

THE POSITION OF ADVERBS IN ENGLISH: TRYING TO SOLVE A MAJOR PROBLEM MOST LANGUAGE LEARNERS USUALLY FACE

Mayra Solís Hernández

RESUMEN

Este artículo presenta los resultados de un estudio realizado con un grupo de estudiantes de postgrado seleccionados al azar y otro grupo de profesores de inglés con más de diez años de experiencia en la Escuela de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica. El propósito principal de este estudio es determinar si los sujetos podían identificar errores en la posición de los adverbios en algunas oraciones incorrectas y si podían corregirlos en forma satisfactoria. Asimismo, se pretende proveer al profesor de inglés de una serie de reglas y principios que se deben tener presentes para ayudar a los estudiantes a usar el inglés correctamente y así lograr un aprendizaje más efectivo en las clases de inglés.

Palabras clave: posición incorrecta de adverbios, reglas de colocación de adverbios, corrección de errores, gramática inglesa, juicios gramaticales.

ABSTRACT

This article presents the results of a study done with a group of graduate students randomly selected and a small group of experienced English teachers at the School of Modern Languages at the University of Costa Rica. The main purpose of this study was to find out if they could identify errors in adverb placement in faulty sentences, and if they could correct them satisfactorily. This article also provides useful rules to keep in mind when teaching adverbs to help teachers and students have a more effective teaching-learning process in their English classes.

Key words: adverb misplacement, adverb position rules, error correction, English grammar, grammaticality judgement.

Mayra Solís Hernández. Profesora de Lenguas Modernas de la Universidad de Costa Rica. San Pedro, Costa Rica.

Recepción: 20- 4- 2007

Aceptación: 4- 5- 2007

1. Introduction

Learning a foreign language generally implies making mistakes in various areas, especially in grammar. A very common type of mistake which learners make when producing grammatical structures involves the use of adverbs, specifically misplacing them in the sentence. This should not be surprising since adverbs are more difficult to define than nouns, verbs, and adjectives. Adverbs have many kinds of meanings and their grammar is quite complex. Regarding meaning, adverbs express ideas such as manner, time, and place (location or destination). Most adverbs of manner have a recognizable form; that is, they end in *-ly*. Some other adverbs cannot be easily recognized by their form because they do not have a specific suffix. Besides, they may modify almost any kind of construction in English: nouns, verbs, adjectives, other adverbs, and even whole sentences. To make the situation even more confusing, we find that in some cases there is greater flexibility and a speaker may place the adverb in various positions in a sentence without changing the meaning very much; in other cases, the position of the adverbs is fixed. We may also find many other possibilities of variation between these two extremes in the placement of adverbs. This makes adverbs more difficult to teach, and as a consequence, learners have difficulty learning and using them correctly.

Sometimes teachers feel frustrated when they realize that their students continue making the same mistakes after having exposed them to plenty of practice and review in class to help them acquire the structures. During most of my teaching experience as an English instructor, I have perceived that even advanced students, who are highly proficient in the language, make a great number of mistakes when the grammar structures contain one or more adverbs. Basically, the problem in most instances is the misplacement of the adverb. Thus this article intends to analyze the way some students, and experienced English teachers treat faulty sentences with adverb placement errors. Besides, this article provides some useful rules on how to help teachers and students to deal with adverbs more effectively in their English classes.

2. Theoretical Background

Many authors have not only defined adverbs but also described their position in the English sentence; many of them agree on the fact that adverbs are rather complex structures because of their various classifications, meanings and positions in the sentence. This complexity is due to the syntactical and semantic behavior of the adverb which is determined by its position in the sentence. Adverb position may not only change the meaning of the sentence but also make the sentence grammatical or ungrammatical (Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy 2000; Bing 1989; Parrot 2000; Raimis 2001; Swan 2006; Celce-Murcia and D. Larsen-Freeman 1999).

Bing (1989) notes that the word *adverb* refers to single words that modify verbs, adjectives, and adverbs. Adverbs answer the questions *how*, *when*, *where*, and *why*, and most of them modify or describe actions, states, or qualities. Any phrase or clause that is used as an adverb is called *adverbial*. This author exemplifies the complexity of adverb usage by giving the following considerations regarding adverb position in the sentence:

- a. When negative adverbs such as *never* and *rarely* are used at the beginning of a sentence, the word order changes from statement order to question order:

Never have I seen such a crowd!

