

## The Acquisition of English Adverb Placements by Saudi Female Learners اكتساب الطالبات السعوديات لمواضع الظرف في اللغة الإنجليزية

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Received:10/11/2023 Revised:5/2/2024 Accepted: 18/02/2024

تاريخ التقديم: 10/11/2023 تاريخ ارسال التعديلات: 5/2/2024 تاريخ القبول: 18/02/2024

### الملخص:

تهدف هذه الدراسة إلى التعرف على كيفية اكتساب الطالبات السعوديات لمواضع الظرف المختلفة في اللغة الإنجليزية. وقد تناول البحث ثلاثة أنواع من الظروف: ظرف الأسلوب وظرف الزمان وظرف التكرار. وقد تطلب البحث إجراء مهمتين لجمع البيانات من 133 طالبة وكانت الأولى هي مهمة الحكم النحوي والثانية مهمة الإنتاج الكتابي. تؤكد نتائج هذه الدراسة أن الطالبات السعوديات يواجهن صعوبة في اكتساب المواضع المختلفة الخاصة بظرف التكرار وظرف الأسلوب وظرف الزمان. حيث أظهرت الدراسة أن الطالبات لم يتمكنن في هذا الصدد من تحقيق مستوى أداء يماثل هؤلاء الذين تعتبر اللغة الإنجليزية هي لغتهم الأم. ويعد ترتيب الكلمات داخل الجملة في اللغة العربية هو أحد أهم العوامل المرتبطة بهذه النتيجة حيث تختلف تبعاً لذلك مواضع الظرف في الجملة العربية، فقد قامت الطالبات بنقل قواعد اللغة العربية فيما يتعلق بمواضع الظرف. وأظهرت الطالبات بوجه عام أداءً مماثلاً فيما يتعلق بقدرتهن على اكتساب المعرفة الخاصة بأنواع الظروف الثلاثة.

**الكلمات المفتاحية:** موضع الظرف، المتعلمين، الاكتساب، الأخطاء، الوعي.

### Abstract:

This study aims to understand how Saudi female learners acquire the use of adverbs at various positions in English sentences. The focus was on three types of adverbs: Manner, Time, and Frequency. Two tasks were conducted to collect data from 133 students in the grammatical judgment and writing the correct sentences using these adverbs. The findings of this study verify that Saudi female students encounter difficulty in selecting proper types of adverbs such as Frequency, Manner, and Time to place at various positions in a sentence. The students failed to achieve a native-like level of performance in this regard. A significant factor relating to this finding is the word order used in Arabic, which also has variations in positioning adverbs within sentences. The students would transfer the rules of Arabic to adverb positions accurately. The students generally exhibited a similar performance in acquiring three types of adverbs.

**Keywords:** Adverb placement, Learners, Acquisition, Errors, Awareness.

## 1. Introduction

The placement of adverbs is an aspect of grammar that has received considerable attention in studies on L2 acquisition. It is commonly agreed that mastery of these positions is essential to grammatical knowledge (18, 37). However, the placement of adverbs is relatively complex from one language to another. It arises due to their various semantic and syntactic roles within sentences (21), and their placement can change the meaning and grammatical correctness of the sentence (8). As such, mastering their complexity ultimately relies on determining a unified definition for adverbs. Numerous authors have provided various definitions of adverbs, explanations of their use, and where they should go in a sentence (10, 20). For instance, Adverbs are defined as “one of the minor syntactic categories comprising words that typically refer to the manner or time of an action” (30), (p.473) while, according to (27), an adverb is a part of speech that includes words that modify verbs. These words imply “the manner in which an action was performed ... the frequency of the event ... or the time or location of an event” (p.328). Bing (7) pointed out that adverbs are one-word modifiers of verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. However, Quirk et al. (34) said, “It is tempting to say simply that the adverb is an item that does not fit the definitions for other word classes” (p. 438).

Another obstacle to finding a unified definition of adverbs is the close resemblance between adverbs and adverbials, the latter referring to phrases or clauses that function as adverbs (12). However, Cinque (11) stated that adverbs are syntactic categories with particular adverbial features and properties, while adverbials, on the other hand, serve as modifiers for any syntactic category, for example, as prepositional phrases (PP). Adverb phrases (AdvP) function as “unique specifiers of distinct maximal projections, rather than as adjuncts” (11) (p.v). Adverbs are regarded as adverbials for the syntactic category adverbs (13). In contrast, adverbials are regarded as adjuncts semantically, “taking a Fact-Event Object ... or a time interval as its argument” (13), (p.7). In traditional grammar, adverbs are regarded as one of the primary word classes, constituting the head of AdvP (34).

Therefore, giving an accurate definition of adverbs or identifying them is challenging. Adverbs can be found in several English sentence positions, e.g., before adjectives, before other adverbs, before or after the verb phrase, etc. This placement variation poses challenges for language learners. Indeed, adverbs are the most difficult category for EFL/ESL learners to acquire (35, 37) due to their various semantic and syntactic roles in English (20). Thus, the current study examines the acquisition of adverb placements regarding three types of adverbs in English by Saudi EFL learners.

## 2. Adverbs

Considering how difficult it is to define adverbs accurately, it is helpful to identify their morphological forms, functions, meanings, and syntactic positions to comprehend this category (10, 14).

## 2.1. Morphology of adverbs

Morphologically, according to Quirk et al. (34), adverbs are classified into three types, as shown below (1).

- 1) a. Adverbs with simple forms (*now*).
  - b. Derivational adverbs that end in the suffix *-ly* (derived from adjectives), such as *slowly*.
  - c. Compound adverbs, e.g., *wherever*.
- Other types of adjectives prevent the attachment of the suffix *-ly* to derive adverbs, e.g., *\*smally*.

## 2.2. Semantics of adverbs

Semantically<sup>(\*)</sup>, Quirk et al. (34) characterized the following seven classes of semantic roles of adverbs: space, time, process, respect contingency, modality, and degree. These classes are divided into further subclasses<sup>(\*\*)</sup>. For instance, the semantic types of adverbs denoting time are distinguished by four main semantic classes: when, duration, frequency, and relationship. For *when* the concept of “time as stasis” refers to the specific moment at which an activity occurred or the period during which a particular state is applicable (p.482) (34). Duration of time is divided into two subclasses: length of time and from a specified point of time. Frequency is a complicated concept that expresses “direction in its interaction with the goal” and is subdivided into definite and indefinite classes. The expression of relationship is a complex concept that expresses the relationship between one time and another, e.g., *already*.

## 2.3. Functions of adverbs

Adverbs function as the head of an AdvP “with or without modifications” (p. 438) (34). Crystal (12), (p.439) stated that adverbs function as modifiers of verbs, while (34) claimed that adverbs have two functions syntactically: adverbs as a clause element, e.g., “*He quite* forgot about it,” and adverbs as premodifiers of adjectives and other adverbs, e.g., “*They are quite* happy/happily married” (p. 440) (12). They also pointed out that adverbs as clause elements have four grammatical functions: adjunct, subjunct, disjunct, and conjunct.

