

Assessing the Performance of Iraqi EFL - University Students in Using Prepositional Adverbs

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تقويم انجاز طلبة الجامعة في استخدام اللغة الانكليزية كلغة أجنبية عند توظيفهم الظروف النحوية

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الملخص

تختلف الظروف على شكل حروف الجر عن حروف الجر بأنها لا تتبع باسم مجرور. تكون هذه الظروف على ثلاثة أنواع: الظروف التي على شكل حرف جر بسيط. الظروف التي على شكل حرف جر مركب (من كلمتين). الظروف التي على شكل حرف جر مركب (من ثلاث كلمات). تلحق اغلب هذه الظروف ببعض الأفعال التي تسمى بالأفعال على شكل العبارة. مشكلة البحث هي أن طلبة الجامعة الدارسين اللغة الانكليزية لغة أجنبية يواجهون صعوبة في التمييز بين الظروف التي على شكل حرف جر وحروف الجر وأيضا يفشلون في تمييز واستخدام الظروف المناسب للفعل على شكل العبارة عندما يأتي في سياق معين.

Abstract

Prepositional adverbs are particles that have the same form of prepositions but they do not take a complement. They are of three types: **prepositional adverbs related to simple prepositions**, **prepositional adverbs related to complex prepositions** (two word prepositions), and **prepositional adverbs related to complex prepositions** (three word prepositions). Also, **prepositional adverbs** attached to some verbs to form phrasal verbs which could be either transitive or intransitive.

key words: prepositional adverbs, performance, recognition level, production level.

The problem of the present study rises when EFL university students fail to distinguish between prepositional adverbs and prepositions, at the same time the same learners fail to recognize and use which prepositional adverbs that should be used with certain phrasal verbs in certain contexts. Adding to that, these learners fail to use the prepositional adverbs in correct sentences and they tend to use the related prepositions.

Accordingly, it is hypothesized that:

- 1- EFL university students are expected to face difficulty in distinguishing between prepositional adverbs and prepositions.
- 2- The same learners are expected to face more difficulty in recognizing which prepositional adverb should be used with certain phrasal verb in certain context.
- 3- These learners are expected to face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs in correct sentences and they tend to use the related prepositions instead.
- 4- Such learners are expected to face difficulty in using certain prepositional adverbs with certain phrasal verbs in certain context.

A diagnostic test has been designed and applied to a sample of one hundred Iraqi EFL university students at the third year Department of English, College of Education for Human sciences, University of Babylon, during the academic year (2014-2015). Data analysis has revealed that:

- 1- EFL University students have failed in distinguishing between prepositional adverbs and prepositions as the total number and rate of the incorrect responses of Question (1) recognition level are (638, 63.8%) while those of the correct ones are (362, 36.2%).
- 2- The same learners have failed to recognize which prepositional adverb should be used with certain phrasal verb in certain context since the total number and the rate of the incorrect responses of Question (2) at the recognition level are (680,68%), whereas those of the correct ones are (320, 32%).
- 3- Such learners have failed to use prepositional adverbs in correct sentences as the total number of the incorrect responses of Question three at the production level are (819, 81.9%) while those of the correct ones are (181, 18.1%).

These learners have failed to use the correct prepositional adverb with certain phrasal verbs in certain contexts as the total number and the rate of the incorrect responses of Question (4) at the production level are (770, 77%), while those of the correct ones are (230, 23%) .

1. Prepositional Adverbs

Prepositional adverbs are defined by Quirk et al. (1985:713) as "a particle which is formally identical to or related to preposition, and which often behaves like a preposition with ellipped complement". **Prepositional adverbs** are also called **adverbial particles** and they are used to form phrasal verbs (www.grammar.about.com).

(1) A car drove **past**. (ibid)

Accordingly, the prepositional adverb has the same form of the preposition but it does not take a complement, i.e. it does not have the "syntactic status" of the preposition. It can stand alone as an adjunct, conjunct, postmodifier ... etc. without having a complement (Quirk et al.,1985:713).

(2) **Besides**, I don't feel like a walk just now. (ibid.)

Another difference between the prepositions and prepositional adverbs is that adverbs are stressed while prepositions are not (Leech, 1989: 376).

(3) a. She stayed **IN**. (prepositional adverb) (stressed) (Quirk et al., 1985:714)

b. She stayed in the house. (preposition) (unstressed) (ibid)

Leech (1989: 376) denotes that most of the **prepositional adverbs** are adverbs of place. Quirk et al. (1985: 692), on the other hand, indicate that **prepositional adverbs** are adjuncts of time and space except for **without** and the conjunct **besides**. Also some of **prepositional adverbs** of time are used metaphorically to view "life as a journey".

