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Is it Even Also about Only?
An Experimental Study of the Acceptability of Focus Adverb Placement in L1 speakers and EFL Learners

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Abstract

This thesis presents and discusses the results of two experiments conducted to study the acceptability of Focus Adverb placement in English in two groups of English speakers. The two groups investigated were Italians holding an advanced or proficient level of English as a foreign language (EFL) and a group of native speakers (L1) of English, primarily from California. The first experiment was designed to explore the acceptability of grammatical and traditionally ungrammatical word orders in L1 English speakers using grammaticality judgement tasks featuring the Focus Adverbs *only*, *even* and *also*. The purpose of the second study was to investigate whether the EFL subjects behaved differently from L1 speakers when responding to the same grammaticality judgement tasks. This thesis also aims to propose strategies in order to implement more effective ways of teaching adverb placement to students of English. Teaching strategies will be discussed with hopes of perfecting Focus Adverb placement in order to help non-native speakers reach a near-nativelike level.

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Dedication

This thesis is dedicated to two people who are no longer of this world. First, to my grandfather, Joseph B. Gerlach, or "Poppy", whose love for me and his family knew no limits. He instilled in us the value of hard work and sacrifice. Also, to my great-grandmother, Phyllis Price Vann, or "G.G.", who always encouraged me to further my education and who reminded me that I could do anything I set my heart to.

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1. Introduction

Focus Adverbs are a special subcategory of modifier, which introduce focus onto their constituent (König 1990). Their placement is highly variable and so they are dependent on other linguistic factors, including semantics and prosody. Like all other modifiers, Focus Adverbs are optional elements in a sentence. For this reason, they are generally known to cause great difficulty in language learners and can therefore often identify a native speaker from a very proficient non-native speaker (Stringer 2013). This is found in long-term second language learners and those living in an L2 context, as well.

In this thesis, foreign language acquisition of English focus structures using Focus Adverbs will be examined from the point of view of generative linguistics. This will be done by testing the grammaticality of certain positions of Focus Adverbs in two different groups of speakers, including Italian learners of English as a foreign language and native (L1), monolingual speakers of Standard American English. It will also investigate the possible variation of the placement of these elements in sentences in the native speakers.

A selected group of native speakers of English was tested using a questionnaire designed to collect information on their knowledge of adverb placement to investigate Focus Adverb placement acceptability. A second study was then conducted with a group of advanced learners of English as a foreign language (EFL), who were tested using the same questionnaire from the first study. Later, their results were compared with those of the native speakers to understand the acceptability and variability of Focus Adverbs in the EFL group and to better understand Focus Adverb placement errors. The questionnaire consisted of 72 grammaticality judgement tasks and demographic questions. Adverbs of frequency and manner were also tested using this questionnaire and were subjected to the same two word-order conditions as the experimental questions were, (S)ubject, (A)dverb, (V)erb and SVA. This was done to

understand if the subjects performed differently in the tasks using other types of adverbs.

The first study in this thesis serves primarily to investigate how native speakers judge the grammaticality of Focus Adverbs and proposes that they will accept the SAV word order as the most grammatical and reject the SVA word order.

The second study presented in this thesis will examine the extent to which foreign learners of Standard English correctly identify Focus Adverbs in a grammatical order, which is traditionally and strictly SAV and in an ungrammatical order, which will be the assumed order of SVA.[1]

It is proposed that the access that these learners have to the parametric values of verb movement in their own language are transferred to the foreign language they are learning and therefore allow for the erroneous production of sentences in (1a) and in (2b):

(1)   a. She often goes out.

       b. *She goes often out.

(2)   a. He always eats fish.

       b.*He eats always fish.

These findings in the acquisition literature (White 1990, 1991; Formisano 2013; Stringer 2013) demonstrate that the non-target production and acceptability judgements may be due to interference. In other words, the ungrammatical SVA order is accepted or produced instead of the grammatical SAV order because the parametric settings (e.g. verb movement) set in the learner's L1 carry over to the L2.