## 3. Adverb placement in English

Syntactically, adverbs have various positions within sentences due to their different functions (34), and adverb placement in this regard is quite relaxed in English (37). However, there are many semantic (14) and syntactic constraints “on which adverbs can appear in which positions” (20), as cited in White (37). In this regard, there are two adverbs: verb phrase adverbs (VP-Adv) and sentence adverbs (S-Adv) (2). There is debate about whether adverbs are adjoined with VP (14) or appear in the specifier position (10); however, the topic of this debate remains outside the scope of this paper. Adverbs generally occur before the subject, between the subject and the verb, or at the end of the sentence: English adverbs are not allowed between the verb and the direct object.

\* Discussing the semantic roles of adverbs in detail goes beyond the scope of this paper.

\*\* For comparisons, see Ernst (13-14).

In terms of the specific positions, only three types of adverbs are considered in this paper: Manner, Time, and Frequency adverbs. Adverbs of Manner define how something occurs and mostly appear after the main verb (S-V-Adv) or after the object of the sentence (S-V-O-Adv). They are not allowed between the main verb and its object (\*S-V-Adv-O), as shown in (2).

- 2) a. They dress *informally* on Saturdays.  
 b. The students type *very fast*.  
 c. The children closed the gate *quietly*.  
 d. \*She rejected *immediately* the proposal.

If a preposition precedes the object, the adverbs of Manner can occur either before the PP (S-V-Adv-PP) or after the object of the sentence. For emphasis, adverbs of Manner are licensed to occur before the verb, e.g., *I quickly walked to the store*. However, when the adverbs of Place and Manner appear together in the same sentence, those of Manner must come before the adverbs of Place (19).

Frequency adverbs are utilised to indicate how often an event occurs; they usually indicate routines or recurring activities and are used with the present simple tense. They occur before the main verb (S-Adv-V) (3 a & b), between the auxiliary and the main verb (S-Aux-Adv-V) (c & d), and are placed after the verb *to be* (S-V(Be)-Adv) (e) if it functions as a main verb. Adverbs of Frequency are located before the main verb in interrogative (f) and negative sentences. For emphasis, some adverbs of Frequency can appear at the front or final position of a sentence.

- 3) a. He *never* lies.  
 b. We *always* take the train.  
 c. My brothers have *often* visited the kingdom.  
 d. \*She *often* has seen it.  
 e. I am *always* late for work.  
 f. Do they *usually* come early?

If negative adverbs occur at the front position of a sentence, the word order should be altered from a statement into a question format, e.g., from *rarely* do I send messages to Do I *rarely* send messages?

Adverbs of Time often appear in the final position of sentences (4). However, for emphasis, they can appear at the beginning of the sentences or after the subject. Adverbs of Time that explain how long an action has been going on are positioned at the end of a sentence. Likewise, adverbs of Time that state precisely the number of times an activity occurs also often appear at the final position of a sentence.

- 4) a. I am going to school *tomorrow*.  
 b. They stayed at work *all day*.

Adverbs of definite Time and adverbials of Time usually appear in a sentence's final position, and adverbs of indefinite Time can occur mid-position (19). However, (26) it is well established that the adverbs of Time usually appear at the final position of the sentence. On the other hand, they do not occur in the mid position but can come at the beginning to express emphasis. Degree adverbs, negative adverbs, adverbs that express the order of events, and intensifying adverbs can also appear in the mid position. Hewings (19) stated that adverbs are not allowed to occur between the main verb and a following *-ing* (the

present participle) (5 a) or between the main verb and a following *to-infinitive* as shown in (b).

- 5) a. \*He started *quickly* running.  
 b. \*They tried *quietly* to study.

### 3.1. Adverb placement in Arabic

Adverbs in Arabic (Arabic here refers to Modern Standard Arabic (MSA)) and Saudi Arabic (SA) (\*) have received very little attention with only a few studies having compared or described the differences between Arabic and English adverbs. Adverbs in MSA modify adjectives, verbs, other adverbs, phrases, and sentences. This modification expresses time, place, manner, and degree (31). Other significant categories in MSA do not fit into these four groupings but serve as essential roles that include "adverbial accusatives of cause or reason" (called respectively *maf'ul li-ajl-i-hi* or *maf'ul la-hu*) and the "accusative of specification" (called *tamiiz*) (p. 277) (31).

Arabic adverbs lack "unifying characteristics which would set them apart as a category," as with English (15), (p.11). Furthermore, Al-Shurafa (4) noted that "adverbs in Arabic, unlike English, are not heterogeneous" (p. 97-98), and these adverbs lack a "structural identity" (p. 86). Thus, she stated that adverbs appear in sentences as NPs, adjective phrases, and PPs according "to their semantic functions: manner and temporal, intensifiers, and time and place specifiers" (p. 86) (4) (\*\*). Morphologically, adverbs can be expressed as a single word, a phrase, a cognate accusative (called *al-maf'ul al-muTlaq*), a circumstantial adverb (\*\*\*) (called *hall*), or a nominal sentence (3).

From a syntactic perspective (4), studied adverbs in Palestinian and Hijazi Arabic, identifying that adverbs can be classified into VP-Adv and S-Adv. The placement of these adverbs in the sentence is free, and their order is not fixed (6). She further claimed that the VP-Adv are attached to the right or the left of the verb, and the S-Adv are in the front or the final positions within the sentence.

- 6) VP → (Adv) V (NP) (Adv)  
 S → (S-Adv) S (S-Adv)

Badawi et al. (5). stated that adverbs are typically found in the third position within the sentence, following the verb and its agent (7a). Adverbial and PPs, on the other hand, can appear freely in any position (b & c).

- 7) a. 'a'rifuhu *jayyidan*  
 I know him/it *well*.  
 b. *qarīban* yašilūna  
*Shortly*, they will arrive.  
 c. *fi al-mamarrāti* kuntu 'arā l-'a ṭibbā'a wa-l-mumarrīḏīna

\* MSA is the official language of media, schools, etc., whereas SA is the L1 of Saudi students. The students are exposed to these varieties of Arabic.

\*\* In Arabic, there is a subclass of nouns known as Space and Time nouns, whose roles clash with those of English adverbs and prepositions. This subclass is considered to be a noun but functions as an adverbial or prepositional according to Arab grammarians.

\*\*\* They are called Manner adverbs.

*In the corridors*, I would see the doctors and nurses.  
(Adapted from Badawi et al., (p.350) (5).

Fassi (15), adopting Cinque's hierarchy of adverbs (9 \*), examined the positions of adverbs in MSA and highlighted that most adverbs are placed in the final position of the sentence, that is, after the subject, verb, and object. He argued that adverbs are left adjuncts and generated in the specifier positions (Spec) of functional heads lower than the VP. Thus, adverbs are moved to higher positions in the clause and attached to Spec of Tense, Force, etc. In this case, according to Fassi, there are three types of adverbs: adverbs that cannot go higher than Inflectional Phrase (IP), instead being placed higher than the complements of PP or object (8a & b); adverbs that occur higher than the participle IP or Modal Phrase (8c); and initial sentence adverbs that are positioned before the negation phrase (8d).

