
Overcoming Barriers: Enhancing English Adverbial Mastery among EFL Learners

Tuyet Thi Tran*

Maharakham University, Thailand

Hanoi University of Business and Technology, Vietnam

Apisak Sukying

Maharakham University, Thailand

Received: 29 Mar, 2024

Revised: 27 May, 2024

Accepted: 14 Aug, 2024

Abstract

Mastering adverbials is essential for English language proficiency, particularly for English as a Foreign Language (EFL) learners facing unique linguistic and cultural challenges. This study, employing a mixed-methods approach, involved a survey of 200 participants and 20 semi-structured interviews to explore these challenges. Findings indicate significant difficulties with adverbial placement, interpretation, and usage, contributing to errors in English communication. The research suggests enhancing adverbial instruction in the English curriculum through integrated technology, authentic materials, and extensive practice. These strategies aim to improve the understanding and application of adverbials, emphasizing the need for culturally responsive teaching methods tailored to EFL learners' specific contexts, thereby enhancing overall English education effectiveness.

Keywords: Adverbial Mastery; EFL Learners; Teaching Methodologies; Technology Integration; Mixed-Methods Research Approach

Introduction

Mastering adverbials in English, a skill crucial for nuanced communication, poses a significant challenge in English language education, particularly for EFL learners, including Vietnamese students. This study delves into this complex facet of language learning, focusing on the specific difficulties encountered by Vietnamese learners, as highlighted by scholars such as Le (2018), Le and Barnard (2019), Pham (2023), and To (2014). The pronounced linguistic and cultural disparities between Vietnamese and English exacerbate these challenges. In English, adverbial clauses frequently provide additional detail and context to actions (Lewis, 2020). In Vietnamese, such clauses are less prevalent, and context is often implied rather than explicitly stated (To, 2014). Le (2018) also points out that Vietnamese learners usually need help with this explicit detailing in English, resulting in incomplete or awkward sentences in their speech and writing. This challenge requires understanding and support. Moreover, English and Vietnamese differ significantly in adverbs' placement within sentences. In English, adverbs of frequency typically precede the main verb, whereas the equivalent adverbial expression in Vietnamese follows the verb (To,

2014). This syntactic difference can cause confusion and errors for Vietnamese learners when structuring sentences in English. Le and Barnard (2019) highlight that this misplacement is a common issue observed in Vietnamese students' writing and speaking tasks.

Cultural factors also influence how adverbs are used in communication. Pham (2023) discusses how Vietnamese learners may underutilize adverbials, conveying subtle nuances for a preference for more straightforward expressions influenced by Vietnamese cultural norms. This cultural context can result in Vietnamese learners avoiding certain adverbs or misusing them in English, affecting their communication's naturalness. These examples illustrate the linguistic and cultural disparities that challenge Vietnamese learners to master English adverbials. By understanding these differences, educators can develop more targeted teaching strategies to help learners overcome these obstacles and improve their proficiency in using English adverbials effectively.

Adverbials are inherently complex and critical for articulating detailed information about actions or states, as emphasized by Huddleston and Pullum (2002). Their meanings present significant challenges for Vietnamese learners, whose native language structure differs markedly from English. Previous research by Nguyen et al. (2023), To (2014), and Tran et al. (2024) has explored the cross-linguistic challenges faced by Vietnamese learners. However, this study differs by employing a mixed-methods approach to understand adverbial instruction among EFL learners, evaluate its effectiveness, and pinpoint improvement areas. This methodology allows for a more detailed analysis and practical recommendations tailored to EFL contexts such as Vietnam. The study also examines the cultural and linguistic backgrounds influencing adverbial acquisition, drawing on research concerning cross-linguistic influence and the challenges brought by cultural differences in language learning, as observed in the works of Nguyen et al. (2023), To (2014), and Tran et al. (2024). Furthermore, it assesses the current educational materials' adequacy and teacher training programs in Vietnam, scrutinizing their effectiveness in addressing adverbial comprehension nuances. The exploration of incorporating technology and authentic materials into teaching strategies, as suggested by Celce-Murcia et al. (2014) and Nation (2009), is also included.

Central to this study are two research questions (RQs):

RQ1. What are the primary linguistic and cultural challenges Vietnamese learners face in understanding and using English adverbials, and how effective are current teaching methodologies in addressing these challenges?

RQ2. Considering the identified challenges, what innovative pedagogical strategies and materials can enhance Vietnamese learners' mastery of English adverbials?

The study aims to contribute to English language education among EFL learners by addressing these questions. It seeks to enhance the teaching and learning of adverbials, thereby improving Vietnamese learners' overall English proficiency. The research offers insights to help educators develop effective teaching strategies and materials. Ultimately, this could elevate the standard of English language education,

equipping learners with necessary and practical communication skills in an increasingly interconnected global community.

Literature Review

This section explores how the differences between Vietnamese and English language systems, particularly in adverbials, affect Vietnamese learners' spoken and written English communication.

Linguistic Differences and Communication Challenges

Vietnamese and English differ significantly in their use of adverbials, leading to substantial challenges for Vietnamese learners in mastering English. In Vietnamese, adverbial clauses are less prevalent, and context is often implied rather than explicitly stated. This contrasts sharply with English, where adverbial clauses frequently provide additional detail and context to actions. For example, in English, the sentence "She sings beautifully when she performs" uses the adverbial clause "when she performs" to offer supplementary information about the action (Lewis, 2020). In Vietnamese, such explicit detailing is uncommon, often resulting in incomplete or awkward sentences when Vietnamese learners try to construct similar sentences in English (Le, 2018).

Furthermore, the syntactic placement of adverbs within sentences differs markedly between the two languages. In English, adverbs of frequency typically precede the main verb (e.g., "She often goes to the market"). In contrast, in Vietnamese, the equivalent adverbial expression usually follows the verb (e.g., "Cô ấy đi chợ thường xuyên") (To, 2014). This syntactic difference can cause confusion and errors for Vietnamese learners when structuring sentences in English, as they may incorrectly transfer Vietnamese word order to English. Le and Barnard (2019) highlight that such misplacement is common in Vietnamese students' writing and speaking tasks.

Additionally, Vietnamese learners often need help using adverbs in different contexts, particularly distinguishing between similar adverbial forms and functions in English. For example, Nguyen et al. (2023) note that Vietnamese students frequently confuse adverbs of manner with adverbs of degree, leading to sentences like "He runs fastly" instead of "He runs fast." This confusion arises because Vietnamese need a comparable distinction, further complicating learners' acquisition of accurate English adverbial usage. Cultural influences also play a significant role in how adverbs are used in communication. Pham (2023) discusses how Vietnamese learners underutilize adverbials, conveying subtle nuances for a cultural preference more straightforwardly and directly. For instance, using adverbs such as "frankly" or "honestly" to preface opinions might be less common in Vietnamese, where directness can be perceived differently (To, 2014). This cultural context can result in Vietnamese learners avoiding certain adverbs or misusing them in English, affecting their communication's naturalness and effectiveness.

These linguistic and cultural disparities necessitate targeted teaching strategies addressing the learners' needs. Educators must develop materials explicitly teaching adverbials in various contexts, incorporating comparative linguistic analysis to highlight differences and similarities between English and Vietnamese adverbial usage. By doing so, teachers can help learners build a more robust understanding of English adverbials, improving their overall proficiency and communicative competence.