The aim of this work is twofold. On the one hand, it aims to explore the extent of errors in adverb placement and their grammatical acceptability in L1 English speakers

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[1] Focus Adverbs can modify almost every element in a given sentence, therefore, for purposes of this study and questionnaire it will be assumed that they are modifying the verb, as would a true adverb.

and Italian learners of English. On the other hand, it also aims to shed light on whether existing explanations for such errors can effectively account for the empirical findings. The two studies conducted for this purpose will also strive to investigate the issues EFL learners encounter during the acquisition process. This will be done by comparing the results of the subjects with different levels of English.

I will then present possible treatments to increase grammatical accuracy. As it will be assumed that if EFL learners accept a certain non-target structure in a passive grammaticality judgement task, then the error will most likely also occur in active production tasks, as there is less time for the subject to reflect on the grammaticality of the structure.

1.1.   Second and Foreign Language Acquisition of English Adverb Placement

One important goal of research of second and foreign language acquisition is that of determining why some errors persist in learners even once they have achieved levels of advanced proficiency, while also determining the root of these errors. Erroneous placement of certain elements of a sentence could be accounted for either in terms of a lack of knowledge of the target language, overgeneralization of learned grammar rules, or perhaps issues in the execution during language production. In foreign language learning, certain properties of a specific language can be exceptionally difficult to learn when the property at hand may be absent from the learner's L1. This is especially true when these properties are being taught to learners after the critical period for language acquisition, i.e. a period of time before the onset of puberty in which a child in naturally able to acquire a language (Chomsky 1986) or later in adulthood (Stringer 2013:79). Other issues may arise if a certain property of a language is present in the L1 of the learner while absent in the FL, also leaving room for interference errors. Understanding the L1's influence over the L2 is fundamental in the study of FL/L2 acquisition errors and can help researchers understand how to better confront these issues in the language learning classroom.

It is also important to observe and understand these types of errors in L2 language users in order to accurately pinpoint the causes of non-target grammatical representations or procedures and investigate if they are caused by influence of an L1 property. This may be due to learners' failure to recognize L1 and L2 differences or simply because they apply L1 procedures to the L2 which lead to ungrammatical responses. Either way, these errors must be identified and corrected in order for the learner to achieve higher levels of proficiency or appear as native-like as possible.

1.2.   Aims of the Thesis

This thesis has two main aims. The first is to provide evidence for both the complexity in the positioning of Focus Adverbs in English native speakers and to investigate the acceptability of different positions of Focus Adverbs in this group of speakers. The second aim is to delve into the mental grammar of the Italian EFL learner, explore the acceptability of ungrammatical word orders, and account for the issues that may arise with Focus Adverb positioning. The first experiment of the study will confirm the placement of these elements in native speakers of English, assuming that there is a strict word order for adverbs, i.e. SAV, and investigate their complexity in said group. The second experiment will test these elements in a group of non-native English speakers, who have studied EFL for a number or years and who claim to have advanced or proficient levels of English. The errors found in this group of learners can, indeed, be accounted for by theories of second language acquisition and interference.

The questions being posed in this thesis are threefold in character:

1. What is the nature of Focus Adverbs in native speakers of English?

2. Are Focus Adverbs problematic for learners of English as a Foreign Language (henceforth EFL), even when these learners attest to having an advanced or near-native like level (C1/C1+), in contrast to their native speaker counterparts?[2]

3. Does an EFL learner's level contribute to their performance in recognizing traditionally ungrammatical structures?

1.3.   Organization

The first part of this thesis is the literature review. Chapter 2 reviews the available literature on the theoretical background of adverbs and more precisely, Focus Adverbs. It will do so from a generative point of view, considering the syntax of adverbs and the Verb-movement parameter. It will also demonstrate the different functions of the Focus Adverbs *only*, *even*, and *also* with some examples from both Italian and English. Following that, there is a review of the literature on language education and a review of previous studies on modifier placement in the foreign language classroom, with special attention to studies that have focused on adverbs. The subsection which follows includes a brief description of a pilot study conducted in the spring semester of 2018 in high school aged adolescent learners of English that aimed to find if adjectives or adverbs were more problematic in these learners and the nature of the issues.

