



## Effect of Sentence Order Techniques on Learning Adverbs among Pre-intermediate Students

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### Abstract

This study investigated the effects of using sentence order techniques on learning adverbs (i.e., frequency, manner, time, and place) among Iranian pre-intermediate students. To perform this study, 30 pre-intermediate participants were non-randomly selected and divided into two equal groups of control and experimental. Then, they took a teacher-made pretest of grammar in order to determine how well they knew the adverbs of frequency, manner, time, and place before the treatment. The experimental group was taught the grammatical patterns of sentence order techniques like the use of form and functions of adverbs and their positions in the sentences. The control group received the traditional method of teaching adverbs including exercising of grammar, pattern practice, etc. Finally, the participants took the posttest. Independent and paired samples *t*-tests were used to compare the means of the pretest and the posttest in both groups. The findings revealed that the experimental group significantly improved in the posttest. Implications of the study suggest that using new technology, especially sentence order techniques, may enhance learners' learning regarding adverbs at the pre-intermediate level.

**Keywords:** Adverbs of manner, Adverbs of place, Adverbs of time, Frequency adverbs, Sentence order techniques

## 1. Introduction

Teaching grammar has always been one of the debatable matters in language teaching, including English. There have always been many disagreements about the best way of teaching grammar. Richards and Schmidt (2010) defined grammar as a description of the structure of a language and the way in which linguistic units like words and phrases are combined to make sentences in the language.

According to Ur (1999), grammatical rules empower learners to know how sentence patterns should be placed together. The teaching of grammar should also finally focus attention on the way grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly applied. Doff (2000) believes that students can utter meanings in the form of phrases, clauses and sentences by learning grammar.

Sentence order is the sentence construction which refers to the use of appropriate lexical and syntactical constituents in producing grammatical and meaningful sentences (Ghobadi & Taki, 2018). Thus, the term sentence order deals with the techniques that the teachers can use to teach grammatical rules in making grammatical and meaningful sentences through several syntactic activities including linguistics activities like form and functions relations of grammatical rules in sentence construction regarding the positions of the parts of speech, (i.e., adverbs, adjectives, nouns, verbs, etc). In addition, sentence order techniques focus on the use of grammatical rules concerning the parts of speech (e.g., nouns, verbs, adverbs) and grammatical classes (e.g. word, phrase, clause and sentence) in oral and spoken discourse (Richards & Schmidt, 2010).

Word order is the arrangement of words in a phrase, clause, or sentence (Kian & Gorjian, 2018). In the present study, the term sentence order may be used in the same concept since it refers to the grammatical order of words coming together in a meaningful sentence. In many languages, including English, word order plays an important part in determining meanings expressed in other languages by inflections (Collins, 2012). Moreover, Tallerman (2011) stated that word order is the analysis of the arrangements of the syntactic units of a language, and that how different languages would apply different orders in sentences. The conflicts and similarities between orders in different syntactic areas are a subject of interest for linguists. Simple sentence structure in English, for instance, is subject-verb-object. A basic word order in English for instance is like this:

The teacher wrote an example clearly on the blackboard yesterday.

Subject+ verb+ object+ adverb of manner+ adverb of place+ adverb of time

Carter, Hughes, and McCarthy (2000) explain that adverbs take different positions within the sentence. They can position before the subject, between the subject and the verb, or at the end of the clause.

According to Raimes (1983), adverbs modify verbs and adjectives and other adverbs as well. Adverbs can also modify phrases, clauses, and sentences. Adverbs reply one of these questions: When? Where? Why? How? Under what circumstances? And to what degree? Following Raimes (1983), for instance:

The teacher had to speak **loudly** (**Loudly** modifies the verb speak).

**Clearly**, Sarah did not understand the directions. (**Clearly** modifies the sentence)

The suitcase is **still** below the stairs. (**Still** modifies the phrase “below the stairs.”)