Cultural Influences and Adverbial Usage

Cultural factors also play a crucial role in how adverbs are used in communication. In Vietnamese culture, communication tends to be more context-dependent, relying heavily on shared cultural understandings and less on explicit verbal expressions (Tran et al., 2024). This implicit communication style contrasts starkly with the more explicit and detailed style often required in English, where adverbials clarify and specify meaning (Ernst, 2020). Consequently, Vietnamese learners may need help adapting to the necessity of using adverbials to achieve the same clarity and detail level expected in English communication. Moreover, the hierarchical nature of Vietnamese society influences the use of adverbials. In Vietnamese, the word and expression choice, including adverbials, often depends on the interlocutor's social status and the conversation's context (Tran et al., 2024). This nuanced social structure can make it difficult for Vietnamese learners to correctly apply English adverbials, where hierarchical considerations are less pronounced and adverbials are more standardized (Pham, 2023). For example, Vietnamese learners might avoid using adverbs that imply judgment or evaluation, such as "frankly" or "honestly," in their English communication because such expressions might be considered impolite or overly direct in Vietnamese culture (To, 2014). This avoidance can lead to communication lacking the nuance and precision found in native English speakers' usage, making their speech seem less natural or effective.

These cultural influences necessitate a pedagogical approach that teaches the grammatical rules of adverbial usage and addresses the cultural contexts in which these adverbials are used. Educators should incorporate cultural competence into their teaching strategies, helping learners understand when and how to use adverbials appropriately in different social and communicative contexts. By doing so, teachers can enhance learners' ability to use adverbials effectively, improving their English communicative competence.

Implications for Teaching Strategies and Materials

Understanding these linguistic and cultural disparities is essential for developing effective teaching strategies and materials. Traditional grammar-based methods may not adequately address Vietnamese learners' specific needs. Instead, a shift towards dynamic communicative and task-oriented approaches, as advocated by Harmer (2015) and Manda (2023), is necessary. These methods focus on real-life

applications and contextual usage, fostering a more profound understanding and accurate use of adverbials.

Incorporating technology into language instruction can also be transformative. As highlighted by Hung et al. (2022), Tran and Chau (2024), and Tran (2023), interactive platforms and language applications can make the learning process more engaging and accessible. These tools provide opportunities for learners to practice adverbial usage in varied contexts, which is crucial for overcoming the challenges posed by linguistic and cultural differences. For instance, language learning apps can simulate real-life scenarios where learners must use adverbials appropriately, helping them internalize their correct usage through repeated practice and feedback (Hung et al., 2022). Furthermore, incorporating authentic materials, such as videos, articles, and dialogues, into the curriculum can expose learners to natural adverbial usage in diverse contexts. This exposure can help learners understand how adverbials function in everyday communication, improving their correct and effective adverbial use. Tran (2023) emphasizes that authentic materials can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, making learning more relevant and effective.

Assessing Learners' Proficiency

The complexity of assessing adverbial proficiency must be addressed, especially considering contextual and idiomatic variations. Nation (2009), Appel and Golding (2023), and Eguchi and Kyle (2023) advocate for comprehensive assessments that consider learners' diverse linguistic backgrounds. Such assessments should test grammatical knowledge and practical spoken and written communication usage. This holistic approach ensures learners' familiarity with the rules governing adverbials and the ability to apply them accurately in real-life situations. For instance, assessments could include tasks that require learners to use adverbials in context, such as writing essays, engaging in dialogues, or completing fill-in-the-blank exercises where the correct adverbial form is needed. By evaluating adverbials' form and function, educators can better understand learners' proficiency and identify specific areas that need improvement (Eguchi & Kyle, 2023).

Moreover, formative assessments, which provide ongoing feedback during the learning process, can help learners gradually improve their adverbial usage. These assessments can be integrated into regular classroom activities, allowing teachers to monitor progress and adjust instruction. This continuous assessment and feedback loop can significantly enhance learners' mastery of adverbials over time (Nation, 2009).

In conclusion, addressing the linguistic and cultural disparities between Vietnamese and English through targeted teaching strategies and comprehensive assessments is crucial for improving Vietnamese learners' proficiency in using adverbials. Educators can create a more effective and engaging learning environment by adopting communicative and task-oriented approaches, leveraging technology, and incorporating authentic materials. Comprehensive assessments that consider both

grammatical knowledge and practical usage will ensure learners apply their knowledge accurately in real-world contexts, ultimately enhancing their communicative competence in English.

Addressing Research Gaps

Despite advancements in teaching methodologies and technological tools, there remains a notable gap in research concerning Vietnamese learners' challenges with English adverbials. Empirical studies are needed to uncover effective teaching strategies and understand the impact of sociocultural factors on learning. Addressing these gaps is crucial for enhancing the pedagogy of adverbials and, consequently, the overall language proficiency of learners in contexts similar to Vietnam. Much existing research focuses on general language acquisition and teaching strategies without delving deeply into Vietnamese learners' specific issues regarding adverbial usage (Tran et al., 2024). Studies exploring how Vietnamese learners acquire and use spoken and written English adverbials are essential to developing a more tailored and practical approach. Such studies should consider Vietnamese students' unique linguistic and cultural backgrounds, influencing their learning processes and outcomes (Nguyen et al., 2023).

This literature review underscores the importance of aligning teaching approaches with learners' linguistic and cultural realities. It highlights the need for integrating technology, authentic materials, and innovative pedagogical strategies to create an inclusive, effective, and responsive English language education framework. For instance, incorporating culturally relevant examples and contexts into teaching materials can help bridge the gap between learners' native language and English, making the learning process more relatable and compelling (Harmer, 2015). Further research should focus on developing and refining teaching methodologies and assessment strategies that resonate with diverse learners' linguistic and cultural nuances. Such efforts promise to transform English language education, making it more adaptable and relevant to learners from varied backgrounds. This exploration should include longitudinal studies that track learners' progress over time, providing insights into the long-term effectiveness of different teaching strategies and tools (Manda, 2023).

Moreover, research is needed to examine technology's role in supporting adverbial acquisition. Interactive platforms and language applications have the potential to provide personalized learning experiences addressing learner needs. Studies investigating how these tools can be optimized for teaching adverbials to Vietnamese learners would contribute valuable knowledge to the field (Tran, 2023).

Addressing these research gaps ultimately lays the groundwork for a more nuanced understanding of adverbial acquisition and its pedagogical implications. By focusing on the specific challenges Vietnamese learners face and developing targeted teaching strategies, educators can enhance learners' ability to master the complexities of adverbials. This, in turn, improves their overall communicative competence in

English, enabling them to participate more effectively in global communication (Pham, 2023).

In conclusion, it is imperative to align teaching methods with learners' linguistic and cultural realities to transform English language education and make it more inclusive and practical. Integrating technology, authentic materials, innovative pedagogical strategies, and focused empirical research create a robust framework for teaching adverbials. Such a framework addresses the specific needs of Vietnamese learners and provides a model that can be adapted to other contexts, ultimately contributing to the broader field of language education.

Methodology

This study investigated the intricacies of adverbial acquisition among EFL learners, particularly Vietnamese students, recognizing adverbials as a subtle aspect of English syntax. The aim was to critically scrutinize these challenges using a mixed-methods approach, offering substantial, empirically grounded insights for advancing English language education in Vietnam.