In Chapter 3 I will present the findings from the studies conducted in November 2018 on two groups of English speakers, one being a group of native speakers of English and the other a group of EFL learners. In this chapter I will outline the methods used, go over the materials and the participants' information, the coding

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[2] This is based upon the Council of Europe's *Common European framework of reference for languages* and corresponds to an Advanced or Highly Proficient User.

procedure and then present the results of the data collected. Each study will have its own discussion section before moving onto Chapter 4.

Chapter 4 discusses the data collected from the studies in Chapter 3 with hopes to comparatively analyze them. Implications of the study's results will be described and finally the limitations will be given. Chapter 5 will discuss the conclusions of the study as well as the future directions the researcher could take.

2.   Literature Review

In this section I will review the available literature on the key areas of linguistics that will be discussed in this thesis, which are generative syntax and language acquisition theories, both in terms of foreign languages and second language acquisition. The first part discusses generativism and Universal Grammar (UG). Following that, I introduce the positioning of adverbs following Jackendoff's (1972) work and then go on to discuss the theories of their syntactic realization in order to create a solid basis of the generative approach for these elements following work by Jackendoff (1981), Pollock (1989), Alexiadou (1994), Kayne (1994), Potsdam (1998), and Cinque (1998, 1999).

Later on, I will cover theories of foreign language learning, highlighting studies that focus on adverb placement in the FL classroom, beginning with White (1991), Formisano (2013), and Solís Hernández (2006), discussing issues that have arisen in different groups of EFL learners and proposing solutions to correct these types of errors in these students.

2.1.   The Generative Approach

Generativists propose that an innate language faculty in the human brain, the UG, guides each human being in the acquisition of their first language. Research in this field is focused on understanding the precise nature of UG, what is being acquired during the process, and how the acquisition process begins and progresses during one's life. It presumes that mental language is biologically endowed to humans with a

set of possible universal principals and parameters, which are, respectively, rules that hold true across all languages and sets of acceptable values of different features of all possible languages. This process is assumed to occur in a language acquirer observing competent speakers in his or her community speaking the language, leading to the natural discovery of parameter settings specific to the language that is being acquired. This sets the values of the parameters accordingly to allow for the learner to become a competent speaker of the language. This is the process observed when children acquire their first language, as well as in adult speakers learning a second or foreign language and explains for some universally observable patterns of the acquisition process in these learner groups (Chomsky 1995). Evidence for this theory has been found by conducting research on feral children who have had little or no language exposure from a young age, studying if they are then able to successfully acquire parameters of a language (Fromkin et al., 1974; Pinker 1989, 2013, among others).

Linguists have proposed that there are different phases of interlanguage that a learner transitions through on their way to becoming a fully competent speaker at the beginning stages of learning an L2 or foreign language. This is generally due to overlap and interference from the L1. The Full Access/Full Transfer (FA/FT) theory argues that L2 learners' L2 grammar begins where the L1 leaves off, allowing for a full transfer or parametric values of the L1 to transfer to the L2 (Schwarz & Sprouse 1994). This is also the most widely accepted theory in L2 and FL amongst linguists. This would mean that there is a transfer of the parametric values of the L1 at the beginning of the learning process of the L2 that is then followed by a failure-driven process of readjustment that is guided and constrained by UG (Schwartz & Sprouse 1994; Formisano 2013; among others). This process can account for the issues L2 and FL learners have with the placement of different elements when learning a new language, especially when they contradict the L1. This thesis will deal with these issues, especially considering adverbs, and more specifically Focus Adverbs, which prove to be challenging for EFL learners of all levels.