- 8) a. "ʔa-ʔrifu jayyid-an l-jawaab-a  
I-know perfect-acc the-answer-acc  
I know perfectly the answer.  
b. \*jayyid-an y-aʔrifu r-rajulu l-jawaab-a"  
(Fass,(15), 7 a, 8 b, p. 13)  
c. "lam yakim l-rajulu gablu qad akala l-tuffaah-a  
not is the-man-nom before indeed ate the-apples-acc  
The man had not really eaten apples before."  
(Fassi,(15), 9, p.14)  
d. "tabʕan lam yaʔkul l-rajul-u l-tuffaah-a  
evidence-aac not.past eats the-man-nom the-apples-acc  
Evidently, the man did not eat apples"  
(Fassi,(15), 10, p.14)  
e. "yaalib-an -maa yaʔkulu l-rajulu l-tuffaah-a  
often-acc -that eats the-man-nom the-apples-acc  
It is often that the man eats apples."  
(Fassi, (15), 11, p.14)

However, the positions of adverbs within the sentence—in Arabic descriptive grammar—are "flexible to a certain extent, but sometimes particular adverbs have preferred positions. Several adverbs or adverbial expressions may occur in the same sentence" (31), (p. 277). According to (1), the adverb appears before and after the verb it modifies in Arabic, indicating that adverb placement in Arabic is flexible. As mentioned above, it can be inferred that there are disagreements regarding adverb placements in Arabic. This can confuse learners regarding whether L1 transfer would play a role in the acquisition.

Regarding Manner adverbs, they can occur in the sentence as a single word usually as "derived nouns, derived adjectives, and active and passive participles"(3), (p. 157), e.g., deriving Manner adverb *b-sur'a* 'quickly' from the adjective *sur'a* 'speed' by adding prefix *b-* 'with'(3), a phrase, non-derived nouns (e.g., *sahm-an* '[like] an arrow'), verbal sentence (*jaat aukti mubtasima* 'my sister came smiling'), and nominal sentence (*jaat aukti wa hi tabtasim* 'my sister came smiling'). Unlike in English, it can be inferred from the above examples that a distinct word group does not represent adverbs of Manner in Arabic; instead, they are represented by nouns in the accusative case. They have many functions within the sentence: noun and verb modifiers and behave as gerunds in English. Regarding

\* The hierarchy is irrelevant to the current discussion and is, therefore, not presented here.

placement, adverbs of Manner may occur in the final position within a sentence, e.g., *Aukti saafrat hazina* 'my sister traveled *sadly*'. They can occur as the object of a preposition and might follow a question word (3). Adverbs of Manner in SA are usually expressed by the prefix *b-*, e.g., *bi-hudua* 'with a quiet' to express 'quietly.' Other adverbs are formed by using the word *fakal* 'form', e.g., *b-fakal sariʕ* / *b-sarʕa* (with/form speed) to express 'quickly.' Adverbs of the manner in SA appear after the word it modifies (after the verb) and at the end of the sentence, as shown below (9).

- 9) a. Al-walad rakaḍ *b-sarʕa* fi al-madrasa  
the-boy ran-masculine with-speed in the- school  
'The boy ran quickly in the school.'  
b. al-bint tufakir *b-daka*  
the-girl thinking-feminine with-clever  
'The girl is thinking cleverly.'

Adverbs of Time and Place are classified morphologically as a heterogeneous group (31)<sup>(\*\*)</sup>. There are four kinds of adverbs of Time: simple adverbs, e.g., *ams* 'yesterday'; single adjectives and nouns in the accusative, e.g., *daaim-an* 'always'; compound time demonstratives and phrases, e.g., *yawm-a-dhaak* 'that day'; (p. 290) (31) and derivative words (e.g., which have the patterns maCCaC and maCCiC)<sup>(\*\*\*)</sup>. Since the adverb Time is a short word in Arabic, it can be placed anywhere in a sentence; the only position in which it does not usually appear is at the beginning of the sentence, although if the adverb is essential, it might appear in the initial position of the sentence. The noun of Time (functioning as an adverb), whether definite or indefinite, is also expressed in the accusative case. Thus, if adverbs of Time have various syntactic distributions in the sentence, they then function morphologically like nouns. They can function as the subjects of nominal and verbal sentences and as the complements of verbs and prepositions.

Adverbs of Frequency are represented in SA by a simple lexical word, e.g., *aḥainan* 'sometimes,' *nader* 'rarely' (10), or temporal noun words, e.g., *kul yum* 'every day (daily),' *kul fuwai* 'every period (regularly)' (11). In (10), the single adverbs can appear in the sentence's initial, mid, and final positions, whereas in (11), the temporal nouns are placed only in the final position.

- 10) (*aḥainan*) ansa (*aḥainan*) artaḥ (*aḥainan*)  
sometimes I-forget relax  
'I *sometimes* forget to relax.'  
(*abdan*) Ma fuṭṭaḥ (*abdan*)  
(never) Not see-her never  
'I have never seen her.'

- 11) al-ṭulaab laazim yaktabrun *kul sanah*  
the-students-mas must exam-mas every year  
'The students must take exams *annually*.'

However, the adverb *never*, 'abadan' in MSA, has limited or restricted syntactic distributions<sup>(\*\*\*\*)</sup>. It always follows the elements that it modifies, e.g., lan ya'ud akhi *abadan* 'my brother will *never* come back.'

\*\* Arab grammarians treat the nouns of Time and Place as locatives. Adverbs of Time are called *Ḍurūf al-zaman* and those of Place are called *Ḍurūf al-makan*.

\*\*\* For instance, *mahDar-a* 'arrival Time.' The discussion is irrelevant to this study; hence, it will not be expanded upon.

\*\*\*\* This is a very complicated topic that will not be discussed further in this paper.