Many adverbs are formed by adding -ly to an adjective. For example: clear/clearly, hard/hardly. But some adverbs do not use the -ly ending. These adverbs do not have a specific form. A list of some of the most common irregular adverbs is: already, also, always, here, never, now, often, quite, seldom, soon, still, then, there, too, very well. Some words that end in ly are not adverbs. Some adjectives end in "ly" too. For example: *Julia was feeling very lonely.*

In Cinque's (1999) investigation all types of adverbs are joined the main verbs. It can be argued that it is the verb that undergoes movement which results in the order, but the thing is that there is no evidence indicating the trigger of the movement. According to Raimes (1983), English is a head initial subject-verb-object (SVO) language, and shows distinctive agreement only in the third person singular, present tense form of verbs, which are marked by “-s” (walks) or “-es”(teaches). The rest of the persons are not differentiated in the verb (I walk, you walk, they walk, etc.).

Most Iranian English-learning students including pre-intermediate ones have difficulty in English sentence order. The researchers themselves as English teachers have confronted with many Iranian pre-intermediate students who cannot place constituents and parts of English sentences in the correct patterns (Samanian & Roohani, 2018). They do not know where to place subject, direct object, indirect object, or verb; the problem even becomes more complex when adverbs are added. Therefore, there are different patterns of positions for each adverb in the sentences. The researchers' (e.g., Carter, Hughes, & McCarthy, 2000; Hernandez, 2006) experiences in teaching grammar have shown that most of the time,

students misplace adverbs of time with adverbs of place, that is, they put mistakenly adverbs of time before adverbs of place. In this case, there appears to be a fixed order for various adverbs. For instance, people can utter sentences (1) and (3), but sentences (2) and (4) are impossible.

1. Obviously, he had spoken loudly.
2. \*Loudly, he had spoken obviously.
3. He luckily has wisely refused the offer.
4. \*He wisely has luckily refused the offer (Zi-hong, 2010).

A few studies (e.g., Baleghizadeh & Oladrostam, 2011) have been done in order to teach correct adverb placements but none of them had tried the sentence order techniques. Thus the present study worked on using some card sorting techniques to assist learners for placing different types of adverbs in the sentence; the case is Iranian pre-intermediate students.

## 2. Literature Review

A sentence is a complete set of words that conveys meaning. A sentence is composed of one or more clauses. A clause contains a subject and a verb. Sentences are divided into four types: simple sentences, compound sentences, complex sentences, and compound-complex sentences (Raimes, 1983). It is essential to find a correct arrangement of words in order to produce a well-organized sentence.

A simple sentence includes one independent clause. Example: *Johnny rode his bike to school*. A compound sentence includes two independent clauses. A coordinating conjunction (for, and, nor, but, or, yet, so) often links the two independent clauses and , and it is preceded by a comma. Example: *She wanted to go on vacation, so she saved up her money*. A complex sentence contains one independent clause plus one or more dependent clauses. Example: *I will call you after I find the solution*. A compound-complex sentence combines complex sentence and compound sentence forms. A compound-complex sentence includes one or more independent clauses and one or more dependent clauses. Example: *Although she felt guilty for missing her friend's birthday, she took her out to dinner the next day, and they had a great time* (Andersen, 2014).

Every word is a construction, every grammatical rule or template is a construction, and so forth. A crucial feature of constructions is that they are holistic: they express several

linguistic features simultaneously. In construction grammar, word order phenomena are defined as a part of a particular kind of constructions; these constructions could be labeled *ordering constructions*. In ordering constructions, the particular order of the parts of that construction is integrated with a certain sense; some other features of the construction often complete this sense (Kuningas & Leino, 2006).

## 2.1. The Position of Adverbs in the Sentence

Gnanaseelan (2016) stated English language users or learners use the adverbs in English inconsiderable numbers and functions without understanding the deeper level implications and nuances. Adverbs are the most variable units in the English language to be used anywhere- rule bound or rule free.

According to Raimes (1983), the rules concerning where to put adverbs of frequency are not difficult to understand since some basic rules for most one-word frequency adverbs, especially are:

- a) Immediately before the *main verb*. For example, *the mental functions are slowed, and patients are often confused.*
- b) Immediately before the *second auxiliary* when there are two auxiliaries. For instance: *Late complications may not always have been notified.*
- c) After the present and past tenses of 'to be'. For example: *The answer of the machine is always correct.*

Some frequency adverbs (e.g., sometimes, occasionally, often, normally, usually) can be placed at the beginning of a sentence, for the purpose of emphasis. Since all adverbs of manner can always go after the verb or noun, it is best to put them there so learners will never make a mistake and adverbs of time go in various positions (Wallwork, 2011).

