



IRAQI
Academic Scientific Journals



العراقية
المجلات الأكاديمية العلمية

ISSN: 2663-9033 (Online) | ISSN: 2616-6224 (Print)

Journal of Language Studies

Contents available at: <https://jls.tu.edu.iq/index.php/JLS>



EFL learners' Awareness of Decontextualized and Contextualized of Some English Phrasal Verbs

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Received: 1/ 3/ 2024, Accepted:15 /4 /2024, Online Published: 31/ 5 /2024

ABSTRACT

Phrasal verbs belong to fixed expressions and they are well-established, very popular idioms and compromise an integral part of English language .The current paper tackles EFL learners' awareness in determining the correct meaning of some contextualized and decontextualized phrasal verbs. It tries to explore the effect of context as an approach to guess the correct meaning of phrasal verbs. It hypothesizes that context plays an important role in helping students to overcome difficulties they face and hence helps them make inferences to realize the correct meaning of phrasal verbs. In order to test the validity of this hypothesis, (6) English phrasal verbs have been incorporated in two multiple choice tests and then given to (50) EFL learners of English at their 3rd year/stage of study at the English department to choose the correct meaning of phrasal verbs. In the first test , the phrasal verbs were decontextualized and students were asked to choose the correct meaning of them .In the second test , the same students were asked

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to choose the correct meaning of the same phrasal verbs within their contexts (contextualized). Then, both tests were compared to find out the effect of context. The results show the students' ability in making use of the context and determine the correct meaning of phrasal verbs. This paper concludes that context is a very important factor in helping and enabling EFL learners to make inferences of the meanings of contextualized phrasal verbs.

KEY WORDS: phrasal verb, meaning, context, dextontextualized phrasal verb, contextualized phrasal verb.

مستوى الادراك لدى متعلمي اللغة الانكليزية للعبارة الفعلية المنزوعة السياق وذات السياق في اللغة الانكليزية.

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المستخلص

تتتمي العبارات الفعلية إلى التعابير الثابتة وهي مصطلحات شائعة للغاية وهي جزء لا يجزأ من اللغة الإنجليزية. يهدف هذا البحث الى تقصى مدى وعي طلاب السنة الثالثة/ قسم اللغة الانكليزية في تحديد المعنى الصحيح لبعض العبارات الفعلية الانكليزية المستخدمة في سياق والمنزوعة السياق. يهدف البحث إلى تقصي تأثير ودور السياق كنهج لتخمين المعنى الصحيح للعبارات الفعلية. ويفترض أن السياق يلعب دورًا مهمًا في مساعدة الطلاب على التغلب على الصعوبات التي يواجهونها ، وبالتالي يساعدهم في عمل استنتاجات لمعرفة المعنى الصحيح للعبارات الفعلية. من أجل اختبار صحة هذه الفرضية ، استخدم الباحثان وسيلة الاختبار للطلاب حيث تم وضع (6) عبارات فعلية في اثنين من الاختبارات الموضوعية ومن ثم إعطاؤها لـ (50) طالبًا لاختبار المعنى الصحيح للعبارات الفعلية.

في الاختبار الأول ، تم وضع العبارات الفعلية خارج السياق(منزوعة السياق) وطلب من الطلاب اختيار المعنى الصحيح لها (الملحق(1)). في الاختبار الثاني ، طلب من الطلاب أنفسهم اختيار المعنى المتزامن لنفس العبارات الفعلية الموضوعية في سياق(الملحق(2)). ثم تمت مقارنة كلا

الاختبارين لمعرفة تأثير السياق. تظهر النتائج قدرة الطلاب على استخدام السياق لتحديد المعنى الصحيح للعبارات الفعلية. بالإضافة الى ذلك اظهرت النتائج ضعف الطلاب في التعامل مع العبارات الفعلية المنزوعة السياق وأن السياق عامل مهم جدًا في مساعدة الطلاب وتمكينهم من الوصول الى استنتاجات حول المعاني الصحيحة للعبارات الفعلية.

1. INTRODUCTION

In their daily life people communicate via languages. They use language to see and understand the world. The language is used as a vehicle for our thoughts and ideas. As a global language, English is practiced and used by grate number of people all over the world. It is a fact that nowadays English is suggested as an obligatory subject in every school and university. What distinguishes English and makes it a very interesting language is having a great number of phrasal verbs regarded as one of the greatest productive patterns of English.

For non-native English speakers, it is not easy to comprehend the correct meaning of Phrasal verbs, from now on PHVs, because their meaning is non-compositional. This means that the meaning of a particular phrasal verb structure cannot be inferred only from the verb, preposition, or particle. Because phrasal verbs play a significant part in both written and spoken English, English learners who use it as a second language (ESL) in their daily interactions with skillful speakers must acquire and have solid knowledge of them.