Rarely do we invite so many people.

- b. Adverbs of frequency come after the verb *be*; with other verbs, they usually come before the main verb:

It is *always* cold in Minnesota.

It *always* snows a lot here.

Have you *ever* visited Iowa?

- c. Adverbs that tell the exact number of times (*once, twice*) usually come near the end of a sentence, but they can come at the beginning of a sentence, too:

I have seen that movie *twice*.

Twice I went skiing when it was twenty below zero.

- d. Adverbials of time can occur in various positions in a sentence. When they are prepositional phrases, they often come at the end of sentences:

I worked on that jigsaw puzzle *on Saturday*.

- e. When two adverbials of time occur in a sentence, the smaller unit of time usually comes first:

I worked on another puzzle *one evening this week*.

- f. Adverbials of time can also come at the beginning of a sentence, particularly when there are other kinds of adverbials at the end of the sentence:

On Sunday, I started another puzzle *because I was bored*.

- g. The adverbs of time *just, still, and already* usually come either after the first auxiliary verb or before the main verb, and the negative forms *yet* and *anymore* usually come at the end of a sentence:

I am *still* working on that puzzle.

I *just* bought it last week.

I have *already* worked on it for six weeks.

- h. Adverbials of place usually come after the verb and its complements, and before time adverbials:

Let's move the bed *upstairs now*. (upstairs = place; now = time)

- i. Adverbials of manner come before or after the verbs that they modify but never between a verb and its object.

Correct: The director *quickly* offered Sylvia the role.

Incorrect: *The director offered *quickly* Sylvia the role.

Parrot (2000) also defines adverbs as different kinds of words with quite different functions which occupy a range of positions in the sentence. He believes that choosing where to place them is often a major problem for the learner. For teaching purposes, he suggests specifying particular types of adverbs rather than referring to them all together as if they were a unified class of words.

Besides being problematic, adverbs are considered the most movable elements in English by Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy (2000) and by Maclin (1996). These authors explain that adverbs take different positions within the sentence. They can appear before the subject, between the subject and the verb, or at the end of the clause. In general, English adverbs do not come between the verb and the object. Exceptionally, an adverb may separate verb and object, but there must be a good reason for making the exception, e.g. to avoid ambiguity, or because the object is a long noun phrase, or to produce a dramatic effect. Thus in the sentence *We must examine carefully the meanings of the words we use*, ambiguity would result if the adverb *carefully* were placed after the verb *use* instead of after the verb *examine*; in the sentence *He opened, very slowly, the most amazing book I have ever seen*, the delay in introducing the object creates an atmosphere of suspense (Close 1998).

The following are rules provided by these authors for correct adverb placement:

1. In general, adverbs come after the verb, and after the object, if there is one.
2. Short adverbs, intensifying adverbs, negative adverbs, adverbs expressing indefinite frequency, and adverbs expressing the speaker's or the writer's viewpoint often come between the subject and the main verb.
3. Adverbs describing the way something happens, manner adverbs, come first.
4. Adverbs of place come after adverbs of manner.
5. Adverbs of definite frequency come before other adverbs of time.
6. Adverbs of reason come after other adverbs.
7. Putting the adverb in an unusual position can also give it greater emphasis, particularly if a speaker stresses the word or phrase:

*We have always stated our commitment to equality **in public**.* (neutral position)

*We have always stated **in public** our commitment to equality.* (emphasis)

Frequency adverbs are most often put in the middle, but in a special place in the middle: between the subject and the main verb, but after *be* alone. When there are several auxiliaries in a verb phrase, the adverb should be placed after the first one.

Several authors state that placing an adverb between the main verb and a direct object results in an ungrammatical sentence (Maclin 1996; Gethin 1990; Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy, 2000; Swan 2006). Parrot (2000) also agrees with these authors, but he slightly disagrees with this claim because he says that instructors usually teach that placing the adverb

between the verb and the direct object is a mistake. Parrot shows that this rule is somewhat flexible and presents an example that appears to contradict this rule:

We need to design with you an innovative approach.
 Verb phrase Adverbial Direct object

In regard to time adverbs, Maclin (1996) states that they usually come at the end of the clause. They do not usually come in the middle. However, they can be placed at the beginning to express emphasis. This author also suggests putting manner, place, and time adverbs in that order if they are together at the end of the sentence.