Samples

Participants were selected based on specific criteria to ensure a comprehensive and balanced representation. The sampling method was purposive to target learners with varying proficiency levels (Basic, Intermediate, Upper-intermediate), ages (16-25 years), and gender. This method was chosen to capture various experiences and challenges across different stages of English language acquisition. The sample size of 200 participants was calculated based on a desired % confidence level of 95% and a margin of error of 5%, ensuring statistical significance and representativeness. Participants included high school students, college students, and early career professionals in Vietnam, selected for their active engagement in learning English as a foreign language. Exclusion criteria included learners who had lived in English-speaking countries for an extended period, as their exposure might skew the results.

Instruments

Previous studies heavily informed the research instrument development to ensure their relevance and accuracy in capturing the specific linguistic challenges faced by Vietnamese learners. The proficiency tests and survey instruments were drawn upon validated scales previously used in similar contexts and refined through pilot testing with a small subset of the target population to adjust for cultural and linguistic appropriateness. The survey instruments were developed based on a comprehensive review of the literature on adverbial challenges in EFL contexts, incorporating constructs validated by earlier studies such as those by Nguyen et al. (2023), To (2014), and Tran et al. (2024). The selection of items was guided by their relevance to the specific linguistic features of Vietnamese learners, with adjustments made based on feedback from language education experts and pilot responses.

Data Collection

Quantitative data were collected through an online survey and proficiency tests on adverbials. The survey included demographic questions, items measuring familiarity and comfort with adverbials, specific challenges encountered, and perceptions of current instruction quality. It used existing validated scales to ensure reliability, and its internal consistency was confirmed with a Cronbach's alpha of 0.85. The survey was disseminated electronically via Google Forms to ensure broad accessibility and maintain participant confidentiality.

Complementing the quantitative data, 20 participants were selected for semi-structured interviews to provide a deeper qualitative insight into the experiences and challenges of mastering adverbials. The interviews explored learners' personal experiences, cultural and linguistic barriers, and opinions on the effectiveness of current teaching strategies. Each interview was conducted via Zoom, lasting approximately 30-45 minutes, and was audio-recorded with the participant's consent. Additionally, focus group discussions were held to facilitate interactive dialogue and uncover collective experiences among learners regarding instructional strategies and language transfer challenges.

Data Analysis

Quantitative data in the study were analyzed using descriptive statistics to effectively identify critical challenges Vietnamese learners face in mastering English adverbials, such as placement and interpretation. Descriptive statistics, including frequency counts, percentages, mean scores, mode, range, and standard deviation, were utilized to quantify and detail how often specific issues occurred, the average difficulties learners faced, and the variability in their responses. These analyses provided a comprehensive overview of the challenges, revealing the most common errors and the extent of issues across the learner population. By pinpointing these specific areas of difficulty, the study supported a structured approach to developing targeted educational interventions to address the identified gaps.

Qualitative data underwent thematic analysis, with each interview transcribed and coded by two independent researchers to ensure reliability, achieving an inter-coder reliability score of 0.87. The themes identified from the transcriptions were organized into four main categories: practical application of adverbials, understanding contextual usage, adverbial placement in sentences, and distinguishing adverbs from adjectives. These themes captured a range of issues, from difficulties applying grammatical rules in real-life contexts to confusion between adverbs and adjectives, highlighting the need for clearer grammatical differentiation in teaching materials.

The analysis provided a structured understanding of the key areas where Vietnamese learners of English face challenges, guiding the development of targeted instructional strategies to improve English language education effectively.

Findings

Quantitative Results

The quantitative analysis primarily focused on identifying Vietnamese learners' critical challenges in mastering English adverbials. Data were collected through a survey of 200 participants representing diverse proficiency levels.

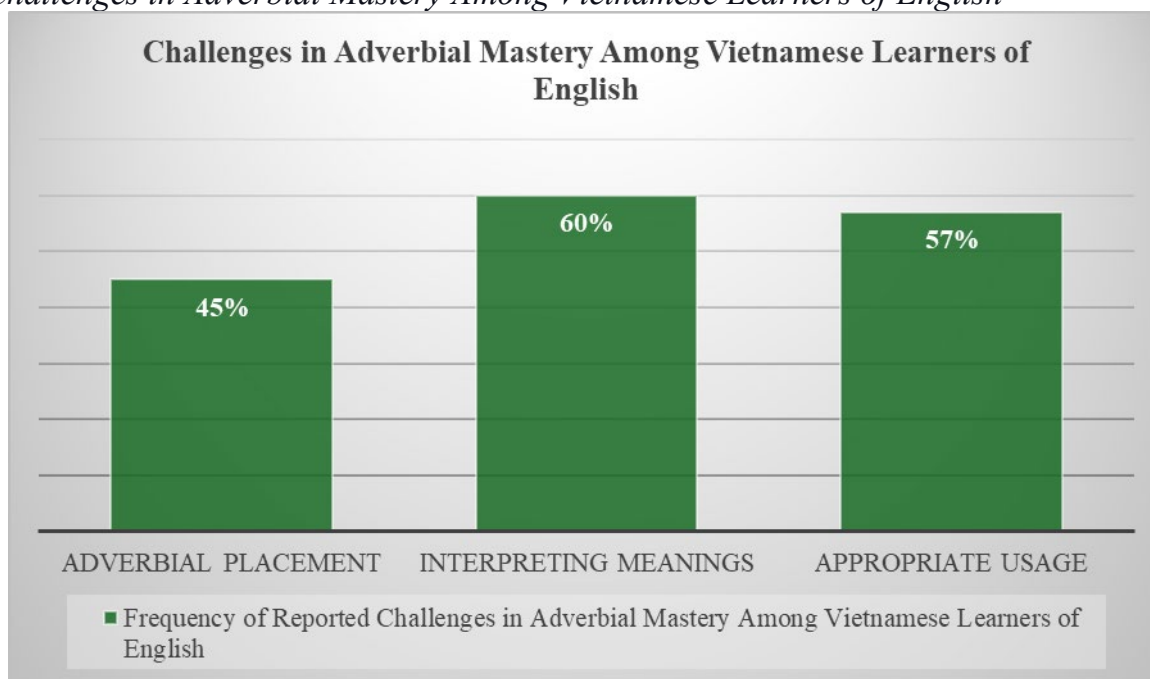
Challenges in Adverbial Mastery

Adverbial Mastery

The survey results, displayed in Figure 1, reveal three main areas of difficulty: adverbial placement (45% of participants), interpretation of meanings (60%), and appropriate usage (57%). These figures were calculated based on the percentage of participants who reported experiencing significant challenges in these areas. Specifically, participants were asked to indicate the extent to which they struggled with each aspect of adverbial usage on a Likert scale. The percentages reflect the proportion of learners who rated their difficulties as "high" or "very high." These findings suggest significant issues in teaching English syntax and practical language use, indicating that nearly half or more learners struggle with these fundamental aspects of language learning. Figure 1 visually represents these challenges, serving as a critical tool for educators to signal the need for pedagogical reform towards more context-based and interactive strategies to improve English proficiency among Vietnamese learners.