A phrasal verb is made up of a verb, usually a monosyllabic verb of action or movement, and one or more particles, and serves as a syntactic and semantic unit. The particle that joins the verb can be an adverb, a preposition, or a word that can function as both an adverb and a preposition. The meaning of these verb phrases is idiomatic and cannot be deduced from their individual parts. That is, the meaning of a phrasal verb may not be obvious.

An expression that deviates from the language's standard pattern or lacks a complete meaning is known as a phrasal verb. When words are coupled with phrasal verbs, we are unable to infer their meaning (Rudzka-Ostyn, 2003:45) Phrasal verbs' intended meanings are determined by the context in which they are employed, which also affects how they are understood. (Newmark, 1982:25)

Numerous academics have emphasized the significance of multiword expressions for developing fluency in language learning (Wood, 2004; Folse, 2004). It is thought that learning them is a crucial component of speaking abilities. Understanding the meaning of multiword expressions is crucial, but it applies to hearing and receptive skills as well as speaking and productive abilities. One explanation is the variety of

layers and types of multiword phrases, including idioms, fixed expressions, phrasal verbs, prefabs, etc (Moon, 1997; Wray, 2002).

Phrasal verbs are acknowledged to be one of the most challenging concepts for students learning English as a second or foreign language. The reason for this is that some phrasal verbs have an idiomatic meaning, which is generally understood as the fact that "the meaning of the complex unit does not emerge from the simple combination of those of its constituents" (Arnaud & Savignon, 1997:161). Similar concerns have been raised in a study by May Mokarram Abdul Aziz who points that context plays a vital role in translating idiomatic expressions, the same way the intended meaning of phrasal verbs diverges from the literal meaning of its components, potentially due to its detachment from its original context, leading to ambiguity. That is to accentuate that context plays a crucial role in grasping the meaning of phrasal verbs (Abdul Aziz, 2024:324).

2. THE AIMS

The aim of this paper is to investigate the role of context in determining the correct meaning of phrasal verbs. The context in which the phrasal verbs are used is necessary for determining the correct meaning of the phrasal verbs because the sum of the meaning of its components does not result in its total meaning. Context, as expected in this study, can help students to make inference to determine the correct meaning of English phrasal verbs.

3. THE HYPOTHESES

The hypothetical points are:

1. EFL learners struggle to recognize the meaning of phrasal verbs appropriately because there is a mismatch between the meaning of the individual components of a phrasal verb and its true meaning.
2. The context aids learners in determining the correct meaning of phrasal verbs.

4. THE RELIABILITY

In order to have reliable results, the phrasal verbs are taken from the book "English Grammar in Use" by Raymond Murphy. Furthermore, the subjects are well-versed in phrasal verbs because they have studied all the units (137–145) that contain them. Then, without consulting dictionaries that could aid them in determining the meaning of phrasal verbs, the subjects were asked to pick the proper meaning of phrasal verbs, whether they were decontextualized or contextualized.

5. THE DEFINITION of PHRASAL VERBS

The term phrasal verb has been tackled differently by many scholars who are concerned with this area. For instance, Svartvik (1966:9) and Strang (1968:177) say that the main component of phrasal verb is a verb plus an adverb or a prepositional particle. These components constitute a group of words whose meaning is, in many cases, independent of the separate elements that form it.

According to (Bolinger .1971:3), instead of using the term phrasal verb, different items are used by different scholars. For example, Taha used the term “Two-Word Verbs “ , live used the term “Discontinuous Verb” , Krusing used the term “Compound Verb “ , Fraser used the term “Verb-Particle Construction” and Kennedy used the term “Verb-Adverb Compound”.(Ibid)

Phrasal verbs are idiomatic pairings of a verb with an adverb, a verb with a preposition, or both (with both adverb and preposition). Their meaning and grammar present challenges for students learning English.(Al-Sulaimaan ,2010:242).

Stageberg (1981: 240), for instance, defines phrasal verbs as” a verb-adverbial composite that contains two elements, the first element is a verb, which is followed by an adverbial like up, down and over. Similarly, Cobuild (1992: 172) states that this group of words consists of two or three parts. The group is called phrasal verbs whereas the parts are called verbs and adverbs respectively.On the other hand, Eastwood (2002: 303) argues that the particle which is combined with the verb is an adverb so as to get what is called the phrasal verb. Biber et. al. (1999: 403) clarifies that all the particles following the verb have a locative or spatial meaning;Taking in, out, and up as examples. Learners will find it simple to distinguish between phrasal verbs and prepositional verbs in this way. Foley and Hall (2003: 156) say that all multi-word verbs are called phrasal verbs though there are several types of them i.e., phrasal, prepositional, and phrasal-prepositional verbs.

