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## LITERAL AND METAPHORICAL MEANINGS OF THE PARTICLE “DOWN” IN THE ENGLISH PHRASAL VERB “GO DOWN”

**Summary.** The paper focuses on examining the semantics of the particle “down” on the example of the English phrasal verb “go down”. The study found that phrasal verb particles as well as their verb constituents can be used metaphorically. There is often a clear connection between the literal meaning of the particle and its metaphorical extension. Moreover, the meanings of the particle “down” form a network of related senses, which are systematic and analyzable. In the course of investigation the literal and metaphorical meanings of the particle “down” were revealed and their contribution into the general meaning of the phrasal verb “go down” was defined. Gaining inside the meaning of phrasal verb particles proved to be a matter of the utmost importance when studying the semantics of phrasal verbs.

**Key words:** phrasal verb, particle, semantic structure, literal meaning, metaphorical meaning.

**Introduction.** Phrasal verbs (PhVs) are a common feature of the English language. They are frequently used not only in everyday English, but also in the official style of communication. Moreover, one should use them in order to sound native-like and to communicate fluently and naturally. On the other hand, PhVs can pose a real problem to learners of English, as their meaning cannot be deduced from the meaning of its constituents.

Many studies have been conducted with respect to PhVs. They concerned their nature [1–3], their semantic structure [4–6], and functioning [7–9]. PhVs are combinations of a verb and an adverb or preposition that function together as a single unit of meaning [10, p. 1]. In A. Nikolenko’s study PhVs are regarded as derived words of an analytical type. They are considered as products of functional re-orientation of primary units – a verb and a preposition / an adverb (in two-member phrasal verbs), and a verb and an adverb and a preposition / an adverb (in three-member phrasal verbs) [6, p. 18]. By “phrasal verb” we mean a combination of an “ordinary” (one-word) verb (e.g. come, play, put) and an adverbial or prepositional particle (e.g. in, off, up), or sometimes both, which constitutes a single semantic and syntactic unit.

As far as research into PhVs is concerned, there is not much attention given to the analysis of particles and their contribution to the general meaning of the PhVs. The topicality of this study consists in the necessity of solving the difficulties the language learners are running into while decoding their meaning.

**The aim** of the paper is to reveal the literal and metaphorical meanings of the particle “down” and demonstrate their contribution to nineteen meanings of the PhV “go down” registered in Collins Cobuild Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs [CCDPhVs].

**The presentation of the main research material.** It is generally assumed by cognitive scholars, that particles in PhVs often have particular meanings which they contribute to a variety of combinations. The fact that new combinations are rarely made on

a random basis also proves the hypothesis that particles contribute special meanings to the verb. Moreover, the particle meanings are fixed enough, that’s why the new combinations formed by them can to some extent be anticipated [8, p. 157].

PhV particles as well as their verb components may be used metaphorically. This is less easy to recognize, but in fact there is often a clear connection between the literal meanings of the particle and its metaphorical extension [8, p. 147]. In English, like in many other languages, the basic literal meanings of adverbs and prepositions refer to direction, positioning space, distance or extent. For example, the particle “up” literally describes movement towards a higher position and metaphorically its meanings have to do with increases in size, number, or strength. In the course of our previous investigation we revealed that the particle “up” has one literal and five metaphorical meanings in the PhrV “go up” [11, p. 258]. The particle under the present investigation literally describes movement towards a lower position and its metaphorical meanings have to do with decreases in number, strength, or intensity. To demonstrate this, let us consider the examples taken from the British National Corpus:

e. g. Very slowly, she began to go down the stairs, step by step, wincing every time one creaked and glancing over her shoulder every ten seconds or so [BNC].

e. g. Certainly, the market crash of ‘87 put the whole matter into perspective and help to propel to prominence the small print in the Government advertisements that investments can go down as well as up [BNC].

In the first sentence the particle “down” is a preposition and has a literal meaning and indicates movement from a higher position or place to a lower one.

That’s why the PhrV “go down the stairs” with literal meaning is easy to understand. The preposition links the object to the verb. While the meaning of the same particle in the second sentence is metaphorical. It occurs as an adverb in the given combination which refers to a decrease or lowering in size. An adverb in a literal PhrV modifies the verb it is attached to. It is worth pointing out that it is the metaphorical application in everyday speech which makes PhrVs so important

In the Particles Index of CCDPhVs we find a detailed semantic analysis of the phrasal verbs particles. Let us take the particle “down” which has the following ten meanings in CCDPhVs: 1) movement and position; 2) decreasing, lowering, and reducing; 3) fastening and fixing; 4) collapsing, attacking, and destroying; 5) defeating and suppressing; 6) completing and failing; 7) eating and drinking; 8) writing and recording; 9) cleaning and flattening; 10) work and activities.

The list is meant to demonstrate how complex “down” is in its semantics. It occurs in 191 phrasal verbs in CCDPhVs [12, p. 460]

and belongs to ten commonest particles used in verb-particle combinations. But not all this semantic diversity of particle meanings is involved into formation of nineteen meanings of the phrasal verb “go down” simultaneously. Let us demonstrate what meaning of the particle is contributed to the phrasal verb in the combination “go down”.