Focus Adverbs are normally grouped with and taught alongside other categories of adverbs in traditional grammars despite the fact that their positioning is heavily dependent on a combination of syntactic, semantic and, especially when spoken, prosodic information. They are classified as a special subclass of adverbs considering they share some general characteristics in their behavior and positioning (König 1991). However, the adverb itself is also considered a devious element when it comes to generative syntax. In traditional terms, it is deceptively easy to give a definition to adverbs and distinguish their classes based on function, however there is much debate in the literature on how adverbs are syntactically realized and situated in a sentence (Cinque 2003). In the following subsections, I will give a general overview of the available literature on adverbs and introduce the two theories of their syntactic realizations, then discuss their importance regarding Focus Adverbs, as they are important for a thorough analysis of said elements. I will also explore their positioning in English and Italian from a cross-linguistic point of view in Section 2.4.1.4 and discuss some of the similarities and differences in the placement of these elements between the two languages, as well as reasons for differences in grammaticality.

2.1.1. The Syntax of Adverbs

How adverbs are realized syntactically is an ever-alive debate amongst theoretical linguists. There are two theories for how their structure is realized in the sentence structure. The options for their realization are that they are either found in adjoined positions, adjoining themselves to the VP (Pollock 1989, Johnson 1991, among others), or that they are to be considered in Specifier (Spec) positions, acting as the head of a distinct projection (Jackendoff 1981, Alexiadou 1994, Kayne 1994, Cinque 1998), which will later be discussed in this section. Before discussing these two theories, however, we will start with a general description of adverb distribution and placement in finite clauses based on Jackendoff's (1972) research, which divides adverbs into two major classes, namely VP-Adverbs and S-Adverbs.

Jackendoff (1972) introduces the theory that English adverbs can be classified based on their positional distribution in tensed clauses. He proposes that there are two syntactic classes of adverbs which correspond to the two traditional distinction of predicate modifiers from propositional modifiers. In his syntactic analysis, predicate modifiers are attached at the VP-level while the latter modify S, giving us the labels VP-Adverbs and S-Adverbs. Given below in (3a) and (3b) are examples of each kind, and are, respectively, Jackendoff's (3.12) and (3.7).

(3) a. Stanley *completely/easily/handily/quickly* ate his Wheaties.

  b. Horatio *evidently/probably/certainly/apparently* lost his mind.

While at first glance these two adverb types seem to behave similarly since they can both appear to the left of the main verb, this is not at all the case. Jackendoff states that their distribution varies, and that VP-Adverbs can occur either directly following the subject, as shown in (4b) or at the end of the clause, as in (4d), however are not permitted to the left of modals or auxiliaries (4e). S-Adverbs can be found in the following positions: clause-initially (5a), immediately following the subject (5b), or to the right of a modal or finite auxiliary verb (5d).

(4) a. **Completely,* Stanley ate his Wheaties.

  b. Stanley *completely* ate his Wheaties.

  c. **Stanley ate *completely* his Wheaties.

  d. Stanley ate his Wheaties *completely*.

  e. **Stanley *completely* is eating his Wheaties.

(5) a. *Apparently*, Horatio lost his mind.

  b. Horatio *apparently* lost his mind.

  c. Horatio lost his mind *apparently*.

d.   Horatio can *apparently* lose his mind.

These observations, however, do not explain how adverbs are syntactically integrated into the structure. To better understand their syntactic realization, two more recent theories must be considered. We will first look at Cinque's (1999), as well as others', work which claims that Adverbs are realized in the specifier position of their own projections and then to the opposing theory that Adverbs are realized as adjuncts.

Cinque (1999) uses the labels "higher adverbs" for S-Adverbs and "lower adverbs" for VP-Adverbs. He, as well as others, including Alexiadou (1994) and Kayne (1994), claim that adverbs are located in the position of specifier in their own distinct projection which is called AdvP and does not assume it to take the VP or a projection dominating the VP as a complement, therefore it is not to be considered an extended projection of V. He reiterates this by citing supporting evidence from Kayne's (1994) more restrictive X-bar theory. This positioning can be explained with evidence found that adverbs do not block head movement in some verbal forms and that certain adverbs can undergo Topicalization and Focus Movement, which are only open to XPs but not to the X°s. He also states that the rigidly fixed relative order of AdvPs is not accounted for under the adjunction theory. However, this is expected if we take into account the general Spec/head agreement relation and apply the so-called "location-in-Spec" hypothesis.