(4) She walked **across**. (ibid: 662)

(5) Reaching age of 16 he left school days **behind** and adulthood was in front of him. (ibid: 692)

Prepositional adverbs, According to Fuster and Sanchez, (2008:149) may be modified by intensifying adverbs like **right**, and **well**:

(6) They left her **well behind**. (ibid)

There are some idioms that consist of (verb+ **prepositional adverb**) like tune **in**, turn **on**, and through **up** (Quirk et al.,1985:713).

2. Types of Prepositional Adverbs

Prepositional adverbs are divided, according to Quirk et al. (1985: 715), into three types: (the three types are going to be discussed thoroughly in the next section)

- a) **Prepositional adverbs related to simple prepositions: abroad, about, above, across, after, along, alongside, around, before, behind, below, beneath, besides, between, beyond, by, down, in, inside, near (nearer, nearest), off, on, opposite, outside, over, past, round, since, through, throughout, under, underneath, up, within, without.**
- b) **Prepositional adverbs related to complex prepositions (two word prepositions): ahead, away, back, close, east, ...etc., eastway(s),...,etc., instead, out, overhead, together.**

- c) **Prepositional adverbs related to complex prepositions** (three word prepositions): **at variance, in addition, in aid, in case, in charge, in favour, in front, in lieu, in line, in need, in relation, in return, on top.**

Quirk et al. (ibid) say that the prepositions **for** and **against** are used as **prepositional adverbs** in phrases **votes for** or **votes against**:

(7) He **votes for** the Democrats. (ibid)

(8) He **votes against** the Republicans. (ibid)

The preposition **to** can be used as a **prepositional adverb** in **set to** (finish), **turn to** (help), and in idioms like "walk **to** and fro"

Quirk et al. (ibid) mention that some **prepositional adverbs** have "positional mobility":

(9) a. She is **about** forty. (ibid)

b. She is forty **about**. (informal) (ibid)

c. She is forty. (ibid)

d. She is approximately forty. (ibid)

Quirk et al. (1985: 662) indicate that **about** is a an adverb because there is possibility to change with another adverb as in (9) d. (approximately) or it can be omitted as in (9) c.

According to Quirk et al. (1985:444), **prepositional adverbs** usually come with intransitive verbs :

(10) The men looked **on**. (ibid)

(11) The airliner has taken **off**. (ibid)

3. Prepositional Adverbs and Phrasal Verbs

Swan (2005: 315) denotes that in modern English, **prepositional adverbs** are attached to certain verbs to give variety of meanings. Such verbs are called phrasal verbs. Such verbs could be transitive or intransitive. Murphy (2002:272) says that the **prepositional adverb** gives a special meaning to the verb e.g.: break **down**= the engine stopped working

Look **out** = be careful

Quirk et al. (1985: 1152) state that the meaning of the phrasal verbs is different from the meaning of the verb and particle in isolation.

(12) Look **out**. (intransitive) (Swan, 2005: 315).

(13) He took **off** his coat. (transitive) (ibid).

Murphy (2002: 272) indicates that the **prepositional adverbs** (**off, out, up...etc**) are used with verbs of movement. The prepositional adverb attached to the phrasal verb cannot be modified by **right**. (Quirk et al. 1985: 1152)

(14) The bus was full. We couldn't get **on**. (Murphy, 2002: 272)

3.1 Intransitive Phrasal Verb

Quirk et al. (1985:1152) state that the intransitive phrasal verb consists of a verb and a **prepositional adverb**. The following **prepositional adverbs** are attached to some verbs to combine phrasal verbs:

About, above, across, after, along, around, by, down, in, off, on, out, over, past, round, through, under, up, aback, a head, apart, aside, astray, away, back, forward(s), in form, on top, out, together.

Quirk et al. (ibid) remark that in metaphors, the inversion of verb- prepositional adverb may occur and this case is unacceptable in other contexts:

(15) **Down** came the prices, and **up** went the sales. (ibid:1153)

3.2 Transitive Phrasal Verbs

Many phrasal verbs are transitive, i.e. they take a direct object which can be placed either after the **prepositional adverb** or immediately after the verb preceding the **prepositional adverb**

(James, 2010:153). But it is preferable to put the direct object after the **prepositional adverb** when the object is long or there is a purpose that the object should be given "end-focus" . Since the phrasal verb is transitive, it can be turned into passive (Quirk et al., 1985: 1153-1154).