Rutledge and Fitton (2015) focused on the significance of teaching adverb placement to ESL students for improving rhetorical knowledge. Learning adverbs has been already hard enough for L2 learners, but ESL teachers should still expand an obvious understanding of adverb position for emphasis when they teach adverb placement (Zhang & Koller, 2015). Adverb position may not only modify the meaning of the sentence but also make the sentence grammatical or ungrammatical (Celce-Murcia & Larsen-Freeman, 1999).

Pérez-Paredes and Díez-Bedmar (2012) showed that although students might not need native-like skill and adverb proficiency in general contexts of communication as they

develop academically, a student's lack of adverbial use in written articles can show a weakness or misunderstanding of rhetorical awareness for ESL students: "this low awareness could have a negative effect on the professional careers of these students if poor cogent language skills are sustained" (p.119). For some authors (e.g., Khomeijani Farahani & Faryabi, 2017; Raimes, 2001; Swan, 2006), the analysis of the nature of adverbs is very strongly related to that of adjectives, and therefore, they maintain formal criteria that can be applied to distinguish the two parts of speech.

Common classifications of adverbs are based on either semantic or syntactic criteria or both. The case is that people first learn the general distinction of various types of adverbs and then acquire the syntactic positions of adverbs of each type. What adult learners acquire about adverbs is the distinction of different adverbs and the different scopes they take. There are 2 aspects about adverbs that we acquire when taking English as a second language: (1) the general positions of adverbs in sentences; (2) the scope of adverbs which is also closely related to syntax (Zi-hong, 2010).

### 2.1.1. Adverbs of Frequency

Adverbs of frequency tell us how many times an action occurs, occurred, or will occur. Frequency adverbs are most often put in the middle, but in a particular place: between the subject and the main verb, but after *be* verb. They include *always, usually, often, sometimes, occasionally, seldom, rarely, hardly ever, never* (Folse, 2012).

Examples:

*He is always late for his class* (after *be* verb)

*She never smokes* (before main verb).

### 2.1.2. Adverbs of Manner

These adverbs say in which manner an action occurs or how the action is done or will happen. Some of them are *well, hard, fast, angrily, happily, slowly, suddenly, noisily, quietly, quickly, badly, carefully, softly, and heavily*. Adverbs of manner most often come in final position, but adverbs ending in *-ly* can often go in mid-position if the adverb is not the main focus of the message (Swan, 2006). Examples:

Ben can run *fast* (final position). She *angrily* tore up the letter (mid position). If the adverb of manner is a phrase, it should not be positioned in the middle since the sentence

looks awkward (Hernandez, 2006). Incorrect: George *with difficulty* ran the last mile. Correct: George ran the last mile *with difficulty*. Adverbs of manner should come first followed by adverbs of place and time, respectively (Hewings, 2005). For instance: The firemen rushed *energetically into the house at one o'clock*.

### 2.1.3. Adverbs of Place

Adverbs of place tell us about the place of action or where the action happens, happened, or will happen. Some of them are: *here, there, near, somewhere, outside, ahead, on the top, at some place*. These adverbs are placed at the end position after the verb and its complements, and before time adverbials (Rutledge & Fitton, 2015).

Examples: He lives *under the bridge*.

The children are playing *outside*.

### 2.1.4. Adverbs of Time

These adverbs tell us about the time of action. Adverbs of time include: *now, then, soon, tomorrow, yesterday, today, tonight, again, early, still, once a week, recently*. They usually come at the end of the sentence. They do not usually come in the middle. However, they can be placed at the beginning to express emphasis (Maclin, 1996).

Examples: I will buy a computer *tomorrow* (end position).

*Last night* the weather was not so good (initial position for emphasis).

