

Adverbs of Frequency in English and Arabic

As A Contrastive Study

Asst. Lecturer: Mustafa Talib. M. Al-Juboury

Key words: Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis, Modern Standard English (MSE), Modern Standard Arabic (MSA), English Adverbs of Frequency, and Arabic counterparts of Adverbs of Frequency.

Abstract

The present study deals with adverbs of frequency in Modern Standard English and Modern Standard Arabic. This is an analytical contrastive study that is applied here to reveal the aspects of similarity and dissimilarity between the two languages. It consists of five sections; introduction, adverbs of frequency in MSE, the counterparts of them in MSA, contrastive analysis of adverbs of frequency between the two languages and conclusions.

The research-paper arrives at some similarities and differences. They are similar in: position of the adverbs(initial, medial, final) and existence of negative in both. As for differences, English differs from Arabic in that adverbs of frequency are of two main kinds: **Definite Frequency** and **Indefinite Frequency**, English adverbs of frequency come between subject and the main verb but when we have auxiliary they come after it. In Arabic, this case is not found.

1. Introduction

James (1980:3) says that contrastive analysis deals with a pair of languages. It is depending on the idea that languages can be compared". Adverbs in English can be classified into five categories: adverbs of times, place, manner, frequency and sentence adverbs, (Eastwood, 1999:270-1) . In general, an adverb in English is a word added to the meaning of a verb, an adjective, another adverb or a sentence and which answers such questions as how? or when? (Richards et al. 1992: 2). The adverb of frequency is a kind of this group of grammar (adverbs). Adverbs of

frequency are adverbs that say how often something happens. For example, often, never, daily, occasionally,...(Swan, 2005: xix).

The present study is an investigation on adverbs of frequency in Modern Standard English (MSE) and their counterparts in Modern Standard Arabic (MSA) by applying a Contrastive Analysis Hypothesis by Carl James (1980). English and Arabic have very important status throughout the world, since English is the language of the present development, and Arabic is the language of the Holy Qur'an. There is a great gap between the two languages for English is Germanic language while Arabic is a Semitic one. Accordingly, they are similar in some aspects and different in others. This study tries to answer the following questions:

- i) Are the two languages different in the field of 'adverbs of frequency'?
- ii) If different, to what extent they are different?
- iii) Concerning adverbs of frequency, how many similarities and differences between them?

This investigation is limited to discuss the adverbs of frequency in MSE and their counterparts in MSA.

It is hypothesized that:

- i) There are more differences than similarities relating to 'adverbs of frequency' in the two languages.
- ii) In the field of 'adverb of frequency', Arabic is more difficult and confusing.

The procedure followed in the present study is contrastive analysis approach in which the two languages could be compared in terms of their phonological constructions , syntactic constructions, writing constructions, and cultural behavioral assumptions. That is, the following steps will be followed:

- i) *Description* of the two languages
- ii) *Selection* of certain areas or items of the two languages for detailed comparison.

iii) *Comparison*, i.e., the identification of areas of similarity and difference, (Fisiak, 1981: 214)

The present study comprises four sections and conclusions. Section one is introduction which gives background of the study and some information related to topic under discussion. Section two identifies adverbs of frequency in MSE. In section three, Arabic counterparts of the adverbs of frequency. Section four is devoted to the contrastive analysis of adverbs of frequency and their counterparts in the two languages. Finally, the conclusions which sum up the results the researcher arrives at.

2. Adverbs of Frequency in English

According to Quirk et al.(1985: 542-3), adverbs of frequency are concerned with a span of time, in other words, they respond to wh-question (= how many times..., how often...). A clear example about that is:

1- A: *How many times* did Jack ring the bell?

B: three Times

2- A: *How often* does Alex wash his house?

B: From time to time.

2.1 Sub-classification of Adverbs of Frequency:

i) Definite Frequency

The adjuncts which name explicitly the times by which the frequency is measured.

ii) Indefinite Frequency

The adjuncts which do not name explicitly the time by which frequency is measured.