#### 4. Literature review

Numerous studies have examined the acquisition of adverb placements in English by EFL/L2 learners cross-linguistically (24, 25, 36, 37). Adverb placement poses significant difficulties for learners because the adverbs, depending on their types, occur in various locations within a sentence (37). Hancock and Sanell (17) examined the acquisition of adverbs by Swedish learners of L2 French, emphasising the use of four French adverbs. They first studied adverbs' pragmatic and semantic functions and syntactic positions in discourse. After that, they studied the six developmental stages of adverb positions. They observed that the learners in the advanced medium stage use *perhaps*, *really*, and *only* similarly to native speakers of French; however, the learners also did not reach the native mastery level in their use of the adverb. The adverb *only* appears in the initial phases of acquisition with additive meaning. It appears in three positions at all the phases of acquisition: final position, after verbs, and initial position. Advanced Swedish learners opted to use this adverb more frequently in the final position than French native speakers. The authors assumed that the learners also preferred to use the final position for the adverb because of L1 transfer. Furthermore, White (37) conducted a study to test the influence of instruction and input on the acquisition of adverb placement by students who were native speakers of French learning English as an L2 in Canada. In English, adverbs are not allowed to appear between the verb and object, while in French, they are permitted to appear in that position. In contrast, English allows adverbs between subjects and verbs; however, French does not allow adverbs in that position. Thus, White explored how L2 French speakers of English comprehend these positions. The participants were grade 5 and 6 students, who were divided into groups: an adverb group, a question group, and a third group of L1 speakers of English, who participated as a control group. The first group was taught the different positions of adverbs explicitly, and the latter received no instruction regarding these positions; instead, they were given the question formation of adverbs. Adverbs of Frequency and Manner were used in the direct instructions of adverbs to the first group. The study consisted of two stages: the original test study and a follow-up study (one year later). The findings showed that the adverb group understood that the form V-Adv-O is impossible in English. However, the results from the follow-up study indicated that all of the French L2 learners of English considered the form V-Adv-O to be a grammatical form in English despite direct instruction. This result is assumed to result from L1 transfer because French allows this structure. Following (37), Formisano (16) found that the explicit, direct, and form-focus teaching methods of adverb placements for Italian EFL learners are more efficient than traditional descriptive instruction. Thus, teaching syntactic adverb placements and verb movement plays a significant role in mastering the complex and various positions of adverbs in English for EFL learners.

In a longitudinal study, Lardiere (23) examined the comprehension of adverb placements by a Mandarin and Hokkien native speaker (Patty) who acquired English as L2. The author used two acceptability judgment tests

(AJT) for grammatical and ungrammatical statements of adverb positions in English. Forty statements were used in the first test. The second test was a follow-up judgment test implemented after 18 months using the same 40 statements from the first test. The findings indicated that Patty judged the \*S-V-Adv-O statements as ungrammatical. For the grammatical S-Adv-V-O statements, the speaker preferred to put the adverbs of Manner at the ends of sentences, which is also accepted in English. The results indicated that this speaker preferred to do so when correcting the ungrammatical \*S-V-Adv-O statements. An interesting finding was that the speaker did not put adverbs of Frequency at the ends of the sentences. The author concluded that Patty had grasped the different positions of adverbs in English that are not permitted in Chinese. This indicates that this knowledge is not attributed to L1. Wu (38) noted that Chinese learners of English prefer to use the Adv-V-O structure more frequently than native speakers, indicating that L1 transfer impacts this preference. In contrast, native English speakers prefer to use Adv-V-O and S-V-Adv structures. Hernandez (18) conducted a study to determine whether the participants (graduate students and English instructors) could recognise the incorrect positions of adverbs in incorrect sentences and whether they could correct them. The results revealed that most students and instructors overlooked the incorrect positions of adverbs in the sentences, especially in complex sentences with auxiliaries such as the verb *be*. Most participants placed adverbs between verbs and their direct objects, which violates the adverb placement rules in English. This means the participants failed to grasp this rule completely. Osborne (28) found that EFL learners whose L1 was Spanish, Italian, or French preferred to produce the V-Adv-O structure; however, the other EFL learners preferred not to use it because their L1 grammar did not allow adverbs to appear in that position. Recently, Vann (36) used the AJT to examine the Focus Adverbs (FA) placements by 48 Italian proficient learners of English and 48 native speakers of English. FA has a fixed word order (S-Adv-V) in English if it modifies the VP, whereas it has two positions in Italian sentences: pre-verbally or post-verbally. The results suggested that the English L1 speakers preferred using the S-Adv-V word order with FA, while the Italian L2 learners opted to use both. Interestingly, both English speakers and Italian learners preferred to use the adverb *only* in the S-V-Adv word order more than other adverbs, *even* in that position. This indicates that the acquisition of FA had not yet been mastered by the proficient learners. This is attributed to L1 transfer because the L2 learners would not identify the S-V-Adv as being ungrammatical for FA in English.

Larsson et al. (24) provided an in-depth analysis of adverb positions in the academic writing of EFL learners and English native speakers. The EFL learners had various L1 backgrounds, and it was found that such learners always produce the S-Adv-O structure but produce the ungrammatical V-Adv-O structure more than L1 speakers. This structure is grammatical in the L1 of the EFL learners; thus, L1 transfer has no role in the production of adverb positions in this case. They found that linguistic factors play a significant role in adverb position production, whereas the L1 transfer does not



affect the written data. Following (24), Lines (25) compared the production of adverb placement between L1 and L2 speakers of Welsh, and the findings revealed that the L2 Welsh speakers had the same production of adverb placements as the L1 speakers and showed that the L2 Welsh speakers never used ungrammatical adverb placements. This is attributed to the fact that placements of adverbs between English and Welsh are not transferable. However, Karpava (22) found that “there is a facilitative transfer from L1 Russian into L2 English and negative transfer from L1” Greek into L2 English (p.49). This is attributed to Russian and English having similar structures regarding adverb placements, whereas Greek is different from English. The overall results indicated that the Russian and Greek L2 learners of English had a higher performance with the adverbs of Frequency than the adverbs of Manner, “which could be the evidence that verb movement is sensitive to adverb hierarchy...” (p.52) (22).

Only two studies have addressed adverb acquisition in Arabic, the first of which was conducted by Balcom and Bouffard (6). They analysed the acquisition of the aspectual adverb placements by 24 Emirati Arabic (EA) native speakers learning French as their L3 (beginners), whose proficiency level in English (L2) was intermediate. Aspectual adverbs (habitual, frequentative, terminative, and perfective) occur optionally before the verb in EA (S-Adv-V-O). Nevertheless, they can also appear in other structures where they are considered grammatically acceptable: S-V-Adv-O, S-V-O-Adv, and Adv-S-V-O. The adverbs are allowed to appear in the S-Adv-V-O structure in English but after the verb in French (S-V-Adv-O). The students were divided into two groups: the experimental group received explicit instruction and input flood of adverb placements, while the control group received none. The results suggested that explicit instruction and input positively impact learning adverb positions in French. After the instruction, the experimental group accurately judged and produced a target-like structure (S-V-Adv-O). Conversely, 60% of the experimental group judged and produced the non-target \*S-Adv-V-O structure – even after the instruction, they still preferred to use this structure – and it was observed that one-third of this group had a native-like performance. The authors explained that this preference could be related to the effect of L1 EA and L2 English as the S-Adv-V-O structure is used in both L1 EA and L2 English. Finally, Owais et al. (29) tested the influence of the grammar-translation method (GTM) on teaching Manner adverbs to 35 Emirati EFL learners. The focus was on comparing Manner adverbs in English and Arabic. The researchers chose three adjectives (e.g., clever) in English. They then changed them into Manner adverbs by adding the suffix *-ly* (e.g., cleverly) before providing the Arabic translations of these adjectives and adverbs, e.g., *dhakee* ‘clever’ and *bdhaka’a* ‘cleverly.’ They used the same adjectives in Arabic and these were later changed to Manner adverbs in Arabic by adding the preposition *b* (equivalent to the suffix ‘*-ly*’). The researchers used this method to teach the learners the adverbs in English. The results indicated that GTM positively impacts learners’ understanding of adverbs, as the L1 helped the learners comprehend and acquire Manner adverbs. However, the study did not show which adverb position was preferred

by the students for adverbs of Manners.