Adverbs like *tonight, tomorrow, yesterday* besides being used adverbially, can also serve as subjects. For example: *Yesterday* was a beautiful day (adverb as subject). Peter worked in his office *yesterday* (adverb as adverbial). Adverbs cannot occur as prenominal attributive modifiers of nouns. For example: \*the quickly runner or \*the happily conditions.

The adverb *sometimes* can occur in all three positions. It is important to show learners that *sometimes* can be placed in the front, mid, and end positions.

*Sometimes* they play basketball together.

They *sometimes* play basketball together.

They play basketball together *sometimes* (Rutledge & Fitton, 2015).

## 2.2. Empirical Studies

Sentence order refers to the investigation of the syntactic patterns in making grammatical and meaningful sentences. Izadi and Rahimi (2015) intended to elaborate

Persian and English sentence orders. Research findings showed that while Persian has an SOV (subject-object-verb) order, English is an SVO language and has a strict sentence order in which words can be presented in sentences. Word order in English is crucial because it has a fixed sentence order (Gill, 2010). English and Persian word orders are different in the positions of noun and relative clause, content verb and auxiliary, question particle and sentence, adverbial subordinator, etc. English sentences have adverbials. The problem for the English learner is that some adverbials can be put differently within the sentence, while other adverbials must appear in one place (e.g., *I very quickly did my homework* and *I did my homework very quickly* both are correct sentences, while we can say only *I did my homework in a hurry*). These instances show that English learners should ask a native speaker or consult a good usage guide or search the sentences in a web if they seek accurate word order. However, Persian is more flexible and its word order is relatively free. Some of these orders are more distinct than the others, but all of them can be permissible (Ramsay, Ahmed, & Mirzaiean, 2005).

Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam (2011) stated that teaching grammar in a way that empower students to apply grammatical structures properly in their active use has always been one of the complex tasks of most practitioners. In their research, teachers' job was to write two various sentences on the board and ask students which kind of placement they thought was right. The game of study was simple game of memory; students were presented with some words that included subject, verb and different kinds of adverbs. They then were asked to select most appropriate structure in a proper grammatical way. Accordingly, adverbs have various kinds of meanings and their grammar is completely complicated. Hernandez (2006) had found that even advanced students have problems with placing adverbs in the sentence. She believed that a teacher should predict those problematic domains and make rules for more effective learning; she/he should begin by categorizing adverbs in different groups and teach each group at a time providing sufficient oral and written exercises.

Macedonia (2005) mentions the cause of too little involvement and lack of interest of learners in out of class speech fluency is related to the type of practices that are employed to process foreign language input. She utilized some games to analyze accuracy and fluency to a level that empower real-time speech. She believed learned grammar and vocabulary should merge into sentences and therefore language learners to speak.



McCamley and Millan (2005) made a team game – each team received marks for correct grammar usage. They gave each team 50 marks and then for each wrong word they lost a mark, or began at zero and gave ten marks for each right sentence first time. This was a two part activity and was a good drill for grammar review. They gave their students a scrambled word exercise. It was an activity that could be applied for any young level and it was a good task-based learning exercise for them and one that could be used for any item of grammar. Then they asked the students to unscramble each sentence so the result was a grammatically correct sentence. Once they have completed the sentence, they then answered the sentence. The teacher checked that each group was writing sentences with all the words in that sentence or the students could gain or lose marks for ungrammatical usage.

**Scrambled sentence:** (do) he where holidays go on?

**Unscrambled sentence:** Where does he go on holidays?

According to the above literature, the studies on four different types of adverbs were reviewed. They have included the studies which have focused on adverbs of frequency, manner, time, and place. These studies have mainly dealt with analyzing the sentence order in English and accurate positions of adverbs, but none of them had tried sentence order techniques in an experimental research. There are rare studies which had investigated the effect of using sentence order techniques on learning adverbs in Iran. Therefore, the present study aimed to bridge this gap in the literature. Since the place of adverbs in the sentence is the most challenging part of the sentence order for Iranian students who learn English, there is a great need to investigate the role of teaching methods and techniques in teaching adverbs to Iranian EFL learners. Thus the present study has focused on the following research questions:

RQ1. Does using sentence order techniques have any significant effect on learning adverbs among Iranian pre-intermediate students?

