



ISSN: 1817-6798 (Print)

Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities

available online at: www.jtuh.org/
JTUH
 مجلة جامعة تكريت للعلوم الإنسانية
 Journal of Tikrit University for Humanities

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07702035700

Keywords:
 Syntactic analysis
 Adverbials
 Mobility
 pedagogical significance
ARTICLE INFO**Article history:**

Received 4 Jan. 2022

Accepted 17 Aug 2022

Available online 15 Apr 2023

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A Syntactic Analysis of English Adverbials and their Pedagogical Significance to EFL Iraqi Learners

A B S T R A C T

This study is concerned with the syntactic order of adverbials in Standard English. It is motivated by the fact that the area of adverbials is an extremely problematic area of English grammar. Hence, it is a fertile issue for investigation. It is hypothesized that the particular problems that adverbials pose lie in the relative distributional freedom they enjoy in the English language. This study also hypothesizes that Iraqi EFL are unaware of the great extent of mobility of the adverbials in English. It aims to check out to what extent Iraqi EFL learners are unaware of the flexibility of adverbials position. The aims are achieved by applying a test to forty students in the third year at the College of Education for Women in Tikrit University.

DOI: <http://doi.org/10.25130/jtuh.30.4.1.2023.22>

تحليل نحوي للظروف الإنكليزية وأهميتها التربوية لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية كلغة أجنبية

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الخلاصة:

تهدف هذه الدراسة بالترتيب النحوي للظروف في اللغة الإنكليزية القياسية. حيث تعتبر الظروف او العبارات الظرفية من المواضيع ذات الإشكالية الواضحة لمتعلمي اللغة الإنكليزية لغة أجنبية بسبب القابلية الكبيرة والمرونة العالية التي تمتلكها الظروف لإشغال مواقع مختلفة في الجملة الإنكليزية. وبذلك تعتبر الظروف من المواضيع المهمة للبحث للتقصي عن قابلية الطلبة في تمييز الاماكن المناسبة للعبارات

الظرفية. تفترض هذه الدراسة أن طلبة المرحلة الثالثة في جامعة تكريت/ كلية التربية للبنات/ العام الدراسي ٢٠٢٢-٢٠٢٣ يفتقرون الى القابلية على معرفة الموقع الأمثل للظرف في الجملة الانكليزية. ويهدف البحث إلى التحقق من مدى وعي متعلمي اللغة الإنجليزية كلغة أجنبية بمرونة هذه الظروف. لتحقيق هذا الهدف يقوم البحث بتطبيق اختبار مكون من ١٥ فقرة على أربعين طالبة في السنة الثالثة في كلية التربية للبنات في جامعة تكريت، وكانت النتائج مؤكدة لفرضية البحث مما يتطلب من تدريسيي المادة بذل جهد اكبر في توعية الطلبة في هذا المضمار.

الكلمات المفتاحية: التحليل النحوي، الظرف، قابلية التنقل، الدلالة التربوية

1. INTRODUCTION

The area of adverbials is an extremely problematic area of English grammar. The problem lies in the syntactic order of adverbials and their distribution in English sentences, that is, with all possible positions that are open for different types of adverbial. Function and position are the determining criteria upon which adverbials are classified. More seriously, the problem in the description of adverbials is its placement. For example,

- (a) *Quickly* Sam tore the flag down.
- (b) Sam *quickly* tore the flag down.
- (c) Sam tore the flag down *quickly*.

The aim of this study is not to present a full account of individual adverbials, i.e. not to present a frequency count of them, but to discuss the positions that adverbials readily occupy. And to check out to what extent Iraqi EFL learners are aware of the multi positions an adverb may occupy. Accordingly, it is hypothesized that Iraqi EFL learners are unaware about the variety of positions of adverbs in English.

Language learners differ, in many cases, in their judgements of the acceptability of adverbial positions because of the complex interplay of factors that influence the choice of these positions. 'Adverbial position' remains a disorderly area of grammar that in turn confuses EFL learners.

It is hoped that the findings of this study may be utilized by teachers and text-book writers as well when dealing with adverbial positions in English. The instructional syllabus can be organized, graded and sequenced for teaching such positions in a way that meets learners' needs.

2. LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Adverbials in English

2.1.1 Definition of Adverbs

Finegn (2008: 39) defines an adverb as the most obscure word class and derived from adjectives when they are associated with (-ly) such as (quick – quickly), on the other hand not all adverbs contain (-ly) such as (here).