In light of the previous research, it is concluded that EFL/L2 learners could transfer the rules of their L1 to their L2. Furthermore, it is found that EFL/L2 learners opt to use the ungrammatical \*SVAdvO structure in English because their L1 allows that structure. Additionally, it is anticipated that there will be some variations in how learners produce adverbs accurately due to the various positions of adverbs. To the best of the author’s knowledge, no research has been conducted on the acquisition of English adverb placements by Saudi EFL learners. Thus, the main objective of this study is to bridge that gap, and, therefore, seeks to answer the following questions:

- 1- Can Saudi EFL learners recognise adverb placement in incorrect sentences?
- 2- a. Are there any differences between the three types of adverbs among EFL Saudi learners?
- b. Are there any differences between the adverbs in each type among EFL Saudi learners?
- 3- What errors, if any, do they make when producing adverbs, and why?

## 5. Methodology

### 5.1. Participants

The research used a convenience sample of 133 Saudi female EFL students, all undergraduates in the English Department at the Faculty of Languages and Translation, King Khalid University. The students were in levels ten, eleven, and twelve (fourth year in the English program) in the English Department. The university switched to a trimester-based study system (consisting of 12 levels) in the academic year 2022-2023, and all the participants were enrolled in the Morphology course in the first semester of the fourth academic year 2023. Their ages ranged from 20 to 21 years old. The participants received significant instruction in language proficiency, grammar, and vocabulary development during their first two years in the faculty, in addition to other courses in the fields of linguistics, translation, and literature in the last two years. The participants were notified that they would not receive any compensation and were entitled to stop the questionnaire at any point before it was completed. Moreover, they were informed that their participation in the study was entirely voluntary.

### 5.2. Instruments

Based on the literature review cited above, this study investigates three types of adverbs: Manner, Time, and Frequency. Five adverbs are used for each type, as shown below (12).

- 12) Frequency adverbs: always, usually, often, rarely, never.
- Manner adverbs: slowly, carefully, fast, hard, well.
- Time adverbs: now, soon, today, late, recently.

The study included a grammatical judgment task (GJT) and a written production task (WPT) to assess the participants’ acquisition of adverb placements. The written production task involved putting scrambled sentences into their correct orders. These tasks were presented to students via a paper questionnaire. The

questionnaire consisted of three parts: the first part was designed to gather data about the participants' demographic information; the second part aimed to collect data about the GJT; and the third part was developed to collect data about the WPT. The GJT aimed to determine whether Saudi learners can recognise adverb placement in incorrect sentences. The GJT consisted of 15 sentences. Participants were asked to read the sentences and to judge whether each statement was grammatically correct or incorrect. There were seven correct sentences and eight incorrect ones (misplaced adverbs). The GJT closely replicates that of Vann (35, 36). However, Vann's studies examine Focus Adverbs (only, even, and also), whereas the current study focuses on three types of adverbs. The second task also consisted of 15 items. Participants were required to read the scrambled sentences and then write them in their correct order. The WPT aimed to determine whether Saudi students can produce adverbs correctly in sentences. The same adverbs used in the GJT were used in the WPT. The researcher developed all the sentences in both tasks. To assess the questionnaire's validity, three assistant linguistics professors examined and approved its content.

### 5.3. Procedure

The purpose of this study was explained to the participants. The researcher then distributed the questionnaire to the participants to complete in the class. The task took approximately 30 minutes to complete.

### 5.4. Data analysis

The researcher scored the students' responses as correct or incorrect and conducted a quantitative data analysis to assess the acquisition of adverb placements. Correct responses received a score of 1, while incorrect ones received a score of 0. The responses of each type were converted into percentages. The same procedure for marking was used in both tasks. In the WPT, the sentences were evaluated regarding the correct adverb placement. If the student misplaced the adverb in a sentence or provided a correct sentence but missing an adverb, they were coded a score of 0. A score of 1 was given if the adverb was placed correctly in the sentence. The data were analysed using SPSS (version 26).

## 6. Findings

The findings have been divided into three sections. The first section presents the main results of the GJT, while the second section shows the WPT's results. Finally, the results of the error analysis are presented.

### 6.1. Grammatical judgment task

The first research question strives to gauge participants' recognition of adverb placement in incorrect sentences and their awareness of adverb placements in English sentences. As previously stated, the participants' judgments of adverb placements in the sentences were classified as correct or incorrect.

Table 1 outlines the descriptive statistics of correct responses for all adverb types. The mean score (M=.69) of the students' correct responses regarding their judgments of adverb placements indicates that they had

not fully mastered the various positions of the adverbs. However, this result shows that the student's performance was high despite not reaching the mastery level of adverb position acquisition, although they were senior college students.

**Table 1:** Descriptive statistics of correct responses for all adverb types in GJT

Adverbs	N (students)	Mean	SD
Manner Adverbs	133	.73	.201
Time Adverbs	133	.68	.198
Frequency Adverbs	133	.65	.217
Overall Judgment	133	.69 (69%)	.148

There was a statistically significant difference (Table 2) between the three types of adverbs among the participants, as demonstrated by one-way ANOVA analysis with repeated measures,  $F(2, 396) = 6.7729, p = .001362$ . The result is significant at  $p < .05$ . The highest mean score was for the adverbs of Manner (73%). The students' performance on adverbs of Time (68%) was slightly better than that of Frequency (65%).

**Table 2:** One-way ANOVA of correct responses for all adverb types in GJT

Source of Variation	SS	df	MS	F	P-value
Between-treatments	10.9223	2	5.46112	6.76628	0.001362
Within-treatments	458.3008	396	1.1573		
Error	213.0777	264	0.8071		

Table 3 summarises the descriptive data of participants' correct responses regarding their judgments of grammatical and incorrect sentences containing Manner adverbs. The students were presented with five sentences (three incorrect sentences and two grammatical ones) and asked to judge them accordingly.