RQ2. Is there any significant difference between the students who learned adverbs by sentence order techniques and those who received traditional method?

### **3. Methodology**

#### **3.1. Design of the Study**

The present study is a quasi-experimental research with a pretest-posttest design. The experimental and control groups were compared to clarify the effect of sentence order techniques like form and functions of adverbs and their positions in the sentences on learning adverbs among Iranian EFL learners.

### **3.2. Participants**

Participants in this study were thirty male and female students selected among sixty language learners attending Dr. Marahel Language Institute in Behbahan, Khuzestan province, Iran. Their age span was from 14 to 18 years old. First language of all of them was Persian and had at least seven years of education. They took part in a proficiency test called Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT) which was used as a homogeneity test and thirty students whose scores were between 30 and 39 out of 60 were selected as pre-intermediate level for the purpose of the study. The pre-intermediate learners were the selected as the participants of this study since they enrolled in grammar classes. They were non-randomly divided into two groups, experimental and control. Each group included fifteen subjects: 6 males and 9 females. Experimental group received sentence order technique that is each session 12 sentences including adverbs were taught by teacher-made flashcards. Control group, however, received the traditional method of teaching adverbs including exercising of grammar, pattern practice, etc.

### **3.3. Instruments and Materials**

The following instruments were employed to achieve the present study:

1. Proficiency test of Oxford Quick Placement Test (OQPT). The researcher employed the OQPT as the first instrument of the study to homogenize the learners in the pre-intermediate level and to divide the sample into two groups. The test included 60 multiple-choice items covering grammar. The allotted time for answering items was 60 minutes.
2. Teacher-made pretest of grammar: A pretest containing the grammar test items was administered. It was designed based on the classroom materials to the subjects before the treatment in order to determine how well the subjects knew the adverbs of frequency, manner, time, and place before the treatment. The subjects were asked to answer 30 multiple-choice adverb questions selected from the book written by Murphy, 2015 under the name of *Essential Grammar in Use*, in 30 minutes. Seven multiple-choice items for each type of adverb were designed.
3. Teacher-made posttest of grammar: All characteristics of the posttest were the same as those of the pretest in terms of time and the number of items. The only difference of this test to the pretest was that the order of questions and alternatives were changed

to wipe out the probable recall of pretest answers. Both the pretest and the posttest were performed as part of the classroom evaluation activities under the supervision of the instructor.

The reliability of both pretest and posttest was estimated through KR-21 after a pilot study as ( $r=.825$ ) and ( $r=.714$ ) respectively. The content validity of these tests also was confirmed by two experts (at Ph.D. level) in Behbahan language institutes. To ensure that students did not give more attention than they should to the words appearing in the pretest, no mention was made of the subsequent learning lessons and the posttest.

The materials used in this study were: (1) the book *Essential Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2015). Adverbs were taught based on this book and also multiple choice items of both pretest and posttest were selected from this book. 120 sentences of 40 units in the mentioned book which were related to adverbs were chosen and were taught by the researcher. Adverbs were taught to the experimental group by using teacher-made English teaching flashcards and to the control group without using flashcards and just by writing sentences on the board and underlining each part of the sentence; and (2) Teacher-made English teaching flashcards: After taking pretest, 120 sentences in 40 units of the book *Essential Grammar in Use* (Murphy, 2015) were selected and different parts of the sentences inserted in isolated cells in Excel software version 2013. Then the words were printed in various colors on the glossy photo papers. Each part of the sentence was cut and the whole sentence was gathered.