Kroger (2005: 227) defines an adverb as the factor which is not unclassified by the verb, but which is added to the sentence to support it with different types of information or expressions; perhaps function as adjunct clauses, the most vulgaris kind are adverb, prepositional phrases and adjunct clauses, such as Sarah makes her address when her sister is going to her home.

Many of linguistics define the adverb and illustrate their position in English or Arabic sentences. Some authors agreed that the sentences which contain adverb are complicated because the adverbs occupy different position in the sentence.

Verspoor and Sauter (2000: 193) state that the adverb phrase is like the adjective phrase which contains of an adverb, adverb phrase preceded or followed by different words, there are pre-modifiers come before head adverb like (very) is so easily recognised as a head adverb and other thing is the post-modifiers and pre modifiers with head they are called adverb phrases.

Eastwood (1994: 261-263) gives an explanation about adverb and adverbial phrase have various form either adverbial phrase such as (She was working very quickly) prepositional phrase for example (He was watching TV, everyday). Sometimes adverbial phrases are added to the sentence to make the sentence more meaningful. So that adverbial phrase can modify various positions in the sentence.

2.1.2 Form of Adverbials

Many adverbs are not derived from other adverb such as " always, soon, very" and some of the adverbs are derived from adjective by adding (-ly) such as (quick – quickly). So we can't use -ly with adjective which contain (-ly) in originally to change it to adverb, but we can use prepositional phrase or other adverb. The shapes of some adverbs are similar to adjectives' shape, such as (fast, long, early). (ibid).

There are adverbs that have or haven't (-ly) this happened when it is formal (common speaking) such as (cheep – cheaply, loud – loudly). Another form of adverbial in which group of words of adverbs have various meanings is when it occurs in the sentence such as (hard – hardly).

Another form of adverbs is that when they are adjectives and adverbs at the same time. Such as (monthly – daily) because they are shaped from day – month – there are same adverbs that have the same meaning with different word in adjective. The position of adverbs relies on what it modifies. An adverb can modify single word, group of words or all the clauses. The place of adverbial relies on what kind of adverbial it is and whether it is one word or more than. Therefore, adverbs can modify nouns, adjectives and adverbs. The places which adverbs take when they modify a noun it is placed after the noun, when an adverb modifies an adjective, it occurs before it.

2.1.3 Adverbial Clauses

Eastwood (1994: 327-328) states that an adverbial clause is portion of the major clauses and it is considered as the same with adverbials such as, prepositional phrase or adverb. The most usual position of adverbial clause is at the beginning and at the end.

The organization of the clause relies on significant information and the information that is new in this situation clause is put at the end sentence.

2.1.4 Types of Adverbs

Downing and Locke (2006: 508- 511) clarify the syntactic function of adverbial position; they say that adverbs have three main functions as adjunct in clause structure as modifier in-group structure and their connectives between clauses.

Ansell (2000: 365-374) states the types of adverbs that modify a verb are as follows:

- a. Adverbs of Frequency: (always, usually, often, ...etc.) are adverbs of frequency, which modify the verb, take one basic places in the clauses that is after the subject or the first auxiliary in reply to the question of how 'often'.
- b. Adverb of Time: placed in two positions either in front position or in the end position of clause adverb of time in reply to the question which is asked by (when)?
- c. Adverb of Manner: an adverb that is placed at the end position of clause, especially when it is placed before an intransitive verb or direct object of a transitive verb. This adverb occurs at the beginning of the sentences (clause) for the sake of pinpoint the notion expressed by

adverb. Sometimes, when the clause doesn't have adverbs of frequency so adverbs of manner occupy middle place.

d. Connecting Adverb: an adverb, which is used to join the thoughts together, which are expressed by the adverbs such as (However, Nevertheless, Therefore, ...). This kind of adverbs occupies the first position of clauses.

e. Adverb phrases and clauses of purpose: the adverbs of purpose occur at the end position of a clause. These adverbs answer the question why? The question in this type is answered either by phrases or clauses and it often occupies the first position in the clause for the sake of emphasis.

f. Adverb of location: this type of adverbs is placed at the end position of clause especially when it occurs before adverbs of time and adverb of location, and can answer the question 'where'?

g. Negative adverb: an adverb which has clear negative meaning (never, not) and also in explicit negative meaning such as (hardly, seldom and scarcely, barely, little and few). These negative words are in their meaning negative but in form positive (Quirk et al, 1973: 187).