Each of the two kinds of frequency can be divided into the following:

i) Definite Frequency

Quirk et al. (1985:548) states that definite frequency can be sub divided as follows:

a) Period frequency (hourly, daily, nightly, weekly, monthly, quarterly, annually, yearly, twice a year, every two years, twice a week/ month, every (n.) weeks/ months, every other week/ month etc.) :

3- I visits my friend **monthly**. [= once a month]

4- Ann shall be in her school **every other day**. [= on alternate days]

5- "**Each year** I spend my holiday in Paris.

6- You have to take two of these pills **three times a day**.

7- Rent can be paid **per week** instead of **per month**. (ibid)

b) Occasion frequency (once, twice, thrice). Noun phrases [= a time or two, three times], or prepositional phrase [= on five occasions]:

8- Jack phoned Helen **twice today**.

9- I see my grandfather **once every week**.

10- I perform operations **three days every week**.

ii) Indefinite Frequency

c) Usual occurrences (usually, commonly, customarily, normally, habitually, invariably, generally, ordinarily):

11- Jack generally wakes up at six o'clock.

12- The child **usually** drinks in the morning

13- "Ann **normally** goes to bed before 10 pm.

d) **Continuous/ continual/ universal frequency** (always, constantly, continuously, continually, incessantly, permanently, perpetually):

14- "Does Anna **always** drink milk in the morning?"

15- Franck **incessantly** asks for more money.

e) **High frequency** (frequently, often, regularly, repeatedly):

16- Ahmed have **often** told them have more relaxations.

17- The teacher explained this lesson **again and again**.

18- Have you been under the influence of alcohol **many times**?

19- Johansson leaves the house unlocked **time after time**.

f) **Low frequency** (infrequently, irregularly, occasionally, periodically[‘from time to time’], rarely, seldom, never), Quirk et al. (1985:550):

20- We are **occasionally** invited to their house for hanging out.

21- Allen **never** reads a story these days.

22- John visits his friends **from time to time**.

In negative, such expressions as **never, notever, or notat all** are used:

23- "Frank **never** pays his debts on time".

24- "My father **does not ever** pays his debts on time".

25- "He **does not** pays his debts **at all**".

In addition, we have other adverbs of frequency which denote negative like seldom, rarely scarcely(= not often):

26- It's **rarely** he loses any money.

27- It's **seldom** that people don't offer to help.

(ibid)

Negative can also be seen with adverbs of group (c) as well as *often* and *frequently*:

28- He doesn't **usually/ often/ frequently** speak from notes.

(Ibid:547)

2.2 Position and use

Thompson & Martinet (1986: 56-7) states that adverbs of frequency can always be placed:

(i) After the present simple of verb 'to be':

29- Rodger is **always** in time in meals.

(ii) Before the simple tenses of main verbs:

30- My friend's family **sometimes** stay up all night.

(iii) After the first auxiliary, or, with interrogative verbs, after (auxiliary + subject):

31- Suzan can **never** understand what I mean.

32- You have **often** been told to do that.

33- Have you **ever** camped in the dessert?

According to Murphy (2000: 212), adverbs of frequency come before 'have to':

34- We have **always** have to wait a long time for the bus.

Adverbs like (always, continually, frequency, occasionally, often, once, twice, sometimes, usually, etc.) could be put at the beginning or at the end of a sentence or a clause.

Exception:

Always is somehow rarely found at the beginning of the sentence/ clause except for imperative:

35- **Often**, if I put at the end, normally require *very or quite*.

36- He ran *quite often*.(ibid:214)

Adverbs like (hardly ever, never, rarely, scarcely, etc.) could also be put at the beginning of the sentence, but with inversion of the following main:

37- Hardly/ Scarcely ever did they meet unobserved, (Thompson & Martinet, 1986: 57)

3. Adverbs of Frequency in Arabic

Arabic adverbs that correspond to adverbs of frequency in English are found in the following cases:

a) أبدا Abadan (= never):

38- ما غضبتُ أبدا. (Atturfi, 1986: 181)

A- I have never angered.