Contrary to this, the adjoined-position theory, or adjunction theory, postulates that adverbs are realized in adjunction positions in a clause structure that has a singular IP dominating one or more VPs (Chomsky 1986). This can also explain why more than one adverb can occur in a certain position and how they can occur one after another. If we were to take into account the Spec-position theory there would have to be one projection for each adverb, since each projection has only one specifier.

According to Potsdam (1998), who offers two essential observations in favor of the adjunct theory, adjunction accounts for the possibility that adverbs are iterated, and

so, adverbs can, in his words, "pile up" hierarchically at one single location. If we consider the Spec-position theory, we find that it would be necessary to have one projection for each adverb. Potsdam sustains that while this is not impossible, it should be led by English-internal motivation, which is absent in this case. His second argument for the adjunct theory is the possibility of certain pairs of adverbs, at least for the English language, to appear in a relatively free order when the semantics are appropriate for the given situation. This, however, has been argued against with evidence in Cinque's (1999) work and states that there are six different counterexamples for why adverbs can appear in an unexpected order, outside of their rigidly-fixed order.

With both theories now considered, Cinque's Spec-position hypothesis will be taken into consideration as the theoretical basis for Focus Adverbs in this thesis, and it will be assumed that adverbs are generated in a Spec-position of their own AdvP projection.

Adverbs can be categorized into four main classes; Modal, Aspectual, Selected, and Focus.[3] Although there seem to be exceptions, and there is room for debate, they can be found in three different positions in a sentence, providing the position respects the hierarchy of precedence based on which class they fall into (Giusti 2003: 131-133). In Figure 1 (cf. Giusti 2003: 131-133) we take into consideration the first three classes of adverbs: Modal, Aspectual and Selected adverbs.

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[3] Focus Adverbs are not always overtly mentioned in traditional language grammars due to their complexity of placement, and in generative linguistics can appear to have different labels such as Focus Particles, Constituent Adverbs, and so on.

Figure 1. The structure of the Adverbial Hierarchy in the VP
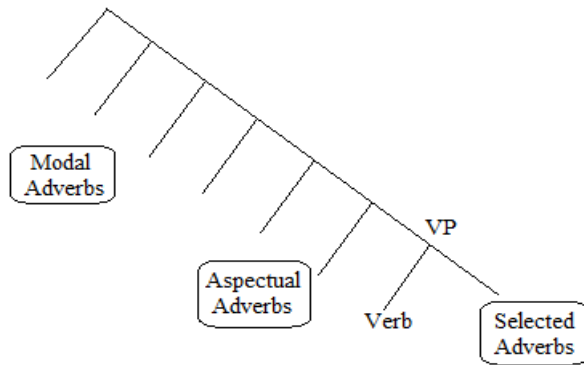
The four classes of adverbs and a few examples are listed below in (i) – (iv):

(i)   Modal Adverbs, such as *frankly* and *probably*, present themselves higher up, above the verb, in the sentence structure;

(ii)   Aspectual Adverbs, such as *always, completely* and *carefully*, are found above the verb, but below modal adverbs;

(iii)   Selected Adverbs are located inside the internal structure of the VP;

(iv)   Focus Adverbs, i.e. *only, even* and *just*, modify the constituent they precede or follow, as demonstrated below in a and b of Figure 2, and which do not necessarily take scope over the entire VP.[4]

Focus Adverbs, as mentioned above, take on bit of a different structure than other adverbs. Their structure can be seen in Figure 2 (Giusti 2003), showing that they

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[4] This idea will later be discussed in Section 1.4.1.4, where, for example, in English, the Focus Adverb can take scope over the entire VP, whereas in Italian it does not necessarily do so.

appear in the position of specifier of the element they induce focus onto, which can be of different grammatical categories, as will be further discussed in the next section.