2.2 The Syntax of Adverbs

2.2.1 Definition of Syntax

The word 'syntax' goes back to 'Greek' and literally means "setting out together" or "arrangement" (Yule, 1998: 100).

Mark and Baker (2003, 265) define syntax as the component of linguistics which studies how words of language that can be collected to make huge units from phrases and sentence. Crystal (2003: 345) defines syntax as an imitative term of the bases governing the way words that are collected to shape sentence in a language.

2.2.2 The Syntactic Position of Adverbs

Carnie (2006: 42) clarified the syntactic distribution of adverbs that adverbs cannot occur between a determiner and a noun or after the verb. They can occur in another place in the sentence, such as the beginning or the end of the clause or sentence.

2.2.2.1 Initial Position

Quirk *et al*, (1985: 490-492) present a general explanation about the position of adverbs in which they have mobility in the sentence. The place of adverbs in this case is occurred before the subject itself in:

- a. (In the morning, she went to Baghdad). Even the sentence which I direct question adverbs are placed before it, and also if the direct question is "operator or wh-element" such as:
- b. In the morning, did you go to Baghdad? Adverbs are placed after conjunction when we have subordinate or coordinate sentence as in:
- c. (Mary is very active, but suddenly, she feels tired).

2.2.2.2 Middle Position

An adverbial may take middle position. In this case, adverbs are placed between the auxiliary and the base verb like: (she has *suddenly* came to the house) also in the interrogative sentence, the adverb lies between subject and the verb as in: (He never comes to this house!). If we say *(never we come to this house!) this sentence is wrong because (never) in original sentence will be in the mid position. (ibid).

Adverb of frequency such as "always, never, seldom, hardly, ever, after, rarely, sometimes, usually" are placed in the middle position between the subject and the main verb or between the auxiliary and the main verb; such as (I usually go to Baghdad), (She has rarely gone to Baghdad). Adverbs like (often) can be placed at the beginning or in the mid of the sentence. He (often rides his car) or (often, he rides his car).

Quirk (ibid: 493-495) divides adverbs that occupy the middle position to three subdivisions: initial middle, middle middle, and end middle. Hence, many adverbs can be placed on the middle more than an initial middle position; "They probably can't find their way here" in this negative sentence adverb tend to occur in the initial middle position because, if we observe that adverb occur in another place, it will be affected by negation. We can conclude that the adverb in this case is put before the main verb of the verb phrase. The final middle position is a scarce. End middle adverb typically with adverb of manner, degree, optional, and with realizations by adverb phrases or prepositional phrases. When the sentence consists of three or more than three auxiliaries, adverbs in this case tends to occur on the middle position. There are some adverbs like (sometimes and often) tend to occur in the middle position as in: She has *sometimes* been late.

2.2.2.3 Final position

They are the adverbs that occur at the end of the sentence and follow the obligatory element. Adverbs in this position are uncommon, if there is more than one obligatory adverb. Adverbs that are obligatory as this "The light was fading rapidly".

Adverbs of place usually occupy the final position of the sentence. The adverb of place occurs after the verb when there is no direct object in the sentence as in: (I read in the library) and if the sentence consists direct object adverb should occur after it (I read a story in the library).

Adverbs that occur at the end of the sentence are obligatory rather than optional and also they tend to be adverbial phrases rather than short adverbs as in:

- They go to the house at night (Ibid).

So, this means that adverbs are not position-fixed in the sentence, such as (I completely finished my work), (I finished my work completely) and (I completely finished my work). Adverbs do not always have various position, that adverb depends on the type of adverb.

2.2.3 The Function of Adverbs

Aarts (2001: 104) states that a modifier "is a word, phrase or clause which functions as an adjective or adverb to limit or quantify the meaning of another word called the head". There are pre-modifiers and post-modifiers depending on their position. If it is after the head, it is post-modifiers, if before pre-modifier, for example "The boat is big enough *to hold us*", "My brother gave his friend a gift in Dubai *last week*". Adverbs are in fact function as modifiers of a variety of sentence elements, as shown below:

a. Sentence Modifying Adverbs

Abbas (19: 133-135) explains that sentence modifying adverbs in which the distribution of subject response for adverb such as (1-Noor and Mary have arrived on time *super singly*), and (2-Samer will go to the party *unfortunately*). These adverbs are more acceptable in initial position rather than final as in; (3-*Surprisingly*, Mary and Noor have arrived on time). The position of an adverb is influenced by some characteristics such as the length of the adverbs, the number of syllables that it contains.