(16) a. We will set **up** a new unit. (ibid)

b. We will set a new unit **up**. (ibid)

(17) She took **in her parents**. (the object "her parents" receives the "end-focus") (ibid)

(18) a. Aunt Ada brought **up** Roy. (ibid)

b. Roy was brought **up** by Aunt Ada. (passive) (ibid)

4. The Test

4.1 Test Design

The test consists of four questions. Questions 1 and 2 assess the subject's responses at the recognition level. Each question includes ten items. The subjects are asked in Question 1 to decide whether the underlined word is a prepositional adverb or a preposition. In Question 2, the subjects are asked to choose the correct prepositional adverb which completes the meaning of the phrasal verb in a way that fits the meaning of the sentence. Questions 3 and 4 measure the subject's responses at the production level. They include ten items each. In Questions 3, the subjects are requested to use the given prepositional adverbs in meaningful sentences. In Question 4, the subjects are required to provide the correct prepositional adverb that completes the meaning of the phrasal verbs in a way that fits the meaning of the sentence (see Appendix I).

4.2 The Subjects

The sample of the test consists of one hundred subjects of the third during the academic year (2014-2015) in the Dept. of English, at the College of Education for Human Sciences, University of Babylon.

4.3 The Results of the Test

4.3.1 Subjects' Performance at the Recognition Level

4.3.1.1 The Results of Question 1

The results obtained in each item are presented in Table (1)

Table (1)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance in
Question 1: The Recognition Level

Item	No.of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
1	35	35	65	65
2	55	55	45	45
3	17	17	83	83
4	98	98	2	2
5	15	15	85	85
6	5	5	95	95
7	95	95	5	5
8	6	6	94	94
9	8	8	92	92
10	48	48	52	52
Total	382	38.2	618	61.8

Table (1) demonstrates that the total number and percentage of the correct responses of Question at the recognition level are (382, 38.2%) while those of the incorrect ones are (618, 61.8%).

The results of Question 1 show that the subjects are confused in the distinction between the prepositional adverbs and the prepositions and they face difficulty in distinguishing between them as in items (1, 3,5, 6, 8, and 9) where the percentage of the incorrect responses are (65%,

83%, 85%, 95%, 94%, and 92%) respectively. These percentages illustrate that most of the subjects incorrectly consider the words (**up**, **across**, **down**, **about**, **in**, and **by**) in the previously mentioned items are prepositions while they are prepositional adverbs. The prepositional adverbs in items (6, 8, and 9) are (**about**, **in**, and **by**) which are incorrectly considered prepositions by the majority of the subjects. The percentages of the incorrect responses of these items are (95%, 94%, and 92%), respectively. This may be attributed to the overgeneralization technique used by the subjects as they consider words like (**about**, **in**, and **by**) prepositions without paying attention to the function of the word in the sentence. At the same time, the highest number of the correct responses are those of items (4 and 7) as the percentages of the correct responses are (98% and 95%). The underlined words in these items are (**in** and **on**), respectively and they function as prepositions in these items

The results of Question (1) at the recognition level validate the first hypothesis which reads:

EFL university students are expected to face difficulty in distinguishing between prepositional adverbs and prepositions.

4.3.1.2 The Results of Question 2

The results of each item are presented in Table (2)

Table (2)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance in
Question 2: The Recognition Level

Item	No. of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
1	35	35	65	65
2	27	27	73	73
3	37	37	63	63
4	25	25	75	75
5	67	67	33	33
6	37	37	63	63
7	38	38	62	62
8	22	22	78	78
9	17	17	83	83
10	15	15	85	85
Total	320	32	680	68

Table (2) shows that the total number and percentage of the correct responses of Question 2 at the recognition level are (320, 32%) while those of the incorrect ones are (680, 68%).

The highest number of the correct responses is that of item (5) as the percentage of the correct responses is (67%). This may be attributed to the phrasal verb **bring up** is familiar to the subjects. The results of Question 2 proved that the subjects face difficulty in choosing the correct prepositional adverb that completes the meaning of the phrasal verb. Items (8,9,and10) have highest percentages of the incorrect responses (78%, 83%, and 85%) respectively. Considering item (8), most of the subjects have chosen choice (d. away) while the correct response is (c. back). The phrasal verb **draw back** means **retire**. The correct answer of item (9) is (d. behind). The verb **fall behind** means **have no ability to keep up with others**. Most of the subjects have chosen choice (b. in). concerning item (10), the correct choice is (a. through) the verb means **to finish something successfully**. The answers of the subjects have chosen (b. in) and (d. up).

