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Kibbitzer 13

‘End up’ in MICASE

Rafael Alejo, Annelie Adel, Jamie Kruis and John Swales (May 2007)

1. The frequency of ‘END UP’

In a preliminary exploration of the most frequent phrasal verbs (PVs) used in the MICASE corpus of spoken academic English, we ended up with the following data:

	PV	Frequency
1	go* on	688
2	go* through	352
3	go* back	317
4	end* up	255
5	figure* out	249

Table 1. Top five Phrasal Verbs in MICASE (* indicates a lemma)

Although a more detailed analysis on the PV status of these verbs is needed, the reader is most likely struck by the presence of ‘end up’ and ‘figure out’ in the top five. This kibbitzer therefore is an attempt to explore and, if possible, explain the roles of the former phrasal verb in this academic register.

We next compare ‘end up’ in MICASE with other corpora, producing the results in Table 2.

Corpus	Raw frequency	Freq. per million words
MICASE	255	150
ELFA	45	66
BNC Spoken	627	61
BNC Written	2804	28
The Hyland corpus of 240 research articles	29	3

Table 2. Frequency of ‘end* up’

As can be seen, ‘end up’ in MICASE is more than twice as frequent as in any of the other corpora. The table also shows (as ELFA is also a spoken academic corpus of non-native speakers of English) that ‘end up’ is very much associated with the spoken mode.

We also note that in American Academic speech ‘end up’ is much more frequent than its alternatives ‘finish* up’ and ‘wind* up’. There were only 23 tokens of the former and 19 of the latter.

2. Forms and syntactic structures of ‘end up’

Syntactically, ‘END UP’ is mainly used in three constructions:

- END UP + in+ ‘PLACE’

*She fled with her children, moving from neighbor to neighbor and **ending up in** a friend’s basement (CCADAE)*

- END UP + ing-FORM

*If you don't know what you want, you might **end up getting** something you don't want.*

- END UP + with

*which is no way to handle the problem. They'll **end up with** panic buying and stockpiling and blackmarket trading*

In terms of tense frequency, the present is the most common (73%), followed by the past with 25%, and with only 2% progressive. It is interesting to note, however, that in the MICASE corpus the past forms are less frequent than in the BNC. As we shall see later, this might have something to do with the meanings which predominate in the academic corpus.

As for the syntactic structures in which 'end up' is used, we can see from Table 3 that the constructions favored for 'end up' in MICASE are those involving the gerund and the preposition 'with'. In the first case, the two most common verbs are *getting* and *being*, which could be related to the presentational construction to be discussed later. For its part, the 'with' construction tends to have a resultative meaning.

Form	MICASE		BNC	
	n	%	n	%
<i>end up + gerund</i>	113	44	1097	32
<i>end up + with</i>	70	27.5	686	20
<i>end up + in/at</i>	19	7.5	618	18
Other	53	21	1030	30
TOTAL	255	100	3431	100

Table 3. Syntactic patterns of 'end up'

3. Meanings of 'end up' in General English

Although closely linked and derived from the simplex verb 'end', the phrasal verb in general English expresses certain nuances of its own as can be seen from the following definition:

END UP 1. PHRASAL VERB. If someone or something ends up somewhere, they eventually arrive there, usually by accident. 2. PHRASAL VERB. If you end up doing something or end up in a particular state, you do that thing or get into that state even though you did not originally intend to. (CCADAE)

However, other sources, such as Biber et al. (1999) and *The American Heritage Dictionary of Phrasal Verbs* (AHDVP), introduce an additional sense. Thus Biber et al. (1999: 428) list 'end up with' under the semantic domain *causative*. For its part, the AHDVP (2005) list the two meanings included in the CCADAE and adds the following one:

3. To arrive in some situation or condition as a result of a course of action. *If you keep going outside in this weather without shoes, you'll end up catching a cold.*

4. Meanings of 'END UP' in MICASE

We found that some of the meanings in MICASE clearly fall within the limits established by reference works, while other meanings seem to have developed in association with the specialized nature of the corpus and may therefore explain its high frequency.

The unintentional or unexpected flavor figuring so prominently in the CCADAE, however, was found not to be very pervasive in the MICASE data.

It may be argued that from its non-marked temporal use, which is the one most frequently used in general language, 'END UP' can take on a locative or a causal meaning, which as we shall see is especially common in MICASE.

a) END SEQUENCE

This meaning is associated with the meaning attested by the general dictionaries and is normally present in narrations recounting the experience of people through a series of events. It is in this meaning where the *accidental* or *not intentional* aspect comes into play, as in the following example:

um it was my senior year i guess his junior year mhm and, we **ended up working** on a project, together

Obviously, with this meaning the verb will tend to collocate with first person pronouns, although it can also be used to recount historical events:

but what, what Francis **ends up doing**, is is throwing down the gauntlet to the entire system including

In this case, "END UP" seems to highlight the end point of a long and complicated process rather than the unexpected nature of the event.

The tense typically used in this sense is the simple past, although, as in the previous example involving the historical present, other tenses also occur.