According to Crowell (1964: 401), a phrasal verb is "a combination of a verb and a particle that together have a meaning that is different from the conventional meaning of the two words." Wishon (1980:217) defined phrasal verbs as "combinations of verb and particle that occur frequently together.". According to Azar (1989: 26), a phrasal verb is a verb and a preposition that have a special meaning when combined.

Phrasal verbs are defined as "a verb consisting of a simple verb plus one or more particles, the meaning of which is not normally predicted from that of the component part" by Trask (1997:169). A phrasal verb is a verb that consists of a basic verb and one or more particles, and its meaning is not always clear from that of its constituent parts. (Warriner, 1982:88)

According to Bolinger (1971), a phrasal verb is "the tight sense of a non-additive compound or derivative, one that has a fixed meaning and is not the sum of its parts.". As a result, the phrasal verb is a "lexical" item that is a component of the language's lexicon, as opposed to the morpheme, which is a unit of grammar. Bolinger views the phrasal verb as little more than an idiom..

Crystal (1991:263) provides a comprehensive definition of phrasal verb saying that it “a type of verb consisting of a lexical element plus one or more particles “e.g., come in , get up, look at .

McArthur and Atkins (1975:6) describe phrasal verbs as the “biggest headache” for EFL learners . Rudzka-Ostyn (2003:1) state that phrasal verbs are words that “do not

enjoy a good reputation” in English language learning although they are very common in spoken and written English and new combinations are constantly “being created”.

Gardner and Davies (2007:339) state that phrasal verbs embody one of the most “notoriously” challenging aspects of the English language. This notoriety originates from two different sources: the syntactic peculiarity and the semantic opacity. Based on the definitions above, it can be concluded that the common elements of any phrasal verb are that a verb and an particle or a verb and a group of particles. Placing prepositions and adverbs after some verbs in English, in order to obtain different and various meanings, is a very frequent trend in modern English. These verbs are called phrasal verbs”.

6. THE IMPORTANS OF PHRASAL VERBS

It is a fact that phrasal verbs are integral part of English language. Therefore, speakers of English, in both written and spoken English, use them since they are the most prevalent verb type in English. Because phrasal verbs are the most common components of vocabulary in English, their function is to broaden the vocabulary, improve understanding and writing of vocabulary, and increase the competence of native speakers who use common phrasal terms. That is to say, phrasal verbs are among the most important words to learn in English. (Jacobs, 2005).

One of the issues that students have when studying English as a second or foreign language is how to control the meanings of phrasal verbs in English. The meaning of phrasal verbs is problematic, which makes it difficult for students to interpret and grasp them correctly. This is primarily because the verb and its particle semantically operate as a single unit, meaning that the meaning of the phrasal verb depends on the verb and its particle taken together..(Li & Shirai, 2000:56).

Phrasal verbs are very important in English for a variety of reasons. The first reason is due to the frequency with which they are used in English. (Garnier & Schmitt, 2015). Phrasal verbs are said to occur nearly 2,000 times per million words in both written and spoken discourse.

Gardner and Davies (2007) also emphasize the importance of phrasal verbs in academic writing, observing that second-language learners may encounter at least two phrasal verbs per page of English written text. Furthermore, Nassaji and Tian (2010) assert that phrasal verbs, as a subclass of English vocabulary, are widely used by native English speakers. As a result, using native-like multi-word idioms like phrasal verbs allows English as a second language learners to produce native-like discourse.

7. THE CONTEXT OF SITUATION

No doubts context has a great influence on the meaning of a phrase or sentence. In determining the meaning of phrasal verbs, the context plays a decisive role since one word may mean a different thing depending on the context in which it is used. The context is connected to the environment in which the communication happens.

Widdowson (2000:126) defines “context” as “those aspects of the circumstance of actual language use which are taken as relevant to meaning.” He further points out, “in other words, context is a schematic construct... the achievement of pragmatic meaning is a matter of matching up the linguistic elements of the code with the schematic elements of the context.”

According to Cook (1999:24), the term "context" can be used in both a wide and specific sense. It is a way of knowing the world. When used strictly, it alludes to (knowledge of) elements unrelated to the text being studied. In a broad sense, it refers to knowledge of both of these things as well as knowledge of additional portions of the text being studied, sometimes known as "cotext.". The physical environment in which a word is used is referred to as context (Yule: 2000, 128).