**Table 3:** Descriptive statistics of correct responses for Manner adverbs

Statements	position	Mean (raw score)	SD	Percent
They all worked <i>Hard</i> .	*Adv-S-V-O	.84 (112)	.366	84.21%
Reading <i>carefully</i> helps students to understand their lessons.	S-Adv-V-O	.84 (112)	.366	84.21%
He swims <i>well</i> .	*S-Adv-V	.81 (108)	.392	81.20%
She is writing letters <i>slowly</i> .	*S-Aux-V-Adv-O	.60 (81)	.489	60.90%
My friend walks home <i>fast</i> .	S-V-O-Adv	.57 (77)	.495	57.89%

The results clearly show that 84.21% of them were able to identify the misplaced position of the adverb *hard*, judging it as being grammatically incorrect (M=.84). They also performed well on the adverb *carefully*, judging its position as being grammatically correct (M=.84). A total of 81% of the participants could identify the misplaced position (\*S-Adv-V) of the adverb *well*.

Adverbs are not allowed to appear between the verb and its object, as shown in the usage of the adverb *slow*; 60% of the participants accurately judged this statement as an incorrect sentence. However, only 57%

of participants considered the usage of the adverb *fast* in the final position grammatically correct, while the rest (43%) incorrectly identified this sentence as incorrect. This indicates that some of the students struggled with the usage of this adverb. One-way ANOVA analysis (repeated measures) between the five adverbs in this category suggested a statistically significant difference at  $p < .05$ ,  $F(4, 660) = 13.71773$ ,  $p = .00001$ . This is clearly shown in students' judgments of the five adverbs mentioned above.

A one-way ANOVA analysis with repeated measures revealed a significant difference between the five adverbs of Time among students,  $F(4, 660) = 34.75704$ ,  $p = .00001$ . The results in Table 4 show that 119 respondents obtained an average score of ( $M = .89$ ) in judging the correct position of the adverb *soon*, which appears in the final position of the sentence. Regarding the adverb *late*, 84% of respondents successfully determined this position to be grammatically correct. However, the respondents' performance in misplaced adverbs *now* and *today* was slightly lower than that for the first two adverbs.

**Table 4:** Descriptive statistics of correct responses for Time adverbs

Statements	position	Mean (raw score)	SD	Percent
They will solve the problem <i>soon</i> .	S-V-O-Adv	.89 (119)	.308	89.47%
Ali arrives <i>late</i> .	S-V-Adv	.84 (112)	.366	84.21%
It is <i>today</i> a holiday.	*S-V-Adv-O	.67 (90)	.469	67.67%
I need your help <i>now</i> .	*S-V-Adv-O	.66 (88)	.474	66.17%

Most of them identified the misplaced positions of these adverbs, which are not permitted to occur between the verb and its direct object. The results *recently* showed a dramatic drop in performance concerning the adverb because it appeared between the S and the auxiliary. Only 34.39% of respondents could recognize the mistake in this sentence. Therefore, it is suggested that the students encountered difficulty acquiring that adverb position. In terms of the adverbs of Frequency (Table 5), the student's familiarity with the different positions of adverbs varied. The differences between the five adverbs in this category are highly significant:  $F(4, 660) = 13.5156$ ,  $p = 0.00001$ .

**Table 5:** Descriptive statistics of correct responses for Frequency adverbs

Statements	position	Mean (raw score)	SD	Percent
My brother <i>never</i> remembers his phone number.	S-Adv-V	.81 (108)	.392	81.20%
He drinks <i>always</i> juice.	*S-V-Adv-O	.75 (100)	.433	75.19%
We had <i>rarely</i> eaten anything.	S-Aux-Adv-V	.69 (93)	.460	69.92%
They have <i>usually</i> breakfast when they get up.	*S-V-Adv-O	.56 (75)	.497	56.39%
Ali goes <i>often</i> to work by bus.	*S-V-Adv-O	.46 (62)	.500	46.62%

According to the findings, 108 respondents received an average score of .81 in recognizing the position of the adverb *never*. However, the respondents slightly deviated in their performance for the adverb *always*, with only 75.19% judging this incorrect sentence accurately. Their performance declined dramatically in judging the positions of the adverbs *rarely*, *usually*, and *often*, with  $M = .69$ ,  $M = .56$ , and  $M = .46$ , respectively. A one-way ANOVA analysis indicated that the result was highly significant at  $p < .05$  in their performance in judging the positions of five adverbs of Frequency, with an  $F$ -ratio value of 13.51561; the  $p$ -value is  $< .00001$ .

## 6.2. Writing production task

The WPT findings were analysed the same way as the GJT, with a score of 1 assigned to each grammatical sentence with a correctly placed adverb and a score of 0 assigned to each ungrammatical sentence with a misplaced adverb. Concerning the second research question, which asked whether there were any differences in the three types of adverbs or adverbs within each type among Saudi learners, an analysis of variance (repeated measures) demonstrated a significant difference between the three types of adverbs among Saudi learners,  $F(2, 396) = 68.98274$ ,  $p = .00001$ . The participants had a high mean score for adverbs of Manner ( $M = .75$ ,  $SD = .283$ ), a high mean for adverbs of Frequency ( $M = .72$ ,  $SD = .192$ ), and a low mean score for adverbs of Time ( $M = .49$ ,  $SD = .186$ ), as indicated in Table 6. The participants' performance regarding the usage of adverbs of Manner and Frequency in the sentences was better than their performance with the adverbs of Time. These findings demonstrated that the learners struggled with using adverbs of Time in English.

**Table 6:** Descriptive statistics of correct responses for all adverb types in WPT

Adverbs	N	Mean	SD	Sig.
Manner Adverbs	133	.75	.283	.00001
Time Adverbs	133	.49	.186	
Frequency Adverbs	133	.72	.192	
Overall Judgment	133	.65 (65%)	.159	

There are statistically significant differences between the adverb positions within each type among learners: Manner adverbs,  $F(4, 660) = 2.93282$ ,  $p = .02$ ;

Frequency adverbs,  $F(4, 660) = 116.40821$ ,  $p = .000$ ; and Time adverbs,  $F(4, 660) = 86.32938$ ,  $p = .000$ , in the WPT, as shown in the Figures below.

Figure 1 presents the mean scores of the five adverbs of Manner in the WPT. Most learners correctly used the adverbs *fast* ( $M = .80$ ,  $SD = .398$ ) and *slowly* ( $M = .80$ ,  $SD = .398$ ) in the final position when they reordered the jumbled sentences; of these, 75% of them used the adverb *carefully* ( $M = .75$ ,  $SD = .429$ ) accurately and placed it at the final position (S-V-O-Adv).

A similar finding can be seen in the correct usage of the adverb *well* ( $M = .73$ ,  $SD = .442$ ). However, the adverb *hard* ( $M = .67$ ,  $SD = .469$ ) was the most problematic adverb for the learners to use correctly in this category. Nevertheless, the learners generally did not master producing the Manner adverbs in their correct positions.