Figure 2. The Structure of Focus Particles
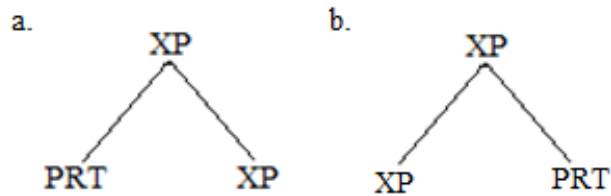
2.1.2. Verb-movement and Adverb Placement

Another important aspect of adverbs is that, while they seem relatively free to appear in a number of positions in a sentence, there are some semantic and syntactic restrictions that govern which adverbs can take up a position (Jackendoff 1972). Considering Italian and English, the two languages that will be the focus of study in Chapter 2, we find that both languages allow for adverbs to appear in a pre-subject position, as well as at the end of a VP, as shown in (6) and (7):[5]

(6)   a.   John drinks his coffee quickly.

        b.   Gianni beve il suo caffè rapidamente.

(7)   a.   Carefully John opened the door.

        b.   Attentamente Gianni ha aperto la porta.

In both Italian and English, the adverb occurs after the auxiliary verb, as shown in (8):

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[5] Examples taken from White (1991) and modified for this thesis.

(8) a. John has often visited the museum.

b. Gianni ha spesso visitato il museo.

Something interesting to note, however, is that some positions are not available to English and contrast with Italian adverb placement. In Italian, an adverb may appear between the verb and its direct object, i.e. SVAO, whereas this position is typically unavailable to English as outlined in (9). English (9a) is ungrammatical. However, the Italian (9b) is grammatical:[6]

(9) a. *Mary has watched often television.

b. Maria ha guardato spesso la televisione.

An even more interesting contrast between Italian and English is that the position between the subject and the verb. i.e. SAV, is available for adverbs in English, but not in Italian, as outlined in (10).

(10) a. Mary often watches television.

b. *Maria spesso ha guardato la televisione.

The similarities and differences between Italian and English can be accounted for by a parameter for UG called *the verb-raising parameter* (Emonds 1978, 1985; Chomsky 1989; Pollock 1989). This parameter accounts for a number of differences between Italian and English, including the differences noted in adverb placement which have been discussed in (6) through (10). The parameter requires all finite Italian verbs to raise to Inflection (I), which does not happen to English verbs, with exception of *be* and *have*. This is clearly outlined in Table 1 (Hamann 2000) where Hamann notes

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[6] This is true to most categories of adverbs, however debatable for Focus Adverbs.

French as a language featuring V-to-I movement, however Italian can be incorporated in this group, too, since it also has the positive setting of this parameter:

Table 1. The Verb-Raising Parameter (Hamann 2000)

	Negative setting:	Positive setting:
Adverb placement:	S A (main)-V...,	S (main)-V A...
Negation:	do-support for main-verbs	finite verb before Neg
WH-questions:	subject/aux inversion,	subject/verb inversion
	do-support for main-verbs	
Instantiation:	English	French with V-to-I, German with V-to-C

English and Italian, as well as other Romance languages, including French, are proposed to have a similar D-structure (Pollock 1989) with the adverb's projection, AdvP, base-generated to the left of the VP, as is seen in example (10). This accounts for the similarities and differences in the grammaticality of adverb placement between these languages, especially after there has occurred movement in Italian.

2.1.3. Theoretical Backgrounds of Focus Adverbs

Elements in a language, such as *even*, *also*, *only*, and so on for English and their equivalents in other languages of the world are very often categorized as adverbs in traditional grammars. These elements, known as Focus Particles, introduce focus onto a specific element in a sentence, i.e. the foci. These particles have proven difficult to define syntactically and theoretical studies appear to indicate that they are a heterogeneous class (König 1991; Gruyter 2003). This opinion stems from the fact this

small group of items share a unique set of characteristics, yet each single item can behave differently from the others. Despite there being discouraging evidence for their belonging to one single category, there is evidence of them having a large number of properties in common. It has been shown that they share many properties with adverbs, especially in terms of their behavior with regards to syntactic movement and should therefore be designated to their own subclass of adverbs known as "function words" or "syncategorematic words" (König 1991) and will therefore continue to be called Focus Adverbs in this thesis.