Figure 1

Challenges in Adverbial Mastery Among Vietnamese Learners of English



Common Errors in Adverbial Usage

Table 1 summarizes the most common errors in adverbial usage among the learners, highlighting the prevalence of specific challenges in their language

acquisition. The errors are categorized as Misplacement of Adverbs (75% frequency), Confusion between Adverbs and Adjectives (60%), and Misuse of Adverbial Clauses (50%). These percentages were calculated by identifying the number of participants who frequently made these errors based on their responses to multiple-choice and open-ended survey questions. For example, if 150 out of 200 participants reported often misplacing adverbs, this resulted in a 75% frequency for that error type. These prevalent errors highlight the need for targeted educational interventions focusing on clear grammatical explanations, practical usage, and contextual practice. The insights from Table 1 are crucial for informing more effective teaching strategies and curriculum development to improve English proficiency among learners.

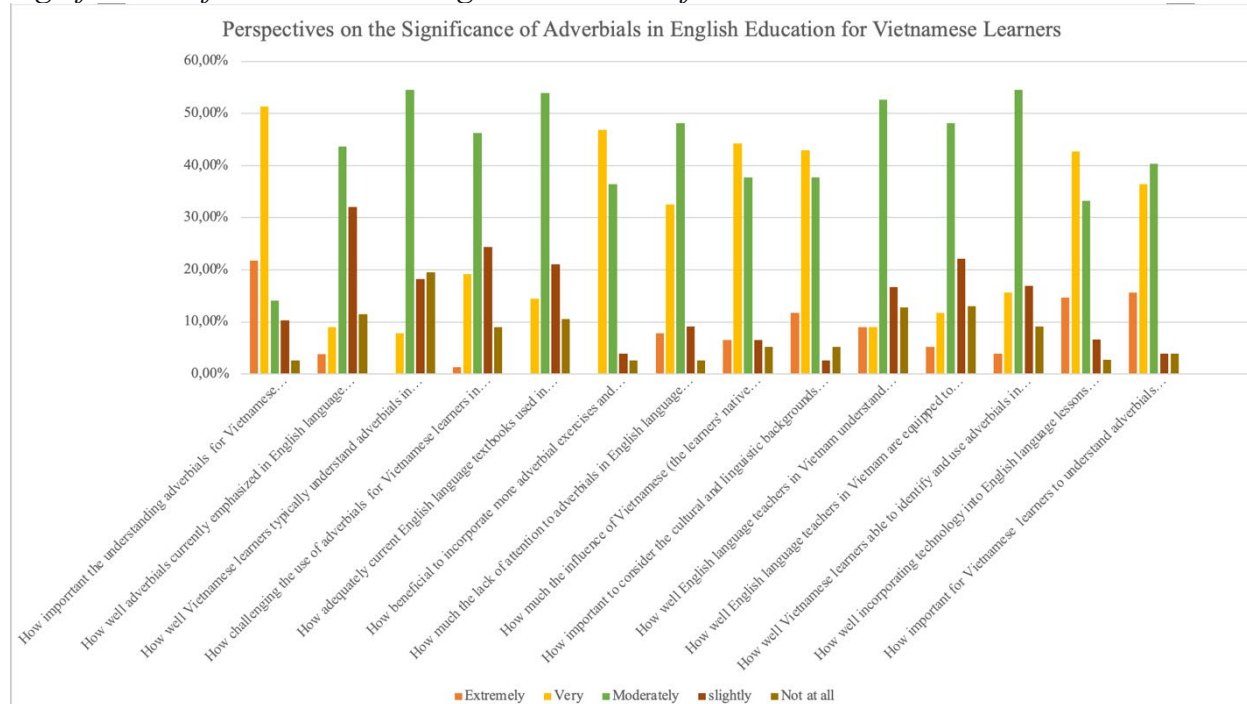
Table 1
*Common Errors in Adverbial Usage
in Adverbial Usage*

Error Type	Frequency	Percentage of Total Responses
Misplacement of Adverbs	150	75%
Confusion between Adverbs/Adjectives	120	60%
Misuse of Adverbial Clauses	100	50%

Significance of Adverbials in English Education for Vietnamese Learners

Figure 2 analyzes opinions on the role of adverbials in teaching English to Vietnamese learners, with data categorized into agreement levels. This data was collected through survey questions asking participants to rate the importance of various aspects of adverbial instruction on a Likert scale. Statistics showed that 73.10% of participants recognized the importance of adverbial understanding, while only 12.80% felt it was well-emphasized in classrooms. These percentages reflect the proportion of participants agreeing or strongly agreeing with the statements provided in the survey. Most participants (72.70%) perceived learners' adverbial knowledge as moderate to none, and 66.70% considered their usage challenging. Additional statistics showed that 68.50% deemed textbook coverage insufficient, 93.60% supported more practical exercises, and 88.40% viewed the neglect of adverbials as detrimental to communication skills. Cultural considerations were essential for 92.30%, while 70.90% rated teachers' understanding and methods as moderate to inadequate. Additionally, 64.90% believed teachers' ability to teach adverbials was mild at best, suggesting better teacher training. Technology integration was favored by 90.70%, and the relevance of adverbial mastery for academic and professional success was acknowledged by 92.30%. These consensus data points call for improved teaching strategies, teacher training, and curriculum development to enhance English adverbial mastery in Vietnam.

Figure 2
Significance of Adverbials in English Education for Vietnamese Learners



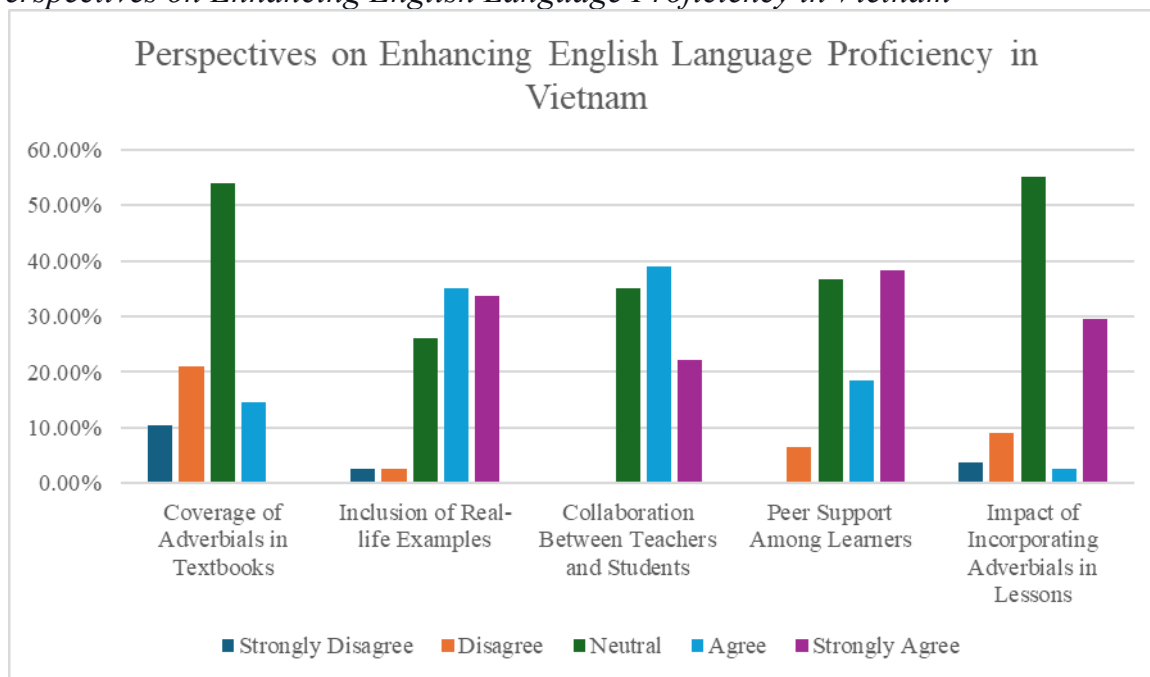
Perspectives on Enhancing English Language Proficiency in Vietnam

