% of verbs in the corpus	meaning	phrasal verbs
1	8.7%	<b>OBSCENE CONTENT (SEXUAL CONNOTATIONS)</b>	beat off (AE), bed sb down, bust up, cat around (AE old-fashioned), chat up sb, check out (AE), come on to sb, cop off with, drool over, eye sb up, feel sb up, fix sb up with, fool around with, get about/around, get it on (AE), get it up, get off on sth, get off with, go down, go (out) with sb, have it away, have it off with sb, hit on sb (AmE), hook up with (AE), jack off (AE), jerk off (AE), knock off, lech after/over, make out, mess around/about with, play around/about with, put it about, put out (AE), put yourself about, run after, screw around with, shack up with, sleep around, slobber over, split up, throw yourself at sb, toss off, touch sb up, turn sb on, turn sb off, vamp it up, whack off
2	7.8%	<b>TO STOP TALKING, LEAVE, GO AWAY, RUN AWAY</b>	back off!, belt up!, bog off!, bugger off!, bunk off, buzz off, clam up, chuck in, clear off, clear out!, dash off, dry up! eff off!, I must be getting/pushing along, get off (to), get out!, get out (of)!, go away, go off, hang about, hang on!, hare off, hold down the noise/hold it down, hold on!, jack in, kiss off!, leave sb to sth, move out, naff off!, pop off, push off, rush off, ship out, shut (sb) up, skip off, skip out (on sb), slip off, slope off, shoot off, shove off, sod off!, speed off, steady on!, take off, throw up, toddle along/off, trot off, zoom off

<sup>1</sup> All phrasal verbs which are explicitly vulgar are not listed in the respective groups in the appendix. However, they are included in the calculations when providing statistics for each group.

3	6.15%	<b>MONEY</b>	bum around/round sth, bust out, chip in, clean up, cough sth up, dole out, be dripping with money, fork out, fork sth over, gobble up, hand over, hide away, hit sb up for, hoard away, knock back, lash out on, lay out, make sth over to, max out, pay up, pitch in, rake in, roll in, rip off, screw sb over, set back, settle up, shell out, be sloshing around, splash out, square up with, stash sth away, stick it to sb, sting sb for sth, stitch up sb, stump up, tap for, touch sb for sth
4	6%	<b>TO COMPETE, ATTACK, FIGHT, HIT, KILL, MURDER</b>	bash up, battle it out, beat up, blow away, bump off, do away with, do sb in, do over, duff up/in/over, duke it out, fight it out, fill sb in (old-fashioned), finish off, go at, go for, have at it (AE), knock around/about, knock off, knock out, lam into (old-fashioned), lay into, mix it up (AE), mix it with, rough up, rub sb out (AE old-fashioned), see off sb/sth, slog it out, slug it out, smash sb's face/head in, snuff out sb/sth, sock it to sb, take sb apart, take out, tangle with (AE), whale on, work sb over
5	5.85%	<b>TO DO SOMETHING VERY BADLY OR UNSUCCESSFULLY</b>	balls up sth, bugger up, cock up, cut up, be done for, dick sb around, dish up, dump on, foul up, goof up (on), hash sth up, make a hash of sth, jerk around, kick sb around/about, lash sth up, louse sth up, mess around/about with, mess up, muck sb about/around, muck up, play sb up, push around, screw up, shove around, stink up
6	4.8%	<b>NERVOUS, ANXIOUS, ANNOYED, ANGRY</b>	be brassed off with/about, burn sb up, be cheesed off with/about, creep sb out, I can't do with, drop sb in it, be fed up with, freak out, be hacked off with/about, be/get steamed up, get to, be/get wound up about, gross sb out, kick off about, land sb in it, mess around/about, mess up, mess with, muck about/around, what's sb playing at?, psych out, screw up, sweat it out, tee off, tick off, wig out

7	4.5%	<b>TO WORK HARD AT STH, TO OVERWORK</b>	bang away (AmE), bash away at, beaver away, be booked up, boil away, buckle down, crack on with, dump on, get on, sb really goes for it, grind away, hash out, hook up (with), keep at (it), knuckle down (to), peg away at, plod along/on with, plug away (at), slave away, slog away (at), snap to it, stick at it, sweat it out, sweat your guts out, toil away, work away, work out
8	4.2%	<b>TO WASTE TIME</b>	bugger about/around, dick around (AE), diddle around (AE), dink around (AE), doss about/around, faff about/around, fiddle around/about, fool about/around (AE), footle about/around (old-fashioned), frig about/around, futz around (AE), hang about/around, jack around (AE), laze around/about, loaf around, mess about/around, moulder away, muck around/about, piddle around/about, play around/about, ponce about/around, putz around (AE), schlep around (AE), screw around (AE)
9	4.2%	<b>TO DISMISS, PUT AN END TO, ABANDON</b>	bottle out, break down, chicken out, chuck away, chuck in, chuck it (all) in, chuck out, come off it!, conk out, cry off, drop out, foul up, give up, jack in, kiss off, knock off, pack in, pack it all in, pack up (machine), shuck off (idea or feeling), shrug off, stamp on, stay away, stick at nothing, stop at, throw away, throw in
10	4%	<b>TO TELL S.O. TO GO AWAY AND STOP ANNOYING, TOUCHING OR UPSETTING YOU</b>	break it up!, bug off!, butt out!, buzz off!, clear off!, cut it out!/cut that out!, I can/could do without sth, get off!, give over!, go away, off you go!, you're having me on, hop off!, knock it off, lay off, leave off!, naff off!, pack it in!, push off!, you're putting me on, run along!, sort out
11	3.15%	<b>TO EAT (QUICKLY AND GREEDILY)</b>	bolt down, chow down, dig in(to), dive in, eat up!, fill up, get sth down, go down well/nicely, gobble down, gobble up, gulp down, pack away, pig out, pork out, put away, stoke up, swill down, tuck away, tuck in, tuck in(to), wolf down
12	3%	<b>TO BETRAY, ACCUSE FALSELY, TELL THE POLICE, NOT DO AS PROMISED</b>	dob in, drop sb in it, fink on, fit up, give away, grass on, grass up, inform on, land sb in it, rat on, set up, sneak on, snitch (on), split on, squeal on, stitch up, tattle on (AE), tell on, turn in, weasel out of