According to König (1991), among others, Focus, [+focus], is the feature which assigns the idea that a certain element in a sentence is to be focalized. This realization can be manifested in different ways. The feature assignment can occur by means of movement, i.e. movement of certain elements leftward in the sentence, as is exemplified in (11). Another way of triggering the focus structure in a phrase is by placing intonation on a specific word, as outlined in (12) and finally by using a word that can trigger the structure, such as a Focus Adverb as seen in (13), although certain other adverbs (such as *possibly*) can be used as a focusing element, as suggested by Cinque (1999).

(11) a.   THE KEYS*,* I lost.

     b.   MARY*,* I saw.

(12) a.   I lost the keys.

     b.   I LOST the keys.

     c.   I lost the KEYS.

(13) a.   ONLY I saw Mary.

     b.   I ONLY saw Mary.

     c.   I saw ONLY Mary.

The examples in (11) would not normally be grammatically possible in English, since it does not typically allow for instances of a verb's direct object being raised over both the verb and its subject, however, when the Focus structure is activated, at least in spoken English, this structure is acceptable for the majority of speakers. This is even more true when the focused word takes on certain prosodic features, such as tonicity. An example of this include when a speaker is repeating information for a second time, in order to reiterate information to the listener. The examples in (12), on the other hand, are all grammatically correct. They are all, at first glance, the same sentence, but when prosodic properties come into play and the intonation shifts from one word to another, the speaker's intent changes. (12a) suggests that the speaker and no one else lost the keys, (12b) suggests that the speaker did no other action to the keys but lose them, in contrast to finding them, forgetting them, etc., and (12c) suggests the speaker did not lose anything else but the keys.

The examples in (13) are similar in nature to (12). The *only* in (a) shifts, so does the focused element, resulting in different meanings directed at the listener. (13a) suggests that only the speaker saw Mary and no one else did, whereas (13b), on the other hand, can suggest two different events. The first is that the speaker's only action was that of seeing Mary and perhaps did not speak to her. This occurs if the verb, in this case the past simple of the verb to see, *saw*, is to take on the nuclear stress. The second interpretation for (13b) is that the speaker did not see anyone else but Mary, which seems to overlap with the interpretation of (13c). (13c), which is grammatically acceptable in spoken English, especially when emphasizing the fact that the only person the speaker saw was Mary, has only one interpretation, and this is that Mary is the person the speaker saw, and he saw no one else. (13c) is interesting because its grammaticality is questionable in both written English and spoken English in a more neutral tone. If a speaker needs to indicate that they went to a party and saw just one person they knew, i.e. Mary, they would first express this idea as (13b) and not (13c).

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With these in mind, in terms of Focus Adverbs, Jacobs (1984) and König (1991) posit that they can do the following:

(i)   Place focus on a specific part of a sentence;

(ii)   Combine with a specific constituent;

(iii)   Have specific semantic scope.

In English, as well as other languages, focus particles have been found to modify all types of phrases including the Verb Phrase (VP), Noun Phrase (NP), Adjective Phrase (AdjP), Prepositional Phrase (PP) and even other adverbs and numerals (König 1991:20), as demonstrated in (14):

(14) a. Verb: Mary *only* ate a sandwich.

      b.   Noun: *Only* John does the washing up.

      c.   Adjective: She drives *only* red cars.

      d.   Preposition: He left the books *only* on the bed.

      e.   Adverb: They liked the cake *only* slightly.

      f.   Numeral: *Only* one person can win the prize.