### **3.4. Data Collection Procedure**

To accomplish the purposes of the study, first, the OQPT was administered among 60 EFL learners in Dr. Marahel Language Institute in Behbahan, Khuzestan. The students answered the items in 60 minutes. Thirty students out of 60 could pass the OQPT; it means their band score was between thirty and thirty nine. Then, the researcher non-randomly divided the sample into two groups of 15, one experimental and the other control through convenience sampling method. In the second session of the course, a teacher made pretest containing 30 multiple-choice items about adverbs was administered to the subjects to determine their ability in adverb placement before any treatment. The allotted time for answering questions was 30 minutes. Teaching adverbs by using teacher-made English teaching flashcards was started from the third session. Four types of adverbs including

frequency, time, manner and place were taught to pre-intermediate students in 10 sessions. Each session took 40 minutes and students took part in the class twice a week. They were taught correct placement of adverbs by using teacher-made English teaching flashcards. Each card included one part of the sentence; for example in sentences like *Tom works very hard, I sometimes walk to work, or We had dinner at a restaurant last night*, subjects, verbs, and correct adverbs had been written in single cards. Then students learnt adverb placement by placing flashcards on the proper order on the board one by one. They also put flashcards next to each other on their chairs.

At the last 10 minutes of each session, the same cards were given to them so that their learning would be checked. The entire research project took 40 days and students learnt 40 units of the book. Each session, they were taught four units of the book. Totally, 120 sentences were taught to the learners by flashcards. Each session, they learnt 12 sentences. Students had an active role in the class and they showed interest to come to the board and put the cards next to each other. After treatment, the same test was given to learners as posttest but in a different order to avoid reminding the items. Participants answered the posttest in 30 minutes, too. Fifteen learners in control group received the same pretest and posttest as experimental group but they learnt adverbs in the traditional way. They learnt adverbs without using flashcards and just by writing the rule on the board and underlining each part of the sentence and giving one or two examples. Learners in this group did the exercises of grammar and pattern practice in the book *Essential Grammar in Use* by Murphy (2015). They did exercises of four units of the book each session in the class.

### **3.5. Data Analysis Procedure**

Independent and Paired Samples *t*-test were employed to see if there was significant difference between the control and experimental groups. The hypotheses were tested at a .05 level of significance. Moreover, KR-21 method was used to estimate the reliability of the pre and posttest. The independent variable in this study was learning sentence order and the dependent variable was the sentence order techniques of learning adverbs.

## **4. Results**

The data obtained from the pretest and the posttest of grammar were analyzed through descriptive and inferential statistics in both groups.

**4.1. Results of Normality of the Tests**

The results of Kolmogorov-Smirnov (K-S) test of the pre and posttests are shown in Table 1.

Table 1.

*One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test*

		Pretest control	Posttest control	Pretest experimental	Posttest experimental
N		15	15	15	15
Normal Parameters <sup>a,b</sup>	Mean	12.0667	14.2667	13.1333	19.1333
	Std. Deviation	2.89005	4.90578	4.96943	7.18994
Most Extreme Differences	Absolute	.189	.198	.124	.251
	Positive	.189	.131	.124	.251
	Negative	-.160	-.198	-.103	-.171
Kolmogorov-Smirnov Z		.732	.767	.478	.971
Asymp. Sig. (2-tailed)		.657	.598	.976	.303

a. Test distribution is Normal.

b. Calculated from data.

Table 1 depicts One-Sample Kolmogorov-Smirnov Test. Since the participants of this study were too small, the Normality test was calculated and the results showed the normality of the test. Thus the parametric statistics like independent and paired samples *t*-test could be used.

**4.2. Results of the Pre and Posttests**

The descriptive statistics of the pretest scores are presented regarding the mean scores, standard deviation in both the experimental and control groups' pretest. The results are shown in the below table:

Table 2.

*Descriptive Statistics (Pretest)*

Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pretest				
Control	15	12.0667	2.89005	.74621
Experimental	15	13.1333	4.96943	1.28310

Table 2 shows the mean of 13.13 and standard deviation of 4.96 in the experimental group and mean and standard deviation of 12.06 and .2.89 respectively in the control group. Mean and standard deviation showed that the participants of two groups performed closely in the pretest. However, the data was put into Independent-Samples *t*-test analysis to show any possible difference between the experimental and control groups on the pretest. Table 3 shows the results.

Table 3.