Do not put an adverb of manner that is a phrase in the middle position because the sentence sounds awkward.

Incorrect: *George with difficulty ran the last mile.*
 Correct: *George ran the last mile with difficulty.*

With place as well as time adverbs, put more specific information before more general information.

Put adverbs that modify adjectives and participles directly before the words they modify.

Examples: Amy and Paul were *very* happy.
 They were *happily* married for fifty years.

Firsten and Killian (1994) also believe that whereas adjectives, nouns, pronouns, and verbs tend to have fairly rigid, systematic placement in basic sentences, adverbs can usually be placed in three different positions in a sentence. One common position is between a subject and its verb if it is not a complex verb: *I gladly accept your offer.*

The other common position where adverbs of manner appear is at the end of a clause: *I accept this award gladly.* The third position is at the beginning of the clause. This is called adverb forwarding. Adverbs of manner can be pushed to the front of the sentence for emphasis, but we should keep in mind that this is a very formal style observed more in written than in spoken language, and we have to be careful because the meaning can change when the adverb of manner is fronted. The following sentences illustrate where the adverb **happily** can mean either an evaluation or manner (Huddleston and Pullum 2003: 575).

- a. They **happily** watched TV until dinner. (central position – manner)
- b. They watched TV **happily** until dinner (end-of-clause position – manner)
- c. They watched TV until dinner **happily**. (end position – manner)
- d. **Happily**, they watched TV until dinner. (front position – evaluation)

Writers may also forward adverbs to organize the text in a particular way, for example by time-frame or by location and actions around the places mentioned.

To address the issue of adverb position in English, the present study was designed to answer the following questions: Can graduate students and experienced English teachers identify adverb misplacement in faulty sentences? How do they treat these faulty sentences? What can the English teacher do to help the students acquire correct structures that contain adverbs?

3. Subjects, instrument, and method

The subjects of this study were twenty graduate students (14 female and 6 male ages 23-45) chosen at random from the master's program in Teaching English as a Foreign Language and 12 experienced English teachers from the School of Modern Languages at the University of Costa Rica. Four native speakers of English rated the sentences. Two of them were graduate students, and the other two were teachers at the University of Costa Rica.

The instrument contained 16 sentences collected by the author in her English classes over a six-month period. (See Appendix) Fourteen sentences had been written by fifth-year English majors and graduate students at the School of Modern Languages. Out of these 14 sentences, 10 had mistakes in adverb placement; two had some other type of mistake and were used as distractors, and the other two sentences were correct.

The subjects were asked to read, analyze, and mark each sentence as correct or incorrect. If the sentence was incorrect, they had to provide a correct version of the sentence. For the purpose of this study, only the ten faulty sentences with mistakes in adverb position are analyzed.

4. Results

Table 1 presents the responses given by the 20 graduate students when they rated the sample sentences.

Table 1. Students' Rating of Faulty Sentences

	FAULTY SENTENCES	A M	C S
1.	This benefited the slow learners who came usually late.	14	6
2.	We decided to change constantly students' partners when working in groups or pairs.	18	2
3.	They most of the time missed the warm-up and pre-task activities.	14	6
4.	They lacked the necessary English skills to perform successfully the tasks.	18	2
5.	The students measured quickly the skills and English proficiency of their classmates.	13	7
6.	We had always students work with different students.	17	3
7.	Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address directly the students' needs and interests.	6	14
8.	All the teachers believe that errors should be always corrected.	9	11
9.	I think that students can be also in charge of correction if they learn to do it.	14	6
10.	Errors need to be always corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive.	5	15