The results of Question (2) at the recognition level validate the second hypothesis which reads:

EFL university students are expected to face difficulty in recognizing which prepositional adverb should be used with certain phrasal verb in certain context.

The total results of the recognition level are given in Table (3)

Table (3)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance at
The Recognition Level

Question	No. of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
Q1	382	38.2	618	61.8
Q2	320	32	680	68
Total	702	35.1	1298	64.9

Table (3) illustrates that the total number and percentage of the correct responses at the recognition level are (702, 35.1%) while those of the incorrect ones are (1298, 64.9%) . The results of the recognition level reflect that the subjects face difficulty at this level.

4.3.2 The Subjects' Performance at the Production Level

Both Questions 3 and 4 measure the subjects' performance at the production level:

4.3.2.1 The Results of Question 3

The results obtained in Question 3 are presented in Table (4)

Table (4)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance in
Question 3: The production Level

Item	No. of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
1	23	23	77	77
2	12	12	88	88
3	22	22	78	78
4	11	11	89	89
5	16	16	84	84
6	14	14	86	86
7	44	44	56	56
8	10	10	90	90
9	11	11	89	89
10	18	18	82	82
Total	181	18.1	819	81.9

Table (4) demonstrates that the total number and percentage of the correct responses of Question 3 at the production level are (181, 18.1%) while those of the incorrect ones are (819, 81.9%).

The subjects are asked to exemplify for the given prepositional adverbs. The reason behind the high percentage of the incorrect responses in Question (3) is that most of the given words have been used by the subjects as prepositions rather than prepositional adverbs which reflects that the subjects face difficulty in using the given words as prepositional adverbs and they tend to use the related prepositions instead. The results of Question (3) validate the third hypothesis which states:

EFL university students are expected to face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs in correct sentences and they tend to use the related prepositions instead.

4.3.2.2 The Results of Question 4

The results obtained in Question 4 are presented in Table (5)

Table (5)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance in
Question 4: The Production Level

Item	No.of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
1	57	57	43	43
2	23	23	77	77
3	54	54	46	46
4	12	12	88	88
5	18	18	82	82
6	19	19	81	81
7	17	17	83	83
8	17	17	83	83
9	13	13	87	87
10	0	0	100	100
Total	230	23	770	77

Table (5) shows that the total number and percentage of the correct responses of Question 4 at the production level are (230, 23%) while those of the incorrect ones are (770, 77%).

The subjects are asked to supply the missing prepositional adverbs to complete the meaning of the given phrasal verbs. The highest percentages of the correct responses are those of items 1 and 3 (57% and 54%), respectively. This may be attributed to the phrasal verbs (**find out** and **get away**) which are familiar to the subjects unlike the rest of the phrasal verbs in the other items which have low percentage of correct responses, for example, in item (4), most of the incorrect responses have been used the prepositional adverb **up** while the correct answer is **back** and the phrasal verb is **give back**. Similarly, most of the incorrect responses of item (5) have been the preposition **away** whereas the correct answer is **ahead**, the phrasal verb is **go ahead**. Item (10) has (0) correct responses, the correct answer is **aside**, accordingly, the phrasal verb is **put aside**. The responses of question (4) reflect that the subjects face difficulty in using the correct prepositional adverb that completes the phrasal verb in certain sentence. The results of the fourth question validate the fourth hypothesis which states:

EFL university students are expected to face difficulty in using certain prepositional adverbs with certain phrasal verbs in certain context.

The total results of the production level are given in Table (6)

Table (6)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance at
The Production Level

Question	No.of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
Q3	181	18.1	819	81.9
Q4	230	23	770	77
Total	411	20.55	1589	79.45

Table (6) presents that the total number and rate of the correct responses at the production level are (411, 20.55%) and those of the incorrect responses are (1589, 79.45%).

The results of the whole test are presented in Table (7):

Table (7)
The Number and Rate of Subjects' Performance in the Test

level	No. of correct answers	% of correct answers	No. of incorrect answers	% of incorrect answers
Recognition	702	35.1	1298	64.9
Production	411	20.55	1589	79.45
Total	1113	27.825	2887	72.175

Table (7) shows that the number and percentage of the correct responses are (1113, 27.825%) while those of the incorrect responses are (2887, 72.175%) which reflect that the subjects face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs.

5. Conclusion

1- Questions (1) and (2) measure the recognition level: the number and the rate of the correct responses of question (1) are (382, 38.2%) whereas those of the incorrect ones are (618, 61.8%) which reflects that the subjects face difficulty in recognizing prepositional adverbs as they fail to recognize prepositions from prepositional adverbs. The similarity in form between the prepositional adverbs and prepositions is the main source of error at question (1).