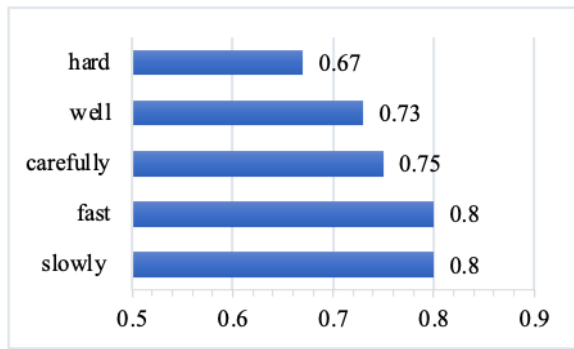


Figure 1: Mean scores of Manner adverbs in WPT

The learners' performance in this section was similar to that in Manner's adverbs. The majority of the learners used the adverbs *never* ( $M = .96$ ,  $SD = .190$ ), *always* ( $M = .92$ ,  $SD = .264$ ), *rarely* ( $M = .84$ ,  $SD = .366$ ), and *usually* ( $M = .67$ ,  $SD = .469$ ) accurately, as shown in Figure: 2. However, when the students reordered the jumbled sentences, the adverb *often* ( $M = .20$ ,  $SD = .403$ ) emerged as the most difficult adverb to use regarding its positioning. This finding is striking, as only 20% of the participants could pinpoint this adverb's position. They placed it between the negation and the main verb (S-Neg-Adv-V).

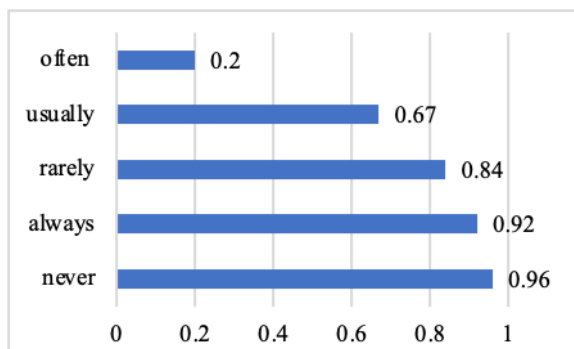


Figure 2: Mean scores of Frequency adverbs in WPT

Figure: 3 presents the production scores for correctly placing adverbs of Time in the sentences. The majority of students used the adverbs *today* ( $M = .87$ ,  $SD = .326$ ) and *now* ( $M = .82$ ,  $SD = .379$ ) correctly in their positions within the sentences. Conversely, the adverbs of Time *late*, *recently*, and *soon* were the most difficult to master, with an accuracy mean of .28, .27, and .21, respectively. *Late* and *soon*, they were supposed to be placed at the final position in the sentence and *recently* to be placed in the S-Aux-Adv-V structure.

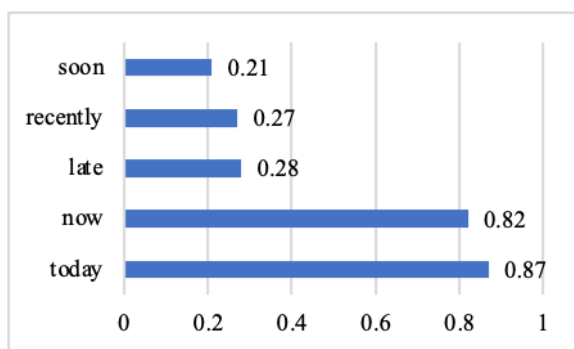


Figure 3: Mean scores of Time adverbs in WPT

Analysis of variance (repeated measures) revealed no statistically significant difference between the two tasks. The results showed that the significance value was at  $p = .313$ .

### 6.3. Error analysis

The adverb placement errors in the WPT were counted and categorised into eight types. A summary of error types committed in the three types of adverbs is shown in Table 7. Due to the variations of error types, they were examined within each adverb type. The Manner adverb placements, for instance, produced five error types: pre-verbal, avoided using adverbs, incorrect word order structure, post-verbal, and pre-sentence. In the pre-verbal error, some students put the adverb *hard* before the verb *works*, e.g., *\*my mother hard works*, whereas the target sentence is *"my mother works hard"*.

A total of 88.1% (37 times) of students made this error. Two students avoided using this adverb (4.8%), whereas 7.1% produced sentences with an incorrect structure, *\*my works hard mother*. The adverb *well*, on the other hand, yielded five types of errors: pre-verbal (31%), e.g., *\* Jack well speaks French;* avoided using the adverb (13.8%), e.g., *"Jack speaks French;"* incorrect word order (6.9%), e.g., *"\*Well Jack French speaks;"* post-verbal (44.8%), e.g., *"Jack speaks very well French;"* pre-sentence (3.4%), e.g., *"\*Well Jack speaks French"* whereas the target was *"Jack speaks French very well."* The learners also made similar placement errors with the other adverbs *carefully*, *fast*, and *slowly*.

Concerning placement errors of Time adverbs, eight types of errors were generated: post-object, pre-verbal, incorrect word order, post-verbal, pre-sentence, pre-auxiliary, post-auxiliary, and avoided using the adverb. For example, 64.9% of the students placed the adverb *soon* between the verb *realised* and its object, *the problem*, *"\*they realised soon the problem."* Also, 48.1% of the students placed the adverb *late* between the subject and the main verb, e.g., *"\*I late come to school,"* and 5.8% of the students used *recently* incorrectly in ungrammatical sentences, e.g., *"Ali his work has recently finished."*

The learners also improperly placed the adverbs *now* and *today* similarly. Finally, the adverbs of Frequency generated eight types of errors, as shown in Table 7 above. For example, *"\*often we do not eat cheese,"* 6.4% of the students placed the adverb *often* before the sentence. Fifteen students (78.9%) placed the adverb *rarely* after the object, e.g., *"\*He is in the house on -*

*Fridays rarely."* The students also misused the other adverbs in this category, *always*, *usually*, and *never*, in the same manner.

Table 7: Types of errors

Types	Error Frequency (Frequency Adverbs)	Error Frequency (Time Adverbs)	Error Frequency (Manner Adverbs)
Post-object	44 (33.1%)	1 (.6%)	
Pre-verbal	2 (1.5%)	34 (21.7%)	80 (60%)
Avoid using adverb	10 (7.5%)	26 (16.6%)	14 (10.5%)
Incorrect word order	5 (3.8%)	6 (3.8%)	9 (6.7%)
Post-verbal	23 (17.2%)	56 (35.7%)	29 (21.8%)
Pre-sentence	7 (5.3%)	6 (3.8%)	1 (.7%)
Pre-auxiliary	37 (27.8%)	24 (15.3%)	
Post-auxiliary	5 (3.8%)	4 (2.5%)	
<b>Total</b>	133 (100%)	133 (100%)	133 (100%)

## 7. Discussion

The research questions underlying this study were whether the participants could detect incorrect adverb placement in sentences, whether there were any differences between the successful placement of three types of adverbs among Saudi learners, and whether they made errors when producing adverbs.

The results of both the GJT and the WPT generally showed that 69% and 65% of participants, respectively, were able to recognise the various positions of the three types of adverbs (Manner, Time, and Frequency) in incorrect sentences and use them properly within the sentences. These percentages are considered slightly high yet do not suggest that the Saudi learners have reached native-like performance despite being senior college students. These findings align with previous studies' findings (6, 17).