The coverage of adverbials in current textbooks yielded varied opinions among participants, as illustrated in Figure 3. A substantial 53.9% remained neutral regarding the adequacy of adverbial coverage, while 31.6% expressed dissatisfaction, either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing with the coverage extent. In contrast, only 14.5% were content with the current materials, highlighting a perceived gap in the resources available for teaching adverbials. Regarding including real-life examples in teaching, a significant majority (69%) advocated for this approach, believing it would greatly assist learners in comprehending and effectively using adverbials. This majority includes 35.1% who agreed and 33.8% who strongly agreed with the importance of practical examples. Only a small fraction, 5.2%, held opposing views, while 26% remained neutral. These findings underscore a strong consensus on the value of real-life contexts in language learning.

The study revealed diverse opinions regarding collaboration between teachers and students. While 39% of participants agreed and 22.1% strongly agreed that cooperation enhances the learning experience, 35.1% remained neutral, reflecting differing perspectives on the impact of collaborative learning methods in the classroom. Peer support and collaboration among learners were generally viewed positively, with 38.2% finding it very helpful, 36.8% considering it moderately beneficial, and 18.4% considering it constructive for understanding adverbials. Only a minority, 6.6%, found it slightly helpful, emphasizing the perceived importance of collaborative learning among peers. Regarding the impact of incorporating adverbials into lessons, 55.1% of participants believed it would moderately improve overall English proficiency, while 29.5% expected a significant improvement. A smaller portion, 9%, thought it would slightly enhance proficiency, and 2.6% believed in a

high level of improvement. Conversely, only 3.8% saw no benefit, indicating a strong belief in the positive impact of focusing on adverbials as a teaching priority.

Figure 3
Perspectives on Enhancing English Language Proficiency in Vietnam

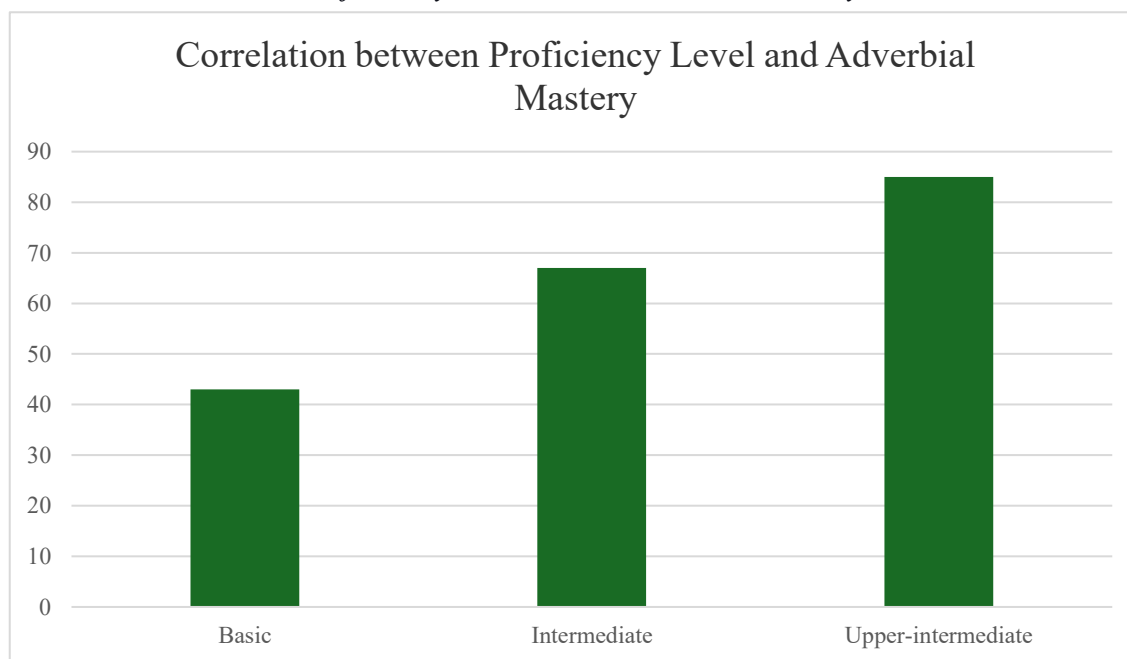


Correlation between Proficiency Level and Adverbial Mastery

Figure 4 illustrates the correlation between proficiency levels and adverbial mastery. Basic-level learners scored an average of 43, Intermediate learners 67, and Upper-intermediate learners 85. These scores were derived from a proficiency test assessing adverbial use. The increasing trend in scores indicates that as English proficiency improves, so does adverbial mastery. This correlation reflects the RQ1 by identifying specific linguistic challenges at different proficiency levels, highlighting the need for adaptive teaching methodologies.

The challenges identified were further analyzed across proficiency levels, showing that Basic learners reported the highest frequency of errors, which decreased as proficiency increased. However, more complex adverbial usage challenges became pronounced at higher levels. This correlation suggests that different stages of language learning present distinct difficulties, emphasizing the need for innovative pedagogical strategies tailored to each proficiency level.

These findings underscore the need for pedagogical reforms that incorporate practical examples, collaborative learning, and technology integration to enhance the English proficiency of Vietnamese learners.

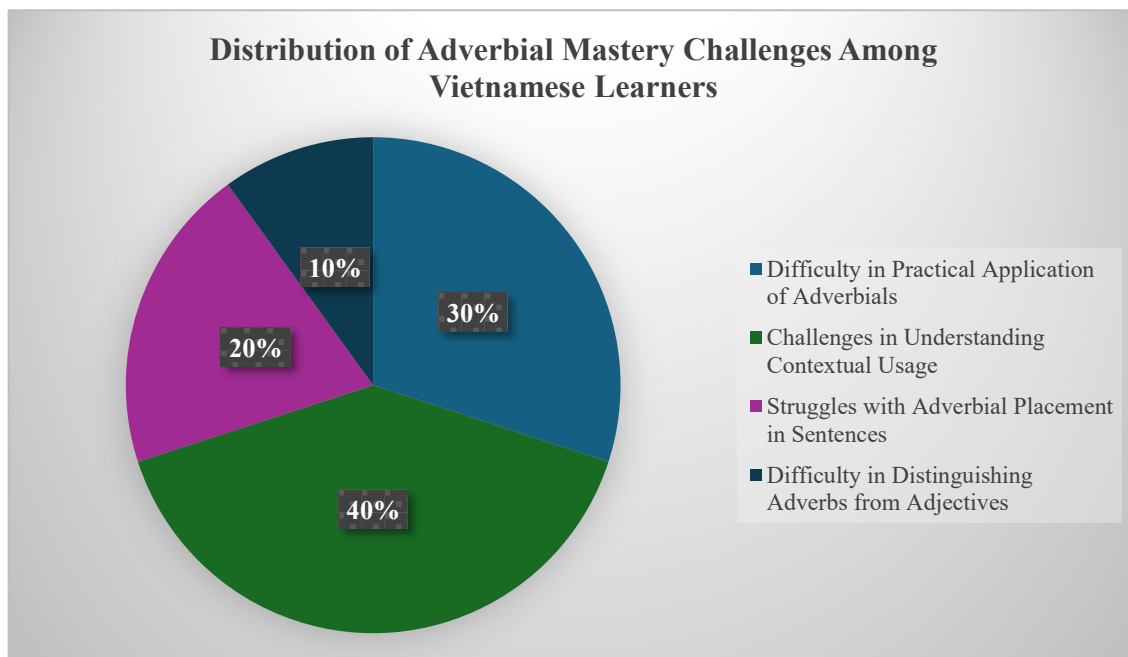
Figure 4*Correlation between Proficiency Level and Adverbial Mastery***Qualitative Findings**