Sentence modifying adverbials may occur in positive, interrogative and negative moods. As in sentence modifying adverbials in negative (5- I *normally* do not go to school lately). So in this sentence the suitable positions of an adverb are initial, after subject, after auxiliary, and at the end of the sentence. In interrogative sentence, with adverb (Frankly) the whole

positions of the sentence are suitable for adverbial, as in (6-*Frankly*,Does he.... give the money.....?).

b. Verb phrase Modifying Adverbs

Abbas (ibid: 148- 151) sheds light on the verb phrases modifying adverbials; everyone agrees that the final position is less acceptable on the other hand the middle is abnormal especially when the adverbs are adverbs of time and place. "They are driving the car *into the garage*". The adverb here can be placed after the verb because it delimits direction. (7- They plan a meeting at my house), and "I only like the fish outside", in this sentence the adverb 'outside' is like object and the information focuses on it. So this adverb as well as, at my house is more acceptable in the final positions. Adverbs are responsible for different responses of subject. "Soon and tonight" these two adverbs are most acceptable in the initial position because the subject gives the emphasis on the event lecturing as in; ("Soon the professor will give the lecture"), but also still the final position is more acceptable as in "The professor gives the lecture tonight".

Accordingly, "ago" modifies the adverbs long and enough modifies the adjective old as well the adverb 'fast' sometimes (enough) comes as an adjective so it modifies a noun like "Do we have enough apples to make a pie?" there is a group of adverbs are called intensifiers which modify adjectives and adverbs, but this adverbial often is used with verb or to modifying adverb as in these examples "She is very sad". "This song was quite bad", "She does that rather well", "She must come so soon".

c. Auxiliary Modifying Adverbials

In this case, adverb is suited after the auxiliary verb and before the main verb such as "He will always read magazine in the morning". So, it can occur also finally.

d. Subject modifying Adverbials

In this type of functions, the position after the subject and before main verb is the most preferable and also initial position is acceptable, such as "She humbly asked her father to accept her excuse".

e. Adverb Modifying Adjectives and Other Adverbs

Ansell (2000: 364) clarifies the adverb, which modifies an adjective or other adverbs, that adverb comes before the word that modifies them as in "a terribly tall tree" and "A bitterly

cold winter" (Finegon: 2008: 40). In these sentences, the words that are underlined are modified by the adverb that precedes them. The adverb such as (ago and enough) both occur after the word that they are modifying. As in happened long ago, "He is old enough" to make his own decisions" and "We ran fast enough to catch the bus".

3. METHODOLOGY

By adopting Quirk, et al's model of classifying English adverbials, a test of fifteen items is conducted on the third year students at the Department of English/ College of Education for Women/ University of Tikrit during the academic year 2022-2023.

The total number of the sample is forty students. In order to fulfill the aims of research and verify the hypotheses, the results of the test are statistically computed and analyzed.

No.	Use a (✓) to choose the number of the position(s) that best fit the adverb:	
A	¹ _ John ² _ will ³ _ come ⁴ _ to the party ⁵ _	(unfortunately)
B	¹ _ Jim ² _ has ³ _ arrived ⁴ _ on time ⁵ _	(surprisingly)
C	¹ _ He ² _ is ³ _ studying ⁴ _ at home today ⁵ _	(wisely)
D	¹ _ We ² _ do not ³ _ go ⁴ _ to bed ⁵ _ before midnight ⁶ _	(normally)
E	¹ _ I ² _ do not ³ _ know ⁴ _ what he wants ⁵ _	(honestly)
F	¹ _ He ² _ does not ³ _ take medicine ⁴ _	(usually)
G	¹ _ Does ² _ Sue ³ _ know ⁴ _ about it ⁵ _?	(frankly)
H	¹ _ They ² _ asked ³ _ the manager to accept ⁴ _ the invitation ⁵ _	(humbly)
I	¹ _ I ² _ have ³ _ never ⁴ _ been to New York ⁵ _	(personally)
J	¹ _ This matter ² _ would ³ _ not ⁴ _ have been ⁵ _ included ⁶ _	(probably)
K	¹ _ He ² _ forgot ³ _ about ⁴ _ her birthday ⁵ _	(quite)
L	¹ _ Leave ² _ the room ³ _	(kindly)
M	¹ _ They ² _ were ³ _ looking ⁴ _ for a job ⁵ _	(very hard)
N	¹ _ I ² _ do not ³ _ remember ⁴ _ its name ⁵ _ (completely)	
O	¹ _ She ² _ will ³ _ leave ⁴ _ home ⁵ _	(soon)