It is noticed that this particle(never) refers to negative in Arabic.

b) According to Aziz (1989: 177-8), the adverb قط qad(= never) is used with the perfect negative:

39- ما رأيتُ قط. (Atturfi, 1986: 275)



- I have never seen him.

c) عادة aadatan(= usually), and كثيرا kathiran(= often):

عادة ما أسافر صيفاً. -40

I usually travel in summer.

d) Defined time adverbials: كل يوم (= three times, i.e., number + time), ثلاث مرات (= every day), كل جمعة (= every Friday), etc...

41- زرت المتحف ثلاث مرات.

- I have visited the museum three times.

42- أذهب إلى المدرسة كل يوم.

- I go to school every day.

(Khalil, 1999: 238-9)

e) The interpretation of Frequency can be done by using words as follows:

عادة (= frequently); كثيرا (= frequently); مرارا (= frequently); دائما (= always); أحيانا (= sometimes); نادرا (= rarely); عادة (= usually):

43- يزورنا محمد أحيانا.

- Mohammed sometimes visits us.

44- اذهب إلى المدرسة دائما مشيا على الإقدام.

- I always go to school on feet.'

45- يزورنا علي نادرا.

- Ali rarely visits us.

46- شاهدتُ هذا الرجل مرارا.

- I frequently saw this man.

47- لعلمكم تفلحون. وابتغوا من فضل الله واذكروا الله كثيرا (Qur'aan, aljum'ah: 10)

-... "and seek the munificence of God. And remember God frequently that perhaps you may thrive".(Abbas, 1991: 187)

f) By the use of some verbs like: كاد (= scarcely):

48- ما كدتُ أراه.

- I scarcely saw him.(Hywood& Nahmad, 1993:426)

g) Certain nouns used in accusative: قَلَّمَا (= seldom):

49- قَلَّمَا أَرَاهُ مَاشِيًا.

- I seldom see him walking. (Ibid:432)

4. Contrastive Analysis of Adverbs of Frequency in MSE and MSA

Here we try to count the aspects of similarity and dissimilarity in the area in question, i.e., adverbs of frequency in the two languages. Though each language has different term of the such adverbs, but most of the adverbs are found in both like sometimes = أحيانًا, never = أبدا, scarcely = قَلَّمَا, etc...In relation to the **aspects of similarity**:

(a) both languages have three positions (initial, medial, and final) for the adverbs of frequency:

- Each year, I spend my holiday in Paris. (initial)

- He is always in time in meals.(medial)

- He walked quite often.(final)

- قَلَّمَا أَرَاهُ مَاشِيًا. (initial)

- أَشْتَرِي حَاجَاتِي دَائِمًا مِنْ هَذَا السُّوقِ. (medial)

- شَاهَدْتُ هَذَا الرَّجُلَ مَرَارًا. (final)

(b) Negative can be used in both English and Arabic. **English** has such expressions as **never, notever, or notat all** which refer to negative as well as seldom, rarely scarcely:

- He never pays his debts on time.

- He doesn't ever pays his debts on the deadline.

- Ali does not pays his debts at all.

- It's rarely Alex loses any money.

- It's seldom that Nelson does not offer to help.

In **Arabic**, we have some underlined words in the following examples:

- مَا رَأَيْتَهُ قَطُّ. (I have never seen him.)

- مَا غَضِبْتُ أَبَدًا. (I have never angered.)



(c) The two languages share some expressions denoting frequency:

English(once, twice, thrice, a time or two, three times, on five occasions):

- Bob phoned twice today.
- Helen visits her grandmother twice every months.
- I perform operations three days every week.

Arabic (ثلاث مرات (= three times, i.e., number + time), كل يوم (= every day), كل

جمعة

(= every Friday), etc...)