It is also important to note that it is in this sense that it collocates with words such as *but* or *actually* that further contribute to a rhetoric of the unexpected. Here are some examples:

six-million-year-old date, um, but what you	end up getting basically is if you use the
are about the past, but all the stories, you	end up with failure. they look to the
thought he was working within the Bible but it	ended up to be, like, he was like
worked on separate parts yeah um, but , we	ended up writing our paper, there was
of you might wanna be there but , uh if you	end up in a chemistry class remember
cases i don't even wanna know. but , you may	end up at a certain institution that has
most of these pre-Roman languages actually	ended up , falling into disuse. speakers
an assessment, that is harder to describe but	ends up i think in some ways being
tead of controlling for that variable, but we	ended up , uh uh two people i believe,

However, there is a use that emerges from the analysis of the concordance lines of 'end up' that is more related to the academic nature of MICASE. In this case the narration is not that of personal experience but typically the narration of scientific process or discovery. The protagonist in this narration is not a person or group of people but the different organisms or entities intervening in the scientific process (expressions of sequencing have been marked in the extract):

finally they secrete these enzymes and stimulate the stroma to produce more enzymes, which **ends up** digesting a path through the, surrounding tissues and into blood vessels. so that's the **first**, of the three **steps** of metastasis the, uh invasion, of cancer cells in the surrounding tissues and in the blood vessels. **once** they've gotten into blood vessels, we'll go to roman numeral two now, the second major stage in the process of metastasis, **once** the cancer cells get through the walls of these small blood vessels they're **now** in the circulatory system. and **at this point**, cancer cells are transported

As suggested by Kruis (2007), the use of 'end up' adds a sense of ongoing procedure, of unplanned result, that if left out would provide a much less vivid picture of what the speaker is trying to state or describe. Compare:

a. they secrete these enzymes and stimulate the stroma to produce more enzymes, which **ends up digesting** a path through the surrounding tissues

with

b. they secrete these enzymes and stimulate the stroma to produce more enzymes, which digest a path through the surrounding tissues.

b) RESULTATIVE: END RESULT

Another meaning of 'end up' occurs when the focus of attention is displaced from the process itself to the results of that process. This meaning is particularly productive in MICASE, especially in the form of the construction 'end up with + noun', the final noun serving to introduce the result.

This focus on results is sometimes highlighted by its use within the framework of a discourse-opening device such as a pseudo-cleft sentence. In a way, it is similar to the presentational function (Fortanet, 2004) with regard to 'we'.

that you considered unreachable, because, **what you end up with** when you plan is a don't wanna do it. so i mean, uh eventually **what i ended up putting** into the system correlated with mean annual temperature. so **what i ended up with** was um, a small num that are broader than they are long. and, **what we end up with** is an equation that, ten-point-six-million-year-old date, um, but **what you end up getting** basically is if years. you use the eleven-point-six date, **what you end up with** is an uplift rate and elevation estimate for those sites. and **what i ended up with** was an average elev

This use is also fairly frequent with highly technical noun phrases that are often accompanied by some linguistic markers indicative of results (the modal *gonna*, conditional sentences, *so* and the presentational structure described above).

meiosis two just picture this, you'd **end up with** four daughter cells on why not be be, okay think of what you **end up with** after meiosis, one. you end up with, so if you multiply all those out, you **end up with**, K V-perpendicular T, is on the order any particular domain whether you'll **end up with** more TAPs with longer deadlines, or wind and all that stuff and **so**, you **end up with** (planetary) nebula, just blows around when somebody after sixteen tries, **ends up with** T-ratio of two um, you've gotta okay, **so**, i'd **ended up with** cells...after, telophase one and they fall off **so** you **end up with** bare, sticky stems ugh what happens then is you're gonna **end up with** four really hard-core courses, (okay)

In these sequences, in particular, we can see how a phrasal verb with originally a primarily temporal meaning has taken on a 'resultative' or 'causative' (Biber et al., 1999) flavor. It is this added utility, along with its capacity to add excitement to the narrated journeys of scientific processes and discoveries, that probably explains why it is the fourth most common phrasal verb in MICASE.

c) FINAL LOCATION

The third meaning of 'END UP' is linked to the first syntactic structure above ('END UP' +in/at+ 'PLACE'). In this use, the verb is used to mark end location and, although it is not the most frequent meaning any more, it seems likely that the sequential and resultative meanings might have evolved from it.

As with the other meanings, its use with non-human subjects adds a certain dramatic effect, as in the following extract:

so it invades into the capillaries and the capillaries immediately now the fluid flow the blood flow will be going towards the small veins, and the small veins feed into the larger veins which feed into the larger veins and finally **end up**, in the right chamber of the heart. so we're going into bigger and bigger plumbing. okay we're starting out with cancer cells in a very very narrow tube, going into bigger and bigger plumbing where there's more and more room for them, and so **we end up** in the right side of the heart.

Interestingly, this meaning is much rarer than the other two. This small study suggests that colloquial usages such as 'END UP' take on particular shades of meaning in particular contexts.

5. Final remarks

In many of the examples of ‘END UP’ in MICASE, the speaker is dramatically unfolding the scientific process to the audience, stretching it out by adding ‘elements of potential suspense’:

fragments pieces of membrane, from cells, that readily metastasize. what do you end up getting? You end up getting cells that frequent metastasize. so this clearly shows that the plasma membrane, influences

, they go they will eventually encounter a capillary bed. okay? they could end up in here they could end up in the stomach and intestines they could end up in the liver they could end up in all the body tissues

This “dramatized” narration is sometimes enhanced by the co-occurrence of linguistic elements such as plural personal pronouns (e.g. the inclusive ‘we’ or the impersonal ‘you’) used to refer to the audience, which are thus incorporated into the metaphorical narration of scientific events.

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