n = 20

A M = Adverb misplacement

C S = Correct sentence

Almost all the students (17, 18) identified sentences 2, 4, and 6 as faulty sentences, and they correctly pointed out that the source of the problem was the misplacement of the adverbs: (2) *We decided to change **constantly** students' partners when working in groups or pairs*, (4) *They lacked the necessary English skills to perform **successfully** the tasks*, (6) *We had **always** students work with different students*. Fourteen students stated that sentences 1, 3, and 9 contained adverb misplacement too: (1) *This benefited the slow learners who came **usually** late*, (3) *They **most of the time** missed the warm-up and pre-task activities*, (9) *I think that students can be **also** in charge of correction if they learn to do it*. Thirteen students marked sentence 5 as faulty because the adverb had been misplaced: (5) *The students measured **quickly** the skills and English proficiency of their classmates*. Surprisingly, more than half of the students mistakenly thought that sentences 7, 8, and 10 were correct; therefore, they failed to find the problems in those sentences: (7) *Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address **directly** the students' needs and interests*, (8) *All the teachers believe that errors should be **always** corrected*, (10) *Errors need to be **always** corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive*.

Table 2 shows teachers' responses when they rated the faulty sentences.

Table 2. Teachers' Responses when Rating Sentences

	FAULTY SENTENCES	A M	C S
1.	This benefited the slow learners who came usually late.	11	1
2.	We decided to change constantly students' partners when working in groups or pairs.	11	1
3.	They most of the time missed the warm-up and pre-task activities.	9	3
4.	They lacked the necessary English skills to perform successfully the tasks.	11	1
5.	The students measured quickly the skills and English proficiency of their classmates.	9	3
6.	We had always students work with different students.	12	0
7.	Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address directly the students' needs and interests.	6	6
8.	All the teachers believe that errors should be always corrected.	9	3
9.	I think that students can be also in charge of correction if they learn to do it.	9	3
10.	Errors need to be always corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive.	7	5

n = 12

A M = Adverb misplacement

C S = Correct sentence

All the teachers correctly identified sentence 6 as faulty, and they pointed out that the problem was adverb misplacement: (6) *We had **always** students work with different students.* Most of the teachers (11) stated that sentences 1, 2, and 4 were problematic because the adverbs had been misplaced: (1) *This benefited the slow learners who came **usually** late.* (2) *We decided to change **constantly** students' partners when working in groups or pairs.* (4) *They lacked the necessary English skills to perform **successfully** the tasks.* Nine teachers marked sentences 3, 5, 8, and 9 as incorrect because of adverb misplacement: (3) *They **most of the time** missed the warm-up and pre-task activities,* (5) *The students measured **quickly** the skills and English proficiency of their classmates,* (8) *All the teachers believe that errors should be **always** corrected,* and (9) *I think that students can be **also** in charge of correction if they learn to do it.* Only seven teachers pinpointed the mistake in sentence 10; they said that the adverb was not in the right position in the sentence: (10) *Errors need to be **always** corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive.* Half of the teachers erroneously thought that sentence 7 was correct; that is, six teachers did not find the mistake in adverb placement in this statement: (7) *Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address **directly** the students' needs and interests.*

Table 3 compares the percentages of students' responses to the teachers' responses.

Table 3. Comparison of Percentages of Students' and Teachers' Responses

SAMPLE SENTENCES	A M		C S	
	Ts %	Ss %	Ts %	Ss %
1. This benefited the slow learners who came usually late.	91.66	80	8.33	20
2. We decided to change constantly students' partners when working in groups or pairs.	91.66	90	8.33	10
3. They most of the time missed the warm-up and pre-task activities.	75	80	25	20
4. They lacked the necessary English skills to perform successfully the tasks.	91.66	90	8.33	10
5. The students measured quickly the skills and English proficiency of their classmates.	75	65	25	35
6. We had always students work with different students.	100	85	0	15
7. Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address directly the students' needs and interests.	50	20	50	80
8. All the teachers believe that errors should be always corrected.	75	45	25	55
9. I think that students can be also in charge of correction if they learn to do it.	75	80	25	20
10. Errors need to be always corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive.	58.33	25	41.66	75

A M: Adverb misplacement

Ts = teachers

C S: Correct sentence

Ss = students

All the teachers (100 percent) but not all the students (only 85 percent) correctly marked sentence 6 as faulty. Most of the teachers (91.66 percent) as well as most of the students (90 percent) determined that sentences 2 and 4 had problems with adverb misplacement. Surprisingly, more students (80 percent) than teachers (75 percent) pointed out that sentences 3 and 9 were incorrect because the adverb had been misplaced. Another interesting fact is that only 50 percent of the teachers and only 20 percent of the students realized that sentence 7 was faulty.