- زرت المتحف ثلاث مرات. (I have visited the museum three times.)
- أذهب إلى المدرسة كل يوم. (I go to school every day.)

In relation to the **differences**, (a) English differs from Arabic in that it is Germanic language but Arabic is Semitic one.

(b) The term (adverbs of frequency) is found as a kind of adverbs in English, while in Arabic such meaning is picked up from different places with different forms(i.e. أحيانا (= sometimes); دائما = always); مرارا (= frequently); كثيرا (= frequently); عادة (= usually) refer to time in Arabic).

(c) There are certain classifications with sub-classifications in English [**Definite Frequency**: i) Period frequency , ii) Occasion frequency; **Indefinite Frequency**: iii) Usual occurrences, iv) Continuous/ continual/ universal frequency, v) High frequency, vi) Low frequency]. In contrary, Arabic has no any classification.

(d) Adverbs of frequency come between subject and the main verb but when we have auxiliary they come after it. In Arabic, this case is not found.

English:

- They **sometimes** stay up all night.(between subj. and main verb)
- He is **always** in time in meals. (after auxiliary)

Arabic:

أشتري حاجاتي دائما من هذا السوق.-

(I **always** purchase my needs from this market.)

e) In English, the part of speech of this area under study is ‘adverb’ compared to ‘noun’ in Arabic.

5. Conclusions

To summarize, the two languages share some similarities and differences through this research-paper and they are as follows:

5.1 Similarities:

- 1- Adverbs of frequency in English and their equivalents in Arabic have three positions in the sentence (initial, medial, final).
- 2- Both languages show negative in English adverbs of frequency and their Arabic counterparts.
- 3- Period frequency is found in both English and Arabic.

6.2 Differences:

- 1- English is Germanic language but Arabic is Semitic one.
- 2- The term (adverbs of frequency) is found as a kind of adverbs in English, while in Arabic such meaning is picked up from different places Arabic grammar.
- 3- Adverbs of frequency in English are classified into **Definite Frequency** and **Indefinite Frequency**
- 4- English adverbs of frequency come between subject and the main verb but when we have auxiliary they come after it. In Arabic, this case is not found.
- 5- ‘Adverbs’ show frequency in English, compared to ‘nouns’ in Arabic.

Bibliography

Abbas, A.Kh.(1991)“*A Pragmatic Analysis of English and Arabic Adverbial Positions and Their Pedagogical Implications*”. Unpublished Dissertation. University of Leicester: ProQuest LLC.

Atturfi, M.(1986) AttuhafAtturfiyyafiTawdihwaTakmilSharh Al-Ujrumiyya fi Annahu. (Atturfiyya Monuments in Illustrating and Completing The Explanation of Al-Ujrumiyya in Syntax) Najaf: Matba'at Al-Adab.

Aziz, Y. (1989). *A Contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic*. Mosul: University of Mosul.

Estwood, J. (1999). *Oxford Practice Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

Fisiak, J. (1981).*Contrastive Linguistics and Language Teacher*. Pergamon Press.

Hywood, J.A. and Nahmad, H.N. (1993). *A New Arabic Grammar of the written Language*. London: Lund Humphries.

James, C. (1980).*Contrastive Analysis*. London: Longman.

Khalil, A.(1999). *A Contrastive Grammar of English and Arabic*. Amman: Jordan Book Centre.

Murphy, R. and William, S. (2000). *English Grammar in Use*. Cambridge: Cambridge University Press.

Quirk, R., Greenbaum, S., Leech, G., and Svartvik, J. (1985). *A Comprehensive Grammar of the English Language*. London : Longman.

Richards, J., Platt, J. and Platt, H. (1992). *Dictionary of Language Teaching and Applied Linguistics*. London: Longman.

Swan, M. (2005) *Practical English Usage*. New York: Oxford University Press.

Thompson, A.J. and Martinet, A.V. (1986). *A Practical English Grammar*. Oxford: Oxford University Press.