13	2.85%	<b>TO ADVISE, CRITICISE</b>	bitch out (AE), chew out, dish out, do down, dump on (AE), get (on) at, get down on, go for, hark at, harsh on, jump on, keep on at, lay into, pick at (AE), rag on, rip into, slag off, tear into, whale on
14	2.55%	<b>TO SLEEP, FALL ASLEEP, GO TO BED</b>	bed down, conk out (AE), crash out, dose up, doss down, drop off, doze off, flake out, kip down, knock out, nod off, sack out, sleep over, stay over, stop over, turn in, zonk out (AE)
15	2.55%	<b>TO BE/BECOME FRIENDS WITH, SPEND TIME WITH</b>	buddy up, chill out, chum up/around with, get along, get in with, get on well, hang about/around together/with, hang out together/with, hang round, hit it off with, pair up, pal around with, pal up, rub along, run around with, take up with
16	2.4%	<b>TO IMPROVE STH</b>	beef up, bust out, clean up your act, diddle with (AE), fiddle around (with), jazz up, kiss away, liven up, pump up, rev up, shape up, spice up, spiff up, spruce up, tinker around/about, vamp up
17	2.4%	<b>TO ENCOURAGE, SUPPORT</b>	cheer up, come on!, gee up, go ahead!, go for it, go on, go to it, get to it, have at it, put yourself down, root for, stick up for, stick with, stand by, think of sb
18	2.25%	<b>TO TALK CONTINUOUSLY ABOUT SOMETHING IN A BORING OR ANNOYING WAY, COMPLAIN</b>	bang on (about), carry on about, crap on about, drone on, gabble on/away, go on (about), go on and on, sb/sth does go on, go on at sb (to do sth), jabber away, ramble on, rabbit on (about), rattle on (about), spout on/off about, waffle on, witter on (about)
19	2.25%	<b>LAZY</b>	bum around/round, doss about/around, goof off, laze around/about, lie around/about, loaf about/around, mooch around/about, moon around/about, mope around/about, screw around, skive off, slack off, slob about/around, slop around, veg out
20	2.25%	<b>TO DRINK, BE DRUNK</b>	be beered up, brew up, be bevvied up, be lagered up, be liquored up (AE), dry out, fill up, get in, knock back, put away, put back, stoke up, swill down, be/get tanked up (BE)/tank up (AE), throw back
21	2.25%	<b>TO VISIT</b>	call in, call round, drop by, drop in/into, drop in at, drop in on, drop over, drop round, look in, look in on, pop in, pop round, stop by, stop in, swing by

22	2.1%	<b>TO STEAL, ROB, BURGLE</b>	clean out, do over, go off with, knock off, knock over, make away with, make off with, rip off, run off with, skip off with, stick up, turn (the place) over, walk off with
23	1.95%	<b>TO NEED, WANT</b>	be crying out for, could do with sb/sth, be dying for, be gagging for, have enough to go on with, hit up for, itch for, long for, lust after, max out on, pant for, stick out for, yearn for
24	1.8%	<b>EXCITED/ EXCITEMENT</b>	calm down, carry on, chill out, dig in, eat up, flip out, hot up, be hyped up, lap up, psych up, pump up, turn on
25	1.8%	<b>TO TRICK, DECEIVE</b>	come on!, fall for, fall for sth hook, line, and sinker, lead on, put over (on) sb, rip off, screw over, slip one over on sb (AE), stitch up, string along, take in
26	1.8%	<b>TO SEARCH</b>	be floating around/about, grub about/around (for), look out, nose around, pat down, poke around/about, scare up, scrounge up (AE), shake down, sniff around,
27	1.65%	<b>TO BREAK, HURT, HARM, DAMAGE, INJURE</b>	bang up (AE), bash in, bash up, bust up, be gunning for, carve up, duff up/in/over, knock about/around, be laid up, mess up
28	1.65%	<b>TO FORCE, INTRUDE</b>	barge in, boot out, chuck out, kick out, push in, roll over, screw out of, shake down, throw out, turf out, whale on
29	1.65%	<b>TIRED, EXHAUSTED</b>	be burned out, crap out, do in, be done in, fag out, be flaked out, be shagged out, be spaced out, take it out of, tire out, be tired out, wipe out, be wiped out, wear out, be worn out,
30	1.5%	<b>TO DEFEAT</b>	ace out (AE), beat out, blow away (AE), blow out, knock off (AE), polish off, put one over (on sb), sweep aside, take apart, walk all over