Although they are viewed from different perspectives for different purposes, these definitions share an important point: the environment ;circumstances or factors by some other scholars in which a discourse occurs.

Kharna and Hajjaj (1989: 70) claim that many English phrasal verbs change their meaning when they are used in association with Either a preposition or prepositions – an adverb or adverbs in different contexts. They explain that the problem with such phrasal verbs is that their meaning cannot be predicted from their constituents, even if we know the meaning of all these constituents. That is to say that the context can solve this problem.

It is important to note that there are various categories under which phrasal verb meanings fall. For example, McArthur(1973:36) claims that phrasal verbs have two types of meanings:

- a. Literal Meaning: They have a normal meaning related to the verb and the particle, e.g.

She **picked up** the bottles.

Here is easy to get the meaning of phrasal verb from the verb and the particle.

- b. Figurative Meaning: They have a metaphoric meaning. This metaphoric use is always familiar for native speakers not for foreign learners of English, e.g.

She **picked up** some ideas. (=acquired)

She **picked up** fever. (=affected)

In the above examples, the meaning of phrasal verbs cannot be understood from the meaning of the constituent parts but we need the context to understand their correct meaning . A good example is the phrasal verb “**take in**” which means “**deceive**”.

The aforementioned examples show that phrasal verbs' meanings are significantly influenced by their context, and the same phrasal verb can take on a variety of meanings depending on the situation.

8. DATA ANALYSIS

The sources of data in this paper are textbook and students test. The students tested by giving them the phrasal verb test.

1. Phrasal verb : **Get by**

A. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
1	Get by	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		16	32	34	68

B. Contextualized

Table (2) The Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
1	Get by	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		41	82	9	18

Table (3) The Effect of Context in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc. of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
82	32	50

Discussion

According to Gambridge advanced Learners Dictionoray(2008) , this phrasal verb means to be able to live or deals with a situation with a difficulty, usually by having just enough of something you need. In fact, this phrasal verb is a very difficult one and it is not easy to determine its meaning out of context. A close look at table 1 above , one can realize that 16(32%) students out of 50 managed to get the correct meaning of the decotectulaized phrasal verb and 34(68%) failed to choose the correct meaning .In case of the contextualized phrasal verb table 2 , it is clear that 41(82%) of students managed to realize the correct meaning , while only 9 (18%) students did not manage to get the correct meaning.

The role of context in helping students to get the correct meaning of phrasal verb can be seen in table (3) as the effect of context reached 50 %.

2. Phrasal verb : **break down**

A. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
2	break down	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		14	28	36	72

B. Contextualized

Table (2) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
2	Break down	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		49	98	1	2

Table (3) The Effect of Conctext in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc. of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
98	14	84

Discussion

Even though this phrasal verb is used commonly among speakers of English ,table 1 shows that only 14(28%) of students managed to get the precise meaning of the decontextualized phrasal verb , while 36(72%) have failed to get the correct menaing. In case of the phrasal verb within context, 49(98%) of students made use of the context and manged to get the correct meaning .Only 1 (2%) did not get the meaning . It is clear from table 3 that context has helped all students to increase their awareness and thus they manged to get the correct meaning (84%) table 3.

3. Phrasal verb : take in

A. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
3	Take in	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		18	36	36	72

B. Contextualized

Table (2) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
3	Take in	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		41	82	9	18

Table (3) The Effect of Conctext in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
82	36	46

Discussion

This phrasal verb has a lot of meanings in different contexts . Among its meanings are understand , including, watch .work , deceive, and care for . Therefore ,it is difficult for English learners to get the correct meaning of it out of context. For the phrasal verb out of context , only 18 (36%) of the students managed to get the correct meaning and 32(64%) failed to get its appropriate meaning. For the phrasal verb within the context,the number of the students who get the correct meaing raised to 41(82%) and this result indicates that what helped the students and increased their awaernes is the context as the effect of context is (46%).

Here also context played an important role in helping the students included in the study to determine the accurate meaning of this phrasal verb as its effect reached 46%.

4. Phrasal verb : work out

A. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
4	Work out	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		17	34	33	66

B. Contextualized

Table (2) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
4	Work out	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perce%
				36	72

Table (3) The Effect of Conctext in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
72	34	38

Discussion

According to Gambridge advanced Learners Dictionoray (2008)^{3rd} ed. , this phrasal verb has seven different meanings in different contetxs namely ;calculate, understand, excersice ,result and develop. Hence , English learners face challenges and difficulties to get the correct meaning of it especially in case of using phrasa verb out of its context. Having a look at table 1 it shows that 34(68%) of the students faced difficulty in guessing the correct meaning of this phrasal verb , while only 17(34%) of the students were able to choose the right meaning. As for the contextualized phrasal verb , 36 (72%) students out of 50 managed to gues the exact meaning because of the context while only 14(28%) were unable to get the correct meaning . In table 2 , it is obvious that 38% is the percentage of effect of the context in determing the meaning of this phrasal verb.