The qualitative aspect involved in-depth semi-structured interviews with 20 participants from the survey respondents. These interviews offered insights into learners' challenges in applying their adverbial knowledge to practical language use. The main themes identified from these interviews are summarized below, supported by relevant figures and tables for a clearer understanding.

The process of categorizing the challenges faced by learners, as presented in Figure 5, involved a systematic coding approach. Each interview was transcribed and coded for recurring themes related to adverbial mastery challenges. Two independent researchers performed the coding process to ensure reliability, with an inter-coder reliability score of 0.87, indicating a high level of agreement. The themes were categorized into four main areas: practical application of adverbials, understanding contextual usage, adverbial placement in sentences, and distinguishing adverbs from adjectives.

Figure 5 displays the distribution of challenges Vietnamese learners face in mastering English adverbials. The chart indicates that 30% of learners need help with the practical application of adverbials, while the largest segment, 40%, needs help understanding contextual usage. Additionally, 20% need help with adverbial placement in sentences, and 10% find it challenging to distinguish adverbs from adjectives. These insights suggest the need for a pedagogical shift towards more practical, context-rich learning and a stronger focus on functional grammar, pointing to the necessity of evolving English education to address these areas better and enhance overall proficiency.

Figure 5
Distribution of Adverbial Mastery Challenges Among Vietnamese Learners



The qualitative findings are further enriched by direct quotes from participants, providing a deeper understanding of the specific areas where learners struggle. Table 2 presents these qualitative insights, complementing the quantitative data from Figure 5. These direct quotes illustrate learners’ varied and nuanced challenges, offering crucial insights for educators and curriculum developers. Addressing these challenges through targeted pedagogical strategies is key to enhancing the effectiveness of teaching English to Vietnamese learners.

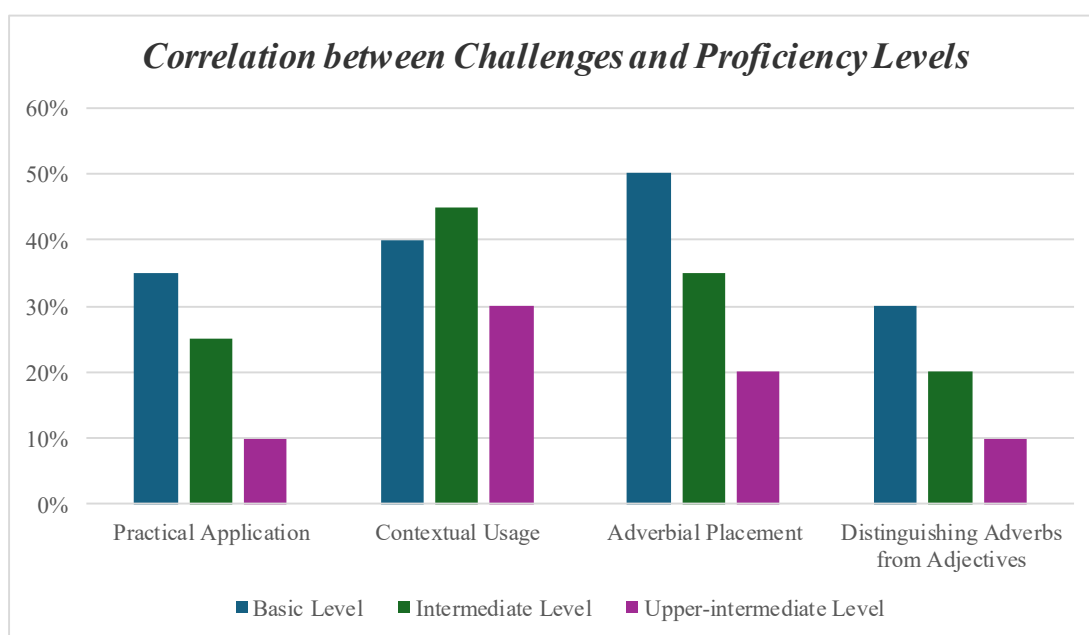
Table 2
Learners’ Responses on Distribution of Adverbial Mastery Challenges

Theme	Participant ID	Quote Excerpt
Practical Application	P5, P10	“I understand the rules, but it’s hard to use them naturally in conversation.” – P5 “I get the theory, but when speaking, it’s hard to apply these adverbial rules correctly.” – P10
Contextual Usage	P9, P17	“Sometimes I know the word, but I don’t know when to use it correctly.” – P9 “Recognizing when and how to use different adverbials in various situations is confusing for me.” – P17

Adverbial Placement	P16, P20	<p>“I often put adverbs in the wrong place, and it changes the meaning.” – P16</p> <p>“Placing adverbials correctly in sentences is tricky; I often mess up the sentence meaning.” – P20</p>
Distinguishing Adverbs/Adjectives	P3, P12	<p>“I confuse adverbs and adjectives, especially with similar words.” – P3</p> <p>“I frequently mix up adverbs and adjectives, especially when they are similar in form.” – P12</p>

Figure 6 shows the relationship between English proficiency levels and adverbial mastery challenges among learners, which was further analyzed. The bar graph illustrates a descending trend in the difficulty of practical application of adverbials, with basic level learners facing a 35% challenge rate, which decreases to 15% at the upper intermediate level. Similarly, challenges in understanding contextual usage peak at the Intermediate level (45%) and decrease at the Upper-intermediate level (30%). The graph also highlights reduced difficulties with adverbial placement and distinguishing adverbs from adjectives as proficiency increases. This data underscores the importance of tailored instructional strategies at each proficiency level and guides educators to adapt language instruction to the evolving needs of Vietnamese learners.

Figure 6
Correlation between Challenges and Proficiency Levels



These findings advocate for a more nuanced and practical approach to teaching English in Vietnam, emphasizing real-world application, contextual usage, more

explicit grammatical instruction, and syntax-focused learning. Addressing these challenges through targeted pedagogical strategies is critical to enhancing the effectiveness of teaching English to Vietnamese learners.

Discussion

Response to Research Question 1

What are the primary linguistic and cultural challenges Vietnamese learners face in understanding and using English adverbials, and how effective are current teaching methodologies in addressing these challenges?