*Independent Samples t-test (Pretest)*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		<i>t</i> -test for Equality of Means 95% Confidence Interval of the Difference							
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2- tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	Lower	Upper	<i>d</i>
Equal variances assumed	3.845	.060	-.719	28	.478	-1.06	1.48	-4.10	1.97	.47
Equal variances not assumed			-.719	22.498	.480	-1.06	1.48	-4.14	2.00	

Table 3 shows the result of Independent-Samples *t*-test for the pretest of both groups. Since the significant level is .478 which is greater than .05 (.478>.05; p<.05), the difference between the two groups in the pretest is not significant. The effect size of Cohen's *d* is 0.47. The next step in analyzing the results of the study was calculating the scores of participants' performance after treatment period in the posttest. Like pretest, descriptive statistics were used for this purpose. The descriptive statistics of participants' scores in the posttest is given in Table 4.

Table 4.

*Descriptive Statistics (Posttest)*

	Groups	N	Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Posttest	Control	15	14.2667	4.90578	1.26667
	Experimental	15	19.1333	7.18994	1.85643

Table 4 shows that mean is 19.13 and standard deviation is 7.18 in the experimental group and in the control group mean and standard deviation are 14.26 and 4.90 respectively. The mean and standard deviation of the two groups are not similar in the posttest. Thus Independent Samples *t*-test shows the significant difference between the groups in the posttest. The results are shown in Table 5.

Table 5.

*Independent Samples t-test (Posttest)*

	Levene's Test for Equality of Variances		t-test for Equality of Means							
	F	Sig.	<i>t</i>	df	Sig. (2-tailed)	Mean Difference	Std. Error Difference	95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		
								Lower	Upper	<i>d</i>
Equal variances assumed	7.881	.009	-2.165	28	.039	-4.86	2.24	-9.47	-.26	.79
Equal variances not assumed			-2.165	24.713	.040	-4.86	2.24	-9.49	-.234	

Table 5 shows that the observed sig level (.039) is less than the ( $p < 0.05$ ), therefore the difference between two groups in the posttest is significant with  $df = 28$  and the experimental group outperformed the control group. The effect size of Cohen's *d* is 0.79 which is greater than the pretest effect size.

Table 6.

*Descriptive Statistics (Pre and posttests in both groups)*

		Mean	N	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean
Pair 1	Pre vs. posttest control	12.06	15	2.89005	.74621
		14.26	15	4.90578	1.26667
Pair 2	Pre vs. posttest experimental	13.13	15	4.96943	1.28310
		19.13	15	7.18994	1.85643

Table 6 shows that in the experimental group mean of pretest and posttest are 13.13 and 19.13 respectively which both are higher than mean of pre and posttest in the control group (12.06 and 14.26 respectively).

Table 7.

*Paired Samples t-test Statistics (pretest and posttests in both groups)*

		Paired Differences			95% Confidence Interval of the Difference		<i>t</i>	<i>df</i>	<i>Sig.</i> (2-tailed)	<i>d</i>
		Mean	Std. Deviation	Std. Error Mean	Lower	Upper				
Pair 1	Pretest vs. posttest cont.	-2.20	4.87	1.25	-4.89	.498	-1.749	14	.102	.54
Pair 2	Pretest vs. posttest exp.	-6.00	8.42	2.17	-10.66	-1.33	-2.758	14	.015	.97

Table 7 shows that since the observed significant level (.015) is less than ( $p < 0.05$ ), the difference between the pre and post- test of the experimental group is significant. But in the control group the observed significant level (.102) is greater than ( $p > .05$ ), so the difference between the pre and post- test of the control group is not significant. Moreover, the effect size of Cohen's *d* in the experimental group (0.97) is greater than the control group (0.54).

## 5. Discussion

This section deals with the discussion of the results to give the possible reasons for the obtained findings of the study. Moreover, it answers the research questions.

RQ1. Does using sentence order techniques have any significant effect on the learning of the adverbs among Iranian pre-intermediate students?



One of the main aims of this study was to find out the effectiveness of using sentence order techniques that the teachers can use to explain phrase and sentence structure rules like the relationships between form and functions of the parts of speech, (i.e., adverbs, adjectives, nouns, verbs, etc. These techniques also help EFL teachers in teaching sentence construction in spoken discourse like conversations or in written discourses like letter writings, compositions, and expository writings. These results are in line with Richards and Schmidt (2010) who believe in using sentence order techniques in teaching grammatical points and parts of speech cues. The outcomes of this study also could be useful in teaching adverbs among Iranian pre-intermediate students. To answer the above research question, the results obtained from the experimental and the control groups in posttest were compared. The results showed that the means and standard deviations of the experimental group and control group were not similar in posttests to assess the effect of using sentence order techniques on learning of the adverbs among pre-intermediate students.