5. Phrasal verb : Sort out

A. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
5	Sort out	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perce%
				26	52

B. Contextualized

Table (2) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
5	Sort out	No. of students	Perce%	No. of students	Perc%
		48	96	2	4

Table (3) The Effect of Conctext in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
96	26	70

Discussion

Table 1 shows that 26 (52 %) of the students included in the study correctly identified the meaning of this phrasal verb, while 24 (48 %) did not. Having contextualized phrasl verb aided students in determining the correct meaning of it ,table 2 ,as 48 (96 %) were successful in determining the correct meaning while only 2 (4 %) were unable to use the context in determining the correct meaning.

In this phrasal verb the context also helped students a lot as its percentage effect is 70%.

6. Phrasal verb : Go off

1. Decontextualized

Table (1) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Decontextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
7	Go off	No. of students	Perc%	No. of students	Perc%
		8	16	42	84

2. Contextualized

Table (2) Students' Number and Percentage of the Correct and Incorrect Meaning

No.	Phrasal verb	Contextualized			
		Correct Meaning		Incorrect Meaning	
7	Go off	No. of students	Perc%	No. of students	Perc%
		35	70	15	30

Table (3) The Effect of Context in Determining the Correct Meaning (%)

Perc. of Contextualized	Perc of Decontextualized	The Effect of Context
70	16	54

Discussion

According to Cambridge advanced Learners Dictionary (2008)^{3rd} ed., this phrasal verb has 7 different meanings in different contexts namely ; stop working , explode , food , noise , leave , happen , and become worse. Therefore , it is not easy to get its correct meaning from its individual parts “go” and “off” and what helped students to determine its meaning is the context in which it is used. Being out of context poses problems and difficulties that mislead students and incorrect choice of meaning. Table 1 shows that 42(84%) out of students failed to determine the correct meaning of this decontextualized phrasal verb. On the other hand, only 8(16%) students managed to determine the correct meaning. In the contextualized situation, 35(70%) students have made use of the context and got the correct meaning, while 15(30%) students failed to realize the correct meaning of the phrasal verb within the context.

The role of context in helping students to guess the correct meaning of phrasal verb can be seen in table 3 as the effect of context reached 54 %.

9. CONCLUSIONS

The paper has come up with the following results and findings:

- Phrasal verbs are regarded as one of the most important tools for vocabulary acquisition.
- Most of the examples included and analysed in the current paper, reveal that the correct meaning can be arrived out once the context is present.
- Context is crucial in determining the meaning of phrasal verbs.
- Context also helps students become more aware of the meanings of phrasal verbs.
- In case of decontextualized phrasal verbs ,it was difficult for students included in this study to get the correct meaning .
- Phrasal verbs should be used by students in their communication and academic use of the English language.
- To provide more thorough explanation of phrasal verb formulations in textbooks, it is necessary to focus on the use of phrasal verbs in English textbooks.

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APPENDIXES

Appendix (1)

Dear students read the following sentences carefully, then choose the closest meaning of the underlined phrasal verb :

1. The phrasal verb **get by** means
a. Manage b. leave c. pay attention d. be careful
2. The phrasal verb **break down** means
a. Stop working b. begin c. enter violently d. escape
3. The phrasal verb **take in** means
a. Invite b. deceive c. refuse d. thank
4. The phrasal verb **work out** means
a. Get information b. destroy c. develop d. retreat
5. The phrasal verb **sort out** means
a. Find solution b. conclude c. introduce d. give hand
6. The phrasal verb **go off** means
a. Explode b. fall asleep c. wake up d. happen

Appendix (2)

Dear students read the following sentences carefully, then choose the closest meaning of the underlined phrasal verb in the sentences:

1. My French is not very good, but it is enough to **get by** .
a. Manage b. leave c. pay attention d. be careful
2. Sorry I am late. The car **broke down** .
a. Stop working b. begin c. enter violently d. escape
3. The man said he was a policeman and I believed him. I was completely **taken in** .
a. Invite b. deceive c. refuse d. cheat
4. Good luck for the future. I hope everything **works out** well for you.
a. Get information b. destroy c. develop d. retreat
5. There are a few problem we need to **sort out**.
a. Find solution b. conclude c. introduce d. give hand
6. A bomb **went off** in the city Centre, but fortunately no one was hurt.
a. Explode b. fall asleep c. wake up d. happen