Regarding the comprehension and usage of Manner adverbs, most participants achieved higher mean scores in recognising the misplaced adverbs of Manner in incorrect sentences in both tasks within the GJT. Five different adverb placements were used in the two tasks: \*Adv-S-V-O, S-Adv-V-O (emphasis), \*S-Adv-V, \*S-Aux-V-Adv-O, and S-V-O-Adv. These results indicate that most of the participants could recognise that adverbs of Manner are located after the verb or after the object, as shown in the various structures. This could be attributed to L1 transfer, in which adverbs of Manner in Arabic are located after the verb or at the end of the sentence. This finding is consistent with that of (37). The results showed that the participants could identify the S-Adv-V-O structure and that the adverb could be placed before the verb for emphasis. However, some students struggled with these structures and failed to identify the \*S-Aux-V-Adv-O as an incorrect word order. For example, most students identified the following sentence as incorrect: \*She is writing *slowly* a letter because the adverb *slowly* is not permitted to appear between the verb and its object (\*S-Aux-V-Adv-O) in English. This result is consistent with data obtained by (37) and (18) with students having difficulty locating adverbs between the main verb and its object. A possible explanation for this finding is that the sentence structure could have confused students because it contains an auxiliary.

To conclude this section, high percentages of the students could comprehend and produce different placements for adverbs of Manner, indicating that the type of adverb could affect the grammatical judgment of Saudi learners (22). However, some of them did not fully comprehend the rules of placement for adverbs of Manner and did not reach the mastery level of native speakers. This was due to their difficulty in grasping the various adverb placement rules.

The analysis of Frequency adverbs also confirmed that the students might not have fully understood the rules of positioning adverbs within sentences. Five different structures (\*S-V-Adv-O, S-Adv-V, S-Aux-Adv-V, *S-VBe-Adv*, and S-Neg-Adv-V) were used in the GJT and WPT. Some students encountered difficulty recognising either the grammatical sentences or the misplaced adverbs in incorrect ones. In the WPT, most students produced the adverbs accurately and correctly

reordered the jumbled sentences using adverbs of Frequency. However, the remaining students struggled to form grammatical sentences in this task. The adverb *often* emerged as the most difficult to master in this task. This adverb is placed after negation and before the main verb in negative sentences; however, the students had difficulty locating the adverb in the target position. Some placed it between the verb and its object (\*We do not eat *often* cheese), and others avoided using the adverb in that sentence. Placing the adverb between the verb and its object indicates that most students did not fully understand this rule, as the adverb is unacceptable in that position. These findings agree with those of Hernandez (18), who also confirmed that students and teachers do not comprehend the rules for correctly placing adverbs.

Additionally, it can be anticipated from this finding that comprehending negation could also be challenging for Saudi EFL learners. Some of the students placed the adverbs of Frequency at the final position of the sentence (after the object), which violates the rule that states that English adverbs of Frequency should be placed in the following word order: *S-Adv-V*, *S-Aux-Adv-V*, and *S-V(Be)-Adv*. It is concluded that the L1 transfer could impact these results, as the frequency adverbs in Arabic have flexible positions and can appear in the front, middle, and final positions in the sentence. The students did not realise that the placements of Frequency adverbs are also different from those of Manner and Time. The learners overgeneralised the rules for adverbs of Frequency (18) and could have speculated that the Frequency adverbs can appear at the ends of the sentences. Overgeneralization errors are usually made before completely grasping the rules of adverb placement. Moreover, the learners could have overgeneralised the rules of post-verbal placements to all types of adverbs (33). The findings from the analysis of the Time adverbs denote that most students could not identify the misplaced adverbs in incorrect sentences with the following structures in the GJT (\*S-V-Adv-O and \*S-Adv-Aux-V). The participants had difficulty producing adverbs of Time and struggled to locate them within the two given structures (S-V-O-Adv, S-V-Adv, and S-Aux-Adv-V) in the WPT. They incorrectly put the adverb before the auxiliary between the verb and its object or avoided using it. This might be the result of L1 transfer, as Time adverbs in Arabic can be placed anywhere in the sentence. The Emirati learners made the same error in French, placing the adverb before the verb. Balcom and Bouffard (6) attributed this error to the L1 transfer because EA allows that structure. These results replicated the results obtained by Osborne (28) and Vann (36).

According to the error analysis, the learners avoided using adverbs when they had difficulty placing them within the sentences to avoid making an error. Avoidance in L2 acquisitions refers to how learners choose one grammatical rule over another to prevent making errors (33). This is referred to as "avoidance behaviour" (Schachter, (32) as cited in (33). L2 learners use this method when they have difficulty producing or comprehending the rules in the language they are acquiring. The findings revealed that the most challenging word structures are related to those

including auxiliaries and main verbs and placing the adverb between the verb and its object. Also, negation appears to impose comprehension and production problems for learners.

## 8. Conclusion

The current study examined Saudi learners' acquisition of adverb placements in English. It has been found that adverb placement is quite challenging, as previously mentioned, and EFL learners may find it perplexing and frustrating. The results of this study confirm that Saudi students encounter difficulty in using and acquiring various positions of adverbs of Frequency, Manner, and Time. They are failing to achieve a native-like level of achievement in this regard. A significant factor of this finding is the word order used in Arabic, which also has variations in positioning adverbs within sentences. The students could transfer the rules of MSA or SA concerning adverb positions and generally exhibited similar performance in acquiring three types of adverbs. Given the findings of this study, it is necessary to change how adverb placements are taught to Saudi students. The results also indicate that senior college students have difficulty understanding the grammaticality of adverb placement in incorrect sentences. Due to the nature of adverbs in English and Arabic, language teachers must have a clear and thorough understanding of how to help their students overcome the difficulties they face in understanding the various positions of adverbs. However, it is unclear whether explicit or implicit classroom instruction for adverb placement would affect the results obtained in the current study; therefore, this needs to be further investigated in future research.

The study has a few limitations that must be addressed. First, the study focused on three types of adverbs. One significant limitation is the small number of adverbs within each type. Further research is required to extrapolate the findings of this study, utilising a more significant number of adverbs and involving other types of adverbs. The study sample was also limited to female Saudi learners. As a result, the conclusions cannot be deemed to reflect male learners or learners from other Arabic varieties. To determine the extent to which the findings from female participants would apply to male learners, conducting a subsequent replication of this study using male participants would be necessary. Further research is needed to cover a larger sample size. Finally, as the analysis of the adverb positions was limited to two tasks, other types of tasks (e.g., oral tasks) could have been utilised to help explain the results.

## Acknowledgement

I extend my gratitude to the students who took part in this study.

## Conflict of Interest

The author has no conflict of interest to declare.

## Funding

This research did not receive any specific grant from

funding agencies in the public, commercial, or not-for-profit sectors.

## Data Availability Statement

The data supporting this study's findings are available on request from the corresponding author.

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