75 percent of the students did not find any mistakes in sentence 10, and they marked it as correct; this sentence also confused 41.66 percent of the teachers because they thought it was correct too. The same was true for sentence 5; 35 percent of the students and 25 percent of the teachers considered that it was correct.

5. Discussion

As can be seen from the results in Table 1, the position of adverbs in English is a difficult issue because not only students but also some teachers failed to identify all the incorrect sentences. Most of the students (15 out 20) could not recognize adverb misplacement in the sentence *Errors need to be always corrected, especially those that are repetitive* and erroneously classified it as correct. According to the raters, the suggested corrections were *Errors always need to be corrected...* or *Errors need to always be corrected...* Their reasoning is that the adverb “always” is usually most neutrally placed after the first verb auxiliary and that for emphasis the adverb can precede the first verb auxiliary. Notice that the word “need” could be considered an auxiliary in this verb phrase since its meaning is similar to the modal auxiliaries *have to* and *must*; the three of them could mean obligation or necessity (Swan 2006: 342; Graver 1986: 46).

A possible explanation for the students’ error here is that they just applied the rule that states that frequency adverbs are placed after the verb *be* as in the example *Craig is always on time*. They did not realize that the word “need” is an auxiliary in this case and not a main verb. They might have thought that sentence 10 was similar to such sentences as *They always need more practice* or *We always need water for irrigation* where the adverb is correctly placed preceding the main verb.

Another possible explanation for the mistakes in sentence 10 could be that the verb phrase in this sentence is rather complex because it is a construction in the passive voice, and it consists of two verb auxiliaries *need to* and *be* plus the past participle of the verb *correct*. Students might have had great difficulty trying to decide what the main verb was. Besides, the fact that five teachers indicated that this sentence was correct shows that even some experienced instructors had trouble placing the adverb correctly.

With a lower percentage of responses than sentence 10, sentence 6 *We had always students work with different strategies* also presents problems in adverb placement. After analyzing the results, it seems that this population knows the grammar rule that states that frequency adverbs must be placed before the main verb because only three students marked it as correct, and as we would logically expect, all the teachers identified the mistake and correctly placed the adverb before the main verb.

Another interesting case is sentence 8: *All the teachers believe that errors should be always corrected* because 11 students and three instructors classified it as correct. The expected corrections according to the raters were *Errors should always be corrected* (placing *always* before the auxiliary *be*) or the emphatic form *Errors always should be corrected*. Again students

might have over generalized the rule for placing frequency adverbs, and they might have thought that the adverb *always* had to be placed after the verb **be**. A similar situation occurred with the adverb *also* in the sentence *I think that students can be also in charge of correction...* because 20 percent of the students identified this sentence as correct. They might have noticed the word **be** and mistakenly thought the adverb had to be placed after it. Surprisingly three instructors also marked this sentence as correct. The raters suggested placing the adverb after the first auxiliary verb.

In regard to placing adverbs between the main verb and its direct object, it is important to point out that a great number of students made this mistake: a total of 25 times, corresponding to items 2, 4, 5, and 7. This is clear evidence that many students and even some teachers (at least 6) do not master this rule, and we have to remember here that many of the authors mentioned in his study claim that adverbs should not separate a main verb from its direct object.

Another common mistake that six students and three teachers made was placing the adverbial phrase *most of the time* before the main verb. According to most authors, adverbial phrases should be placed at the end of the sentence or at the beginning for emphasis. It seems that some students and teachers were not aware of or forgot this rule and indicated that this sentence was correct. It is still surprising that three instructors were not bothered by this mistake and also classified the sentence as correct.

As already noted, adverb position in English is very problematic, and it can confuse both students and instructors. Thus the following section presents rules that the English teacher should keep in mind to help the students acquire grammatical structures dealing with adverbs and learn the appropriate way of using them syntactically and semantically correct.

6. Rules regarding adverb position in English

In this section, two symbols will be used to indicate the grammaticality of the sentence: * stands for ungrammatical and √ stands for grammatical. Adverbs are underlined.

1. Do not place an adverb between a verb and its object.

* She speaks well French.

√ She speaks French well.