This study examines the primary linguistic and cultural challenges Vietnamese learners encounter in understanding and using English adverbials and evaluates the effectiveness of current teaching methodologies in addressing these challenges. The quantitative analysis highlights substantial difficulties in adverbial mastery, notably in placement (45%), interpretation of meanings (60%), and usage (57%). These challenges stem from the significant structural differences between Vietnamese and English, leading to prevalent errors such as misplacement of adverbs (75%), confusion between adverbs and adjectives (60%), and misuse of adverbial clauses (50%).

These findings resonate with earlier research by Nguyen et al. (2023), To (2014), and Tran et al. (2024), which extensively explored the cross-linguistic challenges Vietnamese learners face. Nguyen et al. highlighted how structural differences between Vietnamese and English hinder the understanding of syntax and semantics, directly relating to the challenges of adverbial placement and interpretation identified in this study. To's critique of Vietnamese educational approaches suggests that traditional methods need to be revised to address these linguistic transfer issues. Later, Tran et al.'s work, which detailed specific errors in adverbial use, corroborates the error patterns found in our analysis. This study advances these discussions by employing a mixed-methods approach that not only reaffirms these linguistic challenges but also critically evaluates and suggests improvements to adverbial instruction.

The inherent complexity of adverbials, essential for detailed communication about actions or states, as noted by Huddleston and Pullum (2002), presents significant obstacles due to the linguistic disparities between Vietnamese and English. This study bridges theoretical research with practical educational strategies, offering substantial improvements to English language education for Vietnamese learners by making it more responsive to their unique linguistic backgrounds.

Current teaching methodologies in Vietnam, primarily traditional and grammar-focused, often fail to bridge theoretical knowledge with practical application, which is crucial for mastering adverbials. This has prompted calls for a shift towards more communicative and task-based approaches, as advocated by Le and Barnard (2019), and a greater integration of technology in language education, supported by findings from Celce-Murcia et al. (2014). Such integration helps learners

overcome adverbial complexities and is complemented by the inclusion of authentic materials, vital for practical instruction and a deeper understanding of adverbials. Furthermore, this study underscores the need for significant pedagogical changes, emphasizing real-world application and contextual comprehension of adverbials. There is also a critical need for professional development among educators to implement new teaching strategies and technologies effectively. A comprehensive review of current curricula is essential to ensure that adverbial instruction aligns with these advanced pedagogical approaches.

In conclusion, this research substantiates and expands upon existing literature, highlighting the unique challenges Vietnamese learners face with English adverbials. It advocates for pedagogical shifts towards practical, context-driven, and technology-enhanced methods that could significantly enhance English language education in Vietnam. This approach addresses immediate linguistic challenges and opens avenues for further research into the sociocultural factors influencing language learning, aiming to refine teaching strategies and enhance language proficiency in similar educational contexts.

Response to Research Question 2

Considering the identified challenges, what innovative pedagogical strategies and materials can enhance Vietnamese learners' mastery of English adverbials?

This study advocates integrating innovative pedagogical strategies incorporating technology and authentic materials to address the identified challenges. The quantitative data reveals a strong preference among participants (90.70%) for using technology in language learning and an overwhelming consensus (93.60%) on the need for more practical exercises. These insights align with Celce-Murcia et al. (2014) and Tran (2023), suggesting that interactive platforms, language applications, and digital games can significantly enhance learner engagement and provide opportunities to practice adverbial usage in varied, realistic contexts. Furthermore, the inclusion of real-life examples in teaching adverbials is supported by 69% of participants. This approach is consistent with Gilmore's (2007) recommendation to use authentic materials, such as news articles, podcasts, and videos, to expose learners to the natural use of adverbials in different contexts. Authentic materials help bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, facilitating a deeper understanding and more effective usage of adverbials (Hasnain & Halder, 2023). Professional development for educators is also crucial. Continuous training enables teachers to stay proficient in the latest methodologies and technological tools essential for effectively implementing innovative strategies. Le (2018) and Le and Barnard (2019) emphasize the importance of ongoing professional growth to equip educators with supportive skills to overcome the challenges in adverbial mastery.

Educators can create a more effective and inclusive learning environment by combining context-based learning, technology integration, and ongoing teacher training. This holistic strategy aims to enhance EFL learners' proficiency in using English adverbials, ultimately improving their overall communicative competence.

The emphasis on practical, context-driven, and technology-enhanced methods reflects the evolving nature of language education and the need for pedagogical strategies adaptable to learners' diverse linguistic and cultural backgrounds (Nunan, 2004; Willis & Willis, 2007).

In summary, integrating technology, authentic materials, and continual professional development is a comprehensive approach to addressing the challenges of mastering English adverbials. This multifaceted strategy promises to improve the practical use of adverbials among Vietnamese learners, enhance their ability to communicate effectively in English, and contribute to the broader goals of language education.

Pedagogical Implications and Conclusion

This study has uncovered significant findings, necessitating a rethinking of current teaching approaches. The unique challenges Vietnamese learners face stem from the complexities of mastering adverbials and linguistic and cultural nuances, calling for a tailored approach that traditional teaching methods may need to address fully. These findings have substantial implications for pedagogy and education, particularly in instructing adverbials to EFL learners, highlighting the need for a critical reassessment of pedagogical approaches and educational strategies.

A key implication is the need to reconceptualize the methods employed by English language educators in Vietnam for teaching adverbials. The study highlights the limitations of traditional, grammar-centric approaches and emphasizes the effectiveness of communicative and task-based methods (Klímová et al., 2023; Sukying, 2021). This underscores the need for a paradigm shift in pedagogical thinking towards more dynamic, interactive approaches prioritizing real-world application and contextual comprehension of adverbials. Moreover, integrating technology plays a pivotal role in language instruction. Educators are strongly urged to incorporate multimedia tools, interactive platforms, and educational applications to create engaging, context-rich learning experiences, as observed in studies by Tran and Chau (2024), Tran (2023), and Hung et al. (2022). Simultaneously, learners are encouraged to immerse themselves in authentic online materials to contextualize their understanding of adverbial usage in diverse settings.

The deliberate inclusion of authentic materials is also paramount for effective adverbial instruction. Systematic incorporation of real-life texts, multimedia content, and genuine language sources is essential for exposing learners to authentic language usage (Nguyen et al., 2023). Interacting with such materials significantly narrows the theoretical-practical gap, facilitating a more profound understanding of adverbials. Furthermore, the study underscores the necessity for professional development among English language educators. Establishing focused training programs is imperative to equip educators with the skills and strategies to implement technology effectively, harness authentic materials, and apply communicative teaching methods (Nguyen et al., 2023). Additionally, a thorough review of existing curricula is indispensable.

Curriculum designers must ensure that adverbial instruction aligns with the study's recommendations, potentially requiring substantial revisions to lesson plans, assessments, and learning objectives. This approach should seamlessly integrate technology, authentic materials, and communicative methodologies (Manda, 2023; Nguyen et al., 2023).

This study provides an exhaustive analysis of the intricacies involved in adverbial acquisition among Vietnamese learners of English, influenced by linguistic and cultural factors. The identified challenges demand a shift in adverbial instruction, moving from conventional grammar-focused methods to more pragmatic and communicative methodologies. The study highlights the transformative potential of integrating technology, utilizing authentic materials, and adopting communicative pedagogies. When effectively implemented, these approaches can bridge the gap between theoretical knowledge and practical application, equipping learners with essential skills for proficient communication in English.