4. RESULTS AND DISCUSSION

4.1 Sentence modifying adverbials

The items in the test, which match this function type, are found in the three types of mood, positive, negative, and interrogative, respectively.

- Sentence modifying adverbials in positive:

A. ¹ John ² will ³ come ⁴ to the party ⁵ (unfortunately).

B. ¹..... Jim²...has³...arrived⁴...on time⁵... (surprisingly).

C. ¹..... He².... Is³.... Studying⁴..... at home today⁵..... (wisely).

In sentence (A and B) the suitable positions for adverbial are (1, 2, and 3), but the most appropriate one is the initial (1). In sentence (C) the most suitable positions for the adverbial are (1 and 3).

Most of the students choose answer (1) for the sentences (A, B, and C), respectively. They choose (1) because it is the most appropriate position though, there are other positions that are also appropriate for these adverbials to occur such as number (3 & 5) for sentences (A and B) and (1, 3) for sentence (C).

Some of the students have unfortunately have chosen different positions for the adverbial, but they are not successful in their choice, for example position (2) and (4).

- Sentence modifying adverbials in negative:

D. ¹.....we²...do not³....go⁴....to bed⁵...before midnight⁶..... (normally).

E. ¹.....I²....do not³....know⁴...what he wants⁵.....(honestly).

F. ¹.....He²...does not³....take medicine⁴....(usually).

In sentence (D) the appropriate places for adverbial, (1, 2, 3, and 6) according to the acceptability of sentence modifying adverbial in negative.

Most of the students have chosen one position for the adverbial such as position (1) or (2) which are the most acceptable positions. However there are more appropriate positions for adverbial such as (3) and (6). Other students chose different positions like (4) and (5). This reflects that, students have lack of information concerning the mobility of adverbial.

Sentence (C) and (F) adverbial are fit in all whole positions.

Many students have chosen only one position for adverbials, neglecting the other positions. Although other positions are also suitable, two or three students have chosen no more than three positions.

- Sentence modifying adverbial interrogative.

G. ¹...Does²....Sue³....know⁴....about it⁵....? (Frankly).

In this sentence the adverbial is acceptable in initial position only. Ten from forty students chose number one as appropriate position for adverbial. Other students have chosen different positions for adverbial especially position number three.

4.2 Subject modifying adverbs

H.¹They²asked³the manager to accept⁴the invitation⁵.....(humbly).

I.¹I²have³never⁴been to New York⁵ (Personally).

The most accurate positions for sentence (H) are number (1) and (2).

Most of the students have chosen number (5) though this position is fair to be suitable. They have been successful in choosing the suitable positions.

Some of the students chosen number (2) as the most appropriate neglecting number (1) which is also more acceptable.

Positions of adverbial in sentence (I) are fit in each positions. So that according to his test students have failed in achieving the suitable score. They chose only one position or no more than two positions.

4.3 Auxiliary modifying adverbial:

J.¹This master²would³not⁴have been⁵included⁶.... (Probably).

The appropriate position for adverbial in this sentence is (1, 2, and 3). Most of the students have chosen different positions for adverbial. They chose especially number (2) as the suitable position for adverbial and position (5). Some of students chose number (1) and (3). There are few or no students chose the three correct position.

4.4 Verb modifying adverbial:

K.¹He²forget³about⁴her birthday⁵.....(quite).

L.¹leave²the room³.....(kindly).

M.¹They²were³looking⁴for job⁵.....(very hard).

N.¹I²do not³remember⁴its name⁵.....(completely).

These sentences (k, l, m, and n) in which verb modifying adverbial, adverbials accept different position, they identified according to the type of adverbial in sentence (k) is restragted and the suitable position of it number (2) immediately after the subject and before main verb.

Most of the students have chosen different positions for adverbial especially number (1) and (5). Some of them chose the accurate positions of adverbial number (2). According to this test, they are failed in identifying the suitable position for adverbial.