2. Do not place an adverb between a verb itself and its particle.

* He went fast back.

√ He went back fast.

3. Frequency adverbs are commonly placed in mid-position: following the verb *be* and before any other verb.

* Paul usually is tired.

√ Paul is usually tired.

* They go never to church.

√ They never go to church.

4. Frequency adverbs can go in end position if they are the main focus of the message.
 - √ Lucy gets very depressed *sometimes*.
 - √ I visit my cousins *occasionally*.

5. Place frequency adverbs after the auxiliaries *have, can, must*
 - √ Mark has *never* worked with teenagers.
 - √ They can *always* come and stay with us.
 - √ She must *sometimes* have wanted to run away.

6. Adverbs which modify adjectives, other adverbs, and participles usually immediately precede the words they modify.
 - √ The package is *extremely* large.
 - √ Buses depart *quite* regularly.
 - √ They've been *happily* married for fifty years.

7. The adverbs *ago* and *enough* are exceptional, since they usually follow the adjectives or adverbs they modify.
 - √ That happened long *ago*
 - √ He is old *enough* to make his own decisions
 - √ We ran fast *enough* to catch the bus.

8. When *ago* is used with a noun, it follows the noun.
 - √ That happened six months *ago*.

9. Put manner, place, and time adverbs in that order if they are together at the end of the sentence.
 - √ The children played *happily together in the yard the whole afternoon*.

10. Put time adverbs at the beginning or end of the sentence; they are more emphatic at the beginning.
 - √ I had a tennis lesson *last week*. (neutral)
 - √ *Last week* I had my first tennis lesson. (emphatic)

11. Do not place adverbials of time in the middle of the sentence.
 - * The students *most of the time* eat in the school cafeteria.
 - √ The students eat in the school cafeteria *most of the time*.
 - √ *Most of the time* the students eat in the school cafeteria. (emphatic)

12. Do not put an adverb of manner that is a phrase in the middle position.
- * He will finish **with difficulty** the fence.
 - √ He will finish the fence **with difficulty**.
13. With adverbs of place as well as adverbs of time, put more specific information before more general information.
- √ Charles was born **in a hospital in Alajuela, Costa Rica**.
 - √ He was born **on a Thursday in May in 1999**.
14. Adverbs which give the speaker's opinion of an action most often go in front position.
- √ **Fortunately**, the gas station was still open at that time.
 - √ **Frankly**, I do not understand his attitude.
15. The adverbs **maybe** and **perhaps** usually come at the beginning of a clause.
- √ **Maybe** he is right and **maybe** he is wrong.
 - √ **Perhaps** her flight is delayed.
16. In negative sentences, adverbs generally come before **not** if they emphasize the negative; otherwise, they come after.
- √ I **certainly** do not agree. (emphasis on the negative)
 - √ I do not **often** have a cold. (neutral)
17. Adverbs that express degree of intensity or completeness occur both medially and finally, never initially.
- * **Thoroughly**, I understood the explanation.
 - √ I **thoroughly** understood the explanation.
 - √ I understood the explanation **thoroughly**.
 - * **Very much**, I appreciate it.
 - √ I **very much** appreciate it.
 - √ I appreciate it **very much**.
18. In sentences in the passive voice, manner adverbs generally come after the auxiliary **been** and other mid-position adverbs come before it.
- √ They had **probably** been **severely** scolded by the instructor.
 - √ You have been **wrongly** directed.

7. Conclusions and implications for the EFL classroom

Through the present study, I have attempted to demonstrate that adverbials are semantically and morphologically the most diverse grammatical structures in English and that adverb position can confuse many students and even experienced instructors. I have also tried to pinpoint those areas in which most adverb misplacement occurs. The results showed that the most problematic structures were those containing complex verb phrases consisting of one or two auxiliaries plus a verb form. When auxiliary verbs are used, the neutral position for adverbs is after the first auxiliary verb. This position is commonly used for short adverbs and for adverbs expressly signaling the writer's viewpoint. This type of grammar construction is troublesome because we might wrongly assume that the greater the number of elements, the more possible adverb positions in the structure. Another conflicting issue dealt with placing an adverb between a transitive verb and its object, which is ungrammatical according to most of the authors consulted.