Looking ahead, educators, curriculum designers, and policymakers must embrace these insights to elevate the quality of English language education in Vietnam. Cultivating proficiency in adverbials transcends merely an academic objective; it is a practical necessity in our increasingly globalized world. This study advances our understanding of adverbial acquisition and catalyzes a significant evolution in pedagogy within English language education. The implications delineated here are poised to inspire innovative practices, ultimately empowering Vietnamese learners of English to navigate the intricacies of adverbials with confidence and precision. By adopting these recommendations, Vietnam's English education can experience substantial improvement, effectively preparing learners for seamless communication and success in the interconnected global community.

Authors

Tuyet Thi Tran (EdD) ORCID ID: <https://orcid.org/0000-0002-1221-6015>

Dr. Tuyet Thi Tran is the division head of English theoretical linguistics in the Faculty of English Language Studies at Hanoi University of Business and Technology, Vietnam. Additionally, she serves as an academic manager at Vietnam Golden Generation, JSC.

Thi Tuyet Tran has worked for various universities and institutions in Vietnam, focusing on TESOL, teacher training, curriculum design, and online training solutions. She is pursuing a second doctoral degree in English language teaching in the Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences at Mahasarakham University, Thailand.

Her research interests encompass various areas, including vocabulary acquisition, teacher well-being, and TESOL. She can be contacted via emails: tuyettran.edd@gmail.com/ 66010161003@msu.ac.th

Apisak Sukying

Dr. Apisak Sukying is an Associate Professor of TESOL at Mahasarakham University. His academic focus includes L2 vocabulary acquisition, second language

acquisition (SLA), L2 writing, and English language teaching (ELT) research. Dr. Sukying has extensively published on the effectiveness of language learning strategies, the impact of musical and physical response techniques on vocabulary acquisition among young learners, and the exploration of morphological awareness in EFL contexts. He can be contacted via his university email address: apisak.s@msu.ac.th

References

- Appel, R., & Golding, C. (2023). An exploratory analysis of linking adverbials used by Filipino, Pakistani, and Thai writers of English. *Journal of Modern Languages*, 33(1), 50-73. <https://doi.org/10.22452/jml.vol33no1.3>
- Celce-Murcia, M., Brinton, D. M., & Snow, M. A. (2014). *Teaching English as a second or foreign language* (4th ed.). National Geographic Learning.
- Eguchi, M., & Kyle, K. (2023). L2 collocation profiles and their relationship with vocabulary proficiency: A learner corpus approach. *Journal of Second Language Writing*, 60, 100975. <https://doi.org/10.1016/j.jslw.2023.100975>
- Ernst, T. (2020). The syntax of adverbials. *Annual Review of Linguistics*, 6(1), 89-109. <https://doi.org/10.1146/annurev-linguistics-011619-030334>
- Gilmore, A. (2007). Authentic materials and authenticity in foreign language learning. *Language Teaching*, 40(2), 97-118. <https://doi.org/10.1017/S0261444807004144>
- Harmer, J. (2015). *The practice of English language teaching* (5th ed.). Pearson Education Limited.
- Hasnain, S., & Halder, S. (2023). Exploring the impediments for successful implementation of the task-based language teaching approach: A review of studies on teachers' perceptions. *The Language Learning Journal*, 51(2), 208-222. <https://doi.org/10.1080/09571736.2021.1989015>
- Huddleston, R., & Pullum, G. K. (2002). *The Cambridge grammar of the English language*. Cambridge University Press.
- Hung, B. P., Pham, A. T. D., & Purohit, P. (2022). Computer-mediated communication in second language education. *Intelligent Systems Reference Library*, 45-60. https://doi.org/10.1007/978-3-030-99329-0_4
- Klímová, B., Pikhart, M., Poláková, P., Černá, M., Yayilgan, S. Y., & Shaikh, S. (2023). A systematic review on the use of emerging technologies in teaching English as an applied language at the university level. *Systems*, 11(1), 42. <https://doi.org/10.3390/systems11010042>
- Le, V. C. (2018). Remapping the teacher knowledgebase of language teacher education: a Vietnamese perspective. *Language Teaching Research*, 24(1), 71-81. <https://doi.org/10.1177/1362168818777525>
- Le, V. C., & Barnard, R. (2019). Building teacher capacity for ELT in Vietnam. In V. C. Le, H. T. M. Nguyen, & T. T. M. Nguyen (Eds.), *Building teacher capacity in English language teaching in Vietnam: Research, policy and practice*. (pp.184-186) Routledge.

- Lewis, D. M. (2020). Speaker stance and evaluative -ly adverbs in the modern English period. *Language Sciences*, 82, 101332.
<https://doi.org/10.1016/j.langsci.2020.101332>
- Manda, M. M. (2023). *An examination of the implementation of active learning strategies that enhance active learning of secondary school English grammar* [Doctoral dissertation, Mzuzu University].
<http://repository.mzuni.ac.mw/handle/123456789/493>
- Nation, I. S. P. (2009). *Teaching ESL/EFL listening and speaking*. Routledge.
- Nguyen, T. A., Le, T. T., Vang, M. D., Phuong, Y. H., Huynh, T. T. A., Nguyen, T. H. & Pham, T. T. (2023). Vietnamese EFL high school teachers' perceptions of difficulties when implementing competency-based English teaching curriculum and their proposed solutions. *Forum for Linguistic Studies*, 5(2).
<https://doi.org/10.59400/fls.v5i2.1863>
- Nunan, D. (2004). *Task-Based Language Teaching*. Cambridge University Press.
- Pham, A. H. V. (2023). *EFL teacher development through teacher research in Vietnam*. [Doctoral dissertation, University of Wellington]. Open Access the Herenga Waka-Victoria University of Wellington.
<https://doi.org/10.26686/wgtn.23982819>
- Sukying, A. (2021). Choices of language learning strategies and English proficiency of EFL university learners. *LEARN Journal: Language Education and Acquisition Research Network*, 14(2), 59-87. <https://eric.ed.gov/?id=EJ1310896>
- To, T. M. (2014). The English adverbial of time vs. the Vietnamese range topic of time. *International Journal of Language and Linguistics*, 2(6), 348-355.
<https://doi.org/10.11648/j.ijll.20140206.12>
- Tran, T. T. (2023). Online-merge-offline model for distance learning in English language education: A case study. *Vietnam Journal of Education*, 7(3), 215-226. <https://doi.org/10.52296/vje.2023.251>
- Tran, T. T., & Chau, T. H. H. (2024). Impacts of a blended learning model on EFL students' engagement and English proficiency: Evidence from IELTS preparation courses. *Innovations and Applications of Technology in Language Education*, 183-197. <https://doi.org/10.1201/9781003473916-14>
- Tran, T. T., Quach, T. P. A., & Nguyen, T. D. T. (2024). Linguistic and cultural challenges in mastering English adverbials among Vietnamese young adults: A Quantitative analysis. *Vietnam Journal of Educational Sciences*, 20 (1), 18-31.
http://vjes.edu.vn/sites/default/files/vjes_-_vol_20_-_is_01_-18-31.pdf
- Willis, J., & Willis, D. (2007). *Doing task-based teaching*. Oxford University Press.