The results of this study are supported by Ramsay, Ahmed and Mirzaiean (2005) who stated the problem for English learner is various positions of some adverbs in the sentence and fixed placement of the other. They concluded that English learners should consult a native speaker, refer to a good usage guide, or search the sentences in a web for the correct form of the word order. Zi-hong (2010) supports the research findings of the present study since he discusses the acquisition of syntactic positions of adverbs in English. According to the collected data, he concluded that what adult learners acquire about adverbs is the distinction of different adverbs and the different scopes they take. Ur (1999) agrees with the results of this study and point out that the teaching of grammar should also finally focus on the way grammatical items or sentence patterns are correctly applied. The findings of current study are in line with McCamely and Millan (2005) who taught grammar structures by giving their students a scrambled word exercise and asking them to unscramble each sentence so the result was a grammatically correct sentence.

RQ2. Is there any significant difference between the students who learned adverbs by sentence order techniques and those who received traditional method?

The results of the study showed that the difference between the experimental group's pretest and posttest is significant, yet the observed difference in the control group's pretest and posttest is not significant. These findings gave the researcher enough support to reject the second null hypothesis because there is a significant difference between the students who

learned adverbs by sentence order techniques and those who received traditional method like teaching grammar deductively which follows the pattern practice and mechanical drills. Inductive teaching like teaching sentence order techniques could be helpful since the learners learn how to match form and function relations and construct grammatical and meaningful sentences through using word classes and the agreement among sentence constituents. Farahani and Sarkhosh (2012) support the results of the presents study since they believe that underlining had an impact on retention of connectors as target forms over time. Likewise the researchers (e. g., Gholami Pasand & Tahriri, 2017) found that underlining as input enhancement had an impact on the intake of the target point. However, the result of the present study showed that choice as an input enhancement did not turn out to be effective in retention of target structure.

The findings of the present study are in contrast with Baleghizadeh and Oladrostam (2011) who compared the effectiveness of three instructional methods: games, dialogues practiced through role-play, and unfocused tasks for teaching grammar. The results of this study are compatible with Hernandez (2006) who concluded that teachers should teach adverbs by categorizing them in different groups and teach each group at a time providing sufficient oral and written exercises. Moreover, Izadi, and Rahimi (2015) supported the results of this study that English is an SVO language which has a strict sentence order in which the words in a sentence can be presented in a regular and determined manner. Macedonia (2005) confirms the findings of this study by utilizing some games to analyze accuracy and fluency to a level that empower the learners' parts of speech in the sentences.

## **6. Conclusion**

As the findings indicated, experimental group who was taught through teacher-made English teaching flashcards outperformed the control group. Using flashcards was like a puzzle game was welcomed by the experimental group. It can be concluded that using flashcards is a facilitator for improving learners' knowledge of adverbs. The findings of this study also are in line with Marani and Heidari Tabrizi (2017) who notes that using the choice of forms is a significant help in learning the usage of grammatical structures. It means that using sentence order techniques was beneficial for the experimental group. In the control group, using traditional methods could not affect learners' learning of sentence order significantly. Before using the techniques for learning adverbs, both groups had

approximately the similar results in the pretest. The posttest revealed that using sentence order techniques for learning adverbs was the main reason for these different results in the posttest. So the experimental group performed better than the control group.

This study is beneficial for teachers in a way that they can improve the quality of education without much burden and put a share of instruction's responsibility on the learners' shoulders through using the sentence order techniques and involving learners in the learning process. Through findings of the present study, teachers can engage the learners in the process of learning and bring up independent and autonomous language learners. In this study, focus of learning was on four types of adverbs including frequency, manner, time, and place. The other types of adverbs and also other parts of sentence like verbs, adjectives, nouns can be taught through sentence order techniques.

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