The number and rate of the correct responses of question (2) are (320, 32%) whereas those of the incorrect ones are (680, 68%) which reflects that the subjects face difficulty in recognizing prepositional adverbs that are used with phrasal verbs in certain context. Question (2) has low percentages of correct responses which reveals that the subjects face difficulty in recognizing the prepositional adverb that should be used with a certain phrasal verb in a certain context.

2- Questions (3) and (4) measure the production level: question (3) requires the subjects to use given prepositional adverbs in correct sentences. The number and rate of the correct responses of question (3) are (181, 18.1%) whereas those of the incorrect ones are (819, 81.9%) which reveal that the subjects face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs correctly in sentences. Most of the erroneous responses are attributed to the use of the given words as prepositions rather than prepositional adverbs. Unlike the preposition, the prepositional adverb is not followed by an object but in most of the responses, the given words have been used as prepositions i.e. followed by an object. The responses of question (3) reveal that the subjects are face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs in certain context.

Question (4) requires the subjects to complete the phrasal verbs in the given sentences by using the correct prepositional adverb. The number and the frequency of the correct responses of question (4) are (230, 23%) whereas those of the incorrect responses are (770, 77%) which reflect that the subjects face difficulty in using the correct prepositional adverbs that complete the phrasal verb used in certain sentence. The results of question (4), [see Table (5)], show that items (1) and (3) have the highest numbers of correct responses: (57, 57%) and (54, 54%) respectively. In item (1), the correct answer is **out** and the phrasal verb is **find out**. In item (3), the correct answer is **away** and the phrasal verb is **get away**. These two verbs are relatively familiar to the subjects unlike the rest of the verbs used in the other items of this question. In other items, the subjects tend to use some prepositions or prepositional adverbs to complete the meaning of the verb without paying attention to the meaning of the sentence .

3- The results of the whole test as they are presented in Table (7) show that the number and the rate of the correct responses are (1113, 27.825%) whereas those of the incorrect responses

are (2887, 72.175%). The results of the test reflect that the subjects face difficulty in using prepositional adverbs.

4- It is recommended that more attention should be paid to teaching prepositional adverbs concentrating on the difference between them and preposition.

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Appendix I

The Test

Q1 Decide whether the underlined word is a **prepositional adverb** or **preposition**

- 1- I rang up the theatre to book seats for tonight. -----
- 2- Besides, I don't feel like a walk just now. -----
- 3- She walked across. -----
- 4- They arrived in Spain. -----
- 5- They Turned down the suggestion. -----
- 6- He was moving about. -----
- 7- We get on a public vehicle. -----
- 8- He took in the dog. -----
- 9- He walked by. -----
- 10- He put a rug over him. -----

Q2 Choose the correct prepositional adverb for the following:

- 1- When he took a gun out everyone baked ----- nervously.
a- away, b- out, c- over, d- up
- 2- The report bears ----- my theory.
a- up, b- away, c- out, d- over.
- 3- They blow ----- the bridges so that the enemy couldn't follow them.
a- besides, d- up, c-away, d- out
- 4- The firemen had to break -----the door to get in.
a- off, b- away, c- down, d- out.
- 5- She brought ----- her children to be truthful.
a- round, b- on, c- off, d- up.
- 6- It was too late to call ----- an electrician.
a- in, b- on, c- off, d- back.
- 7- The company has cut ----- our electricity supply.
a- in, b- off, c- down, d- away.
- 8- It is too late to draw ----- now.
a- up, b- in, c- back, d- away.

9- Those who were less fit had fallen -----

a- across, b- in, c- behind, d- off.

10-I am trying to call London but I can't get -----

a- through, b- in, c- off, d- up.

Q3 Put the following prepositional adverbs in sentences:

1- across, 2- after, 3-along, 4-ahead, 5-close, 6-overhead, 7-instead, 8-in charge,

9-in relation, 10- in turn.

Q4 Complete the following sentences by using the correct prepositional adverb to give the correct meaning to the phrasal verb in following sentences:

1- The dog found -----a way to open the door.

2- The club has already fixed ----- several matches for the next season.

3- I had a lot to do in the office and didn't get ----- till night.

4- I must call the library to give ----- this book.

5- You go -----, and I'll follow.

6- I handed ----- my resignation.

7- The rain fortunately held ----- till after the school sports day.

8- I am trying to keep ----- expenses.

9- Her own will-power pulled her -----.

10-He puts ----- 50\$ a month to pay for his summer holiday.