The meaning “movement and position” of the particle “down” is involved into formation of seven meanings of the PhV “go down”, namely: go down<sub>11</sub> – when someone or something goes down, they move from a higher position to a lower one, e.g. *Frank quickly turned to go down the hill as fast as he could*; go down<sub>2</sub> – if you go down in a building, you move downstairs, e.g. *Together they went down to breakfast*; go down<sub>5</sub> – something that goes down to a particular point or in a particular direction extends as far as that point or in that direction, e.g. *One road goes north, the other one goes down to Ullapool* [CCDPHVs, p. 137], go down<sub>13</sub> – when the sun or moon goes down, it sets, e.g. *After the moon went down the noise grew louder*; go down<sub>6</sub> – if you go down on your knees or on all fours, you lower your body until it is supported by your knees or by your hands or knees, e.g. *Ferdinand began to go down on one knee*. [CCDPHVs, p. 138]. Very similar meanings of particle “down” we observe in go down<sub>3</sub> and go down<sub>4</sub>: go down<sub>3</sub> – if you go down to a place you visit it or travel there, e.g. *I have to go down to Brighton.*, go down<sub>4</sub> – if you go down the shop, bank, pub, and so on, you go there for a short while, e.g. *Let's go down the bank then* [CCDPHVs, p. 137].

The “decreasing, lowering, and reducing” meaning of the particle “down” we revealed in the semantic structure of go down<sub>7</sub>, go down<sub>8</sub>, go down<sub>9</sub>, and go down<sub>10</sub>: go up<sub>7</sub> – if the cost, level, standard, or amount of something goes down, it becomes cheaper, lower, or less than it was before, e.g. *Conservative vote actually went down by 1.6 per cent*; go up<sub>8</sub> – if you say that something has gone down, you mean that its quality or standard has become worse, e.g. *The neighborhood has gone down since we came*; go down<sub>9</sub> – if a tyre, balloon, or something else which has been inflated goes down, air is lost from it, and it becomes flatter or smaller; go down<sub>10</sub> – if a swelling on your body or skin goes down, it becomes less swollen or disappears completely, e.g. *She discovered that the inflammation had gone down* [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

The “collapsing, attacking, and destroying” meaning we found only in two phrasal verbs: go down<sub>12</sub> – when someone or something goes down, they collapse or fall over, e.g. *He heard a mine explode and saw Jefferson go down* [CCDPHVs, p. 137]; go down<sub>14</sub> – if a ship goes down, it sinks. If a plane goes down, it crashes e.g. *He came to the surface yards away from where his boat had gone down* [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

The “defeating and suppressing” meaning of the particle “down” is contributed to the meaning of go down<sub>15</sub> and go down<sub>16</sub>: go down<sub>15</sub> – you say that you will go down in a particular way, you still intend to do what you have planned, e.g. *She was determined to go down fighting*; go down<sub>16</sub> – in sport, if a person or team goes down, they are defeated in a match or contest, e.g. *Lendl went down by three sets to one* [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

The “completing and failing” of the particle “down” was revealed in the semantic structure of go down<sub>18</sub> and go down<sub>19</sub>: go down<sub>18</sub> – if a computer goes down, it stops functioning temporarily; go down<sub>19</sub> – when university students go down, they leave university, especially at the end of their degree course, at the end of term [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

The “eating and drinking” meaning of the particle “down” was found only in one meaning of the phrasal verb: go down<sub>12</sub> – if you

talk about food or drink going down well, you mean that it is eaten or drunk with enjoyment, e.g. *A cup of tea would go down nicely* [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

The similar situation is with the “writing and recording” meaning: go down<sub>17</sub> – if something goes down in writing, it is written down, e.g. *They were interested in whatever we need to say, and I have no doubt it went down in their notes afterwards* [CCDPHVs, p. 138].

**Conclusion.** Having thoroughly analyzed the semantic structure of “go down” we revealed that the particle “down” contributes its seven out of ten meanings registered in Particles Index to the formation of nineteen meanings of this PhV. The results indicate that among these seven meanings one is literal, that is “movement and position”, the rest six meanings are metaphorical ones, that is “decreasing, lowering, and reducing”, “collapsing, attacking, and destroying”, “defeating and suppressing”, “completing and failing”, “eating and drinking”, “writing and recording”. We also found out that the meaning of the particle “down” in the PhV go down<sub>11</sub> doesn't coincide with any particle meanings described in CCDPHVs because of its high level of idiomatic connection with the verb constituent. Let us describe its semantic structure: go down<sub>11</sub> – if something goes down in a particular way, it gets a particular kind of reaction from a person or group of people, e.g. *This ruling would go down badly in Britain and Germany* [CCDPHVs, p. 138]. The study made a step forward to further improve the way of PhVs teaching and learning. The semantic analysis of the particle “down” will make the PhVs formed on its basis a more manageable part of the English language.

The prospects of the research we see in applying the methodology of investigation to analyzing the semantics of newly formed PhVs in English.

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**Вислободська І. М. Прямі та метафоричні значення частки “down” в англійському фразовому дієслові “go down”**

**Анотація.** Стаття досліджує семантичну структуру частки “down” на прикладі англійського фразового дієслова “go down”. Наголошується, що частки фразових дієслів, так само як і їхні дієслівні компоненти, можуть вживатися метафорично. Виявлено прямі та метафоричні значення частки “down”, продемонстровано механізм їхнього залучення до формування цілісного значення фразового дієслова.

**Ключові слова:** фразове дієслово, частка, семантична структура, пряме значення, метафоричне значення.

**Вислободская И. М. Прямые и метафорические значения частицы “down” в английском фразовом глаголе “go down”**

**Аннотация.** Статья исследует семантическую структуру частицы “down” на примере английского фразового глагола “go down”. Отмечается, что частицы фразовых глаголов так же, как и их глагольные компоненты, могут употребляться метафорически. Обнаружены прямые и метафорические значения частицы “down”, продемонстрирован механизм их привлечения к формированию целостного значения фразового глагола.

**Ключевые слова:** фразовый глагол, частица, семантическая структура, прямое значение, метафорическое значение.