Also sentence (L) has only one suitable position for adverbial, which is position (1) according to the verb of commands or (imperative verb).

Some of the students have chosen number one as the most accurate position. Other students have chosen the other positions of the sentence.

The appropriate positions in sentence (M) are (4) and (5) many of students have answer position (5) as the most suitable choice, they neglecting position (4) which is also most appropriate.

Sentence (N) according to this sentence which is negative that the most accurate places for adverbial mid and final positions.

Most of the students have chosen (5). Their answer similar to the previous sentence neglecting that position number three is also acceptable. No students have chosen both accurate position, they chose different others positions.

4.5 Verb phrase – modifying adverbial:

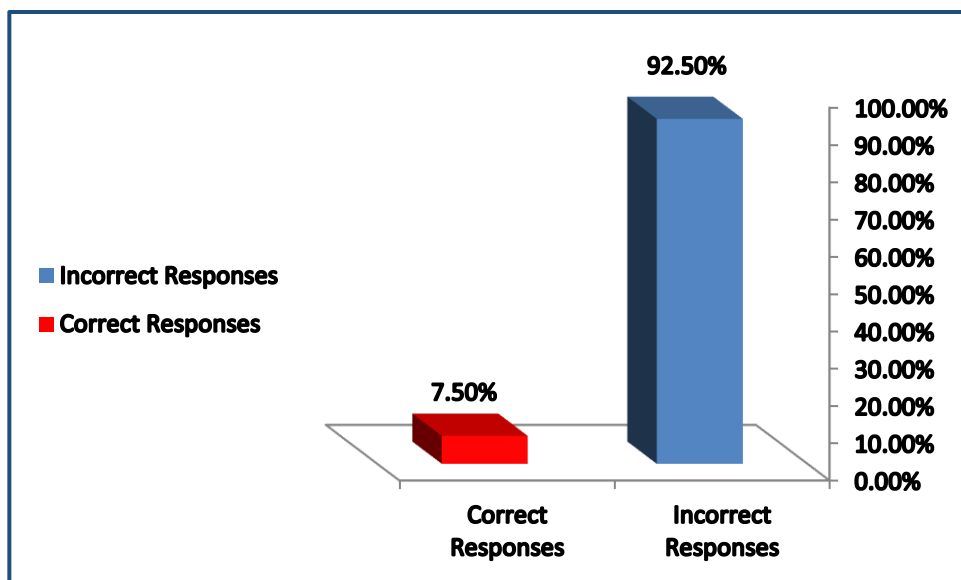
O. ¹.....She....²will.....³leave.....⁴home....⁵(soon)

The acceptability of adverbial in the sentence in which verb phrase modifying adverbial is not similar because this different of the adverbial position, that adverbial itself responsible upon it so that the accurate positions in this sentence (1, 3 and 5).

Most of the students have chosen (5) as a suitable positions for adverbial and they don't pay attention for others important position (1) and (3). Some of student chose more than one different position of adverbial.

The result that we reached that student a wake in; 1- identifying the suitable or the accurate positions for adverbial in the sentence an also. 2-in being aware of the mobility of adverbial in general. So that one can safely say that flexibility of adverbial in the sentence. We can intensify answer the result we have reached according to their answer in point 4.3.1.

Total of Items	No. of Correct Responses	%	No. of Incorrect Responses	%
15	3 Out of 40	7.5%	37 Out of 40	92.5%



5. PEDAGOGICAL SIGNIFICANCE

EFL learners need to learn more about the syntactic function of adverbial, namely their position. English adverbials must be taught by means of communication tasks and real -life situations which provide meaning or in the form of conversation. Besides, more practices and exercises should be conducted among students in English adverbials so that the students can recognize the different positions these adverbials may take. Due to this fact, attention should be given to teaching adverbials in English as it is a problematic area for Iraqi EFL university students.

6. CONCLUSION

This study arrives at the following conclusions:

1. Adverbials have or cause a lot of difficulty for Iraqi EFL learners because of their high mobility within English sentence.
2. According to the result of test, students have difficulty in identifying the most appropriate positions of adverbials. The multi place of adverbials presents serious problems to student's third stage at college of education for women/ Tikrit University.
3. The function of the adverbial in the sentence is affected when the adverbial's place is changed within the same sentence.

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