Having determined the troublesome aspects of adverb position in English, the teacher should anticipate those problematic areas and make provisions to clarify doubts for more effective learning. First, he or she should start by classifying adverbs in various categories and should teach each group at a time providing enough written and oral practice. Second, rules about adverb position should be presented and exemplified using sentences and longer pieces of discourse since broader contexts help convey meaning appropriately. Third, English teachers, novice and experienced, should frequently review the rules on adverb positioning because this is an area in which mistakes can easily be made. Finally, instructors are responsible for raising awareness in their students and providing them with meaningful exercises in which they practice placing adverbs in the correct position. If English teachers followed these simple guidelines, their students' learning process would be enhanced because awareness of grammatical structures and enough practice on them facilitate second language acquisition.

8. Implications for further research

This article is a contribution to the body of research that intends to show insight into the field of English teaching and learning. Although the responses given by these groups of students and teachers cannot be assumed to echo those of all the teachers at the School of Modern Languages, this study highlights directions and possibilities for further research: Will the students who wrote the faulty sentences be able to correct them after they get their BA in English? Why do English instructors at the School of Modern Languages still make mistakes in adverb placement? Why do English majors seem not to acquire the rules of adverb position, and what can be done to solve this problem? Are the grammar courses in the BA. program in English satisfying the students' linguistic needs? Clearly, further research on these related issues would greatly help and enrich our English language teaching.

Bibliography

Bing, J. 1989. *English Grammar in Context*. New Jersey: Prentice-Hall Regents.

Carter, Ronald, Rebecca Hughes, and Michael McCarthy. 2000. *Exploring Grammar in Context*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

- Celce-Murcia, Marianne and Diane Larsen-Freeman. 1999. *The Grammar Book: An ESL/EFL Teacher's Course*. Boston: Heinle & Heinle Publishers.
- Close, R.A. 1998. *A Teachers' Grammar: The Central Problems of English*. London: Language Teaching Publications.
- Dudleston, Rodney and Geoffrey K. Pullum. 2003. *The Cambridge Grammar of the English Language*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Firsten, Richard and Patricia Killian. 1994. *Troublesome English: A Teaching Grammar for ESOL Instructors*. New Jersey: Prentice Hall Regents,
- Gethin, Hugh. 1990. *Grammar in Context: Proficiency Level English*. London: Collins ELT.
- Graver, B.D. 1986. *Advanced English Practice*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.
- Maclin, Alice. 1996. *Reference Guide to English: A Handbook of English as a Second Language*. Washington: Materials Branch, English Language Programs Division
- Parrot, Martin. 2000. *Grammar for English Language Teachers*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Raimes, Ann. 2001. *Grammar Troublespots: An Editing Guide for Students*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.
- Swan, Michael. 2006. *Practical English Usage*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Appendix

RIGHT OR WRONG?

The following sentences were written by some of our students. In your opinion, are these sentences correct (C) or incorrect (I)? If they are incorrect, please write a correct version.

_____ 1. In this ad appears a famous tennis player promoting a brand of watches.

_____ 2. This would benefit the slow learners who came usually late.

_____ 3. We decided to change constantly students' partners when working in groups or pairs.

- ____ 4. They most of the time missed the warm-up and pre-task activities.

- ____ 5. Due to the fact that my course had an existing text in place, my choice regarding selection of materials was limited.

- ____ 6. They lacked the English skills necessary to perform successfully the tasks.

- ____ 7. The students measured quickly the skills and English proficiency of their classmates.

- ____ 8. We decided to assign directly partners when having pair or group work.

- ____ 9. Were I to do it again, I would structure the needs assessment differently.

- ____ 10. We had always students work with different students.

- ____ 11. The strategies helped them very much to understand the meaning of vocabulary items.

- ____ 12. Teaching an ESP course is a really rewarding experience because of the opportunity offered to teachers to address directly the students' needs and interests, which in turn promote the designing of meaningful activities.

- ____ 13. The statement, a teacher is most prepared to teach a class after it has been taught, is equally valid for needs assessment.

- ____ 14. All the teachers believe that errors should be always corrected.

- ____ 15. I think that students can be also in charge of correction if they learn to do it.

- ____ 16. Errors need to be always corrected, especially those that are systematically repetitive.