One of their notable characteristics is the variability and flexibility in their positioning, which is highly dependent on where the speaker wants to place the focus. This is done by a combination of positioning the element, engaging the focus structure and using the proper nuclear tone, making them peculiar as they are seen to be able to move through a sentence and are found in nearly all available positions, as is shown below in (15a) through (15h).

(15) a. *Only* John could have bought the flowers for Mary.

      b.   John *only* could have bought the flowers for Mary.

c.   John could *only* have bought the flowers for Mary.

d.   John could have *only* bought the flowers for Mary.

e.   ??John could have bought *only* the flowers for Mary.

f.   John could have bought the flowers *only* for Mary.

g.   John could have bought the flowers for *only* Mary.

h.   John could have bought the flowers for Mary *only.*

As is illustrated in (15a) through (15h) the focus particle *only* easily shifts throughout the sentence while maintaining grammaticality. This is due to the fact that focus particles are argued to modify their constituent from two possible positions, either directly preceding or following their constituent (Giusti 2003).[7]

In contrast, this is quite different from other types of adverbs, such as those of manner or frequency, which when found in certain positions in a sentence do not hold to be grammatically acceptable as exemplified in (16).

(16) a.   ??Easily, John could have bought the flowers for Mary.

b.   John easily could have bought the flowers for Mary.

c.   John could easily have bought the flowers for Mary.

d.   John could have easily bought the flowers for Mary.

e.   *John could have bought easily the flowers for Mary.

f.   ??John could have bought the flowers easily for Mary.

g.   *John could have bought the flowers for easily Mary.

h.   ??John could have bought the flowers for Mary easily.

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[7] While the structures in (15a)- (15h) are all possible, in English there is a preferred word order of SAV when the Focus Adverb is modifying the verb, and for the purposes of this thesis it will further be discussed in 1.4.1.3.

While other adverbs are categorized into subgroups such as manner, frequency, place, and time, Focus Adverbs are traditionally categorized as a subgroup of adverbs in English, mainly because of the variation which is found in their syntactic placement. Nevertheless, within their own category they can behave differently amongst themselves. In the following section the elements *only*, *even,* and *also* will be taken into consideration as they are the three Focus Adverbs used in the experimental study which follows in chapter 2.

Focus Adverbs can be categorized into different groups based on their semantic meaning and their interaction with other elements within a sentence. König (1991) categorizes them into Additive Particles, such as *also¸* Additive Scalar Particles, i.e. *even,* and finally the Exclusive Particles, such as *only.* This will be further discussed in the next sections following that the variation in their placement will be considered, alongside examples given in both English and Italian.

2.1.3.1.   The adverb *only*

Only, which can be comparable to the Italian *solo,* but also renders itself at times as *soltanto* or *solamente,* is known as an exclusive element in the literature. Exclusive elements, which include other particles like *merely*, *solely, alone*, and at times *just* and *simply*, are assumed that a relevant sentence without the particle is true, however they also entail that no other alternative of the sentence can be considered when being interpreted (König 1991). This concept is further outlined in (17).[8]

(17)   a. Only John came.

b. John came (presupposition)

c. John (came) and only John came.

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[8] Example taken from König (1991), see Section 5.1.

(18)   a. John only met Mary.

   b. John met Mary and Mary only.

   c. John met Mary and not Jane.

   d. John only met Mary and did not dance with her.

In (17a), the speaker is conveying that a person, in this case John, was present at some location, therefore (17b) is a presupposition by both parties and excludes that any other person perhaps previously presupposed to be there, was not there. This leads to (17c) and its interpretation that *"John came and only John came – not Mary."* This, therefore, excludes any other possible complement from being considered.

 Interestingly, as scope plays an important role in the interpretation of a sentence with these particles, in this case a Focus Adverb, it is important to note that when it is used as a modifier of the VP, as is found in (18), the particle takes the function of an adverb and this allows it to take scope over the verb and its complement. This will further be discussed in Section 1.4.1.3. This considered, the most neutral reading of (18a) is (18b), and by default (18c) and not (18d).

2.1.3.2 The adverb *also*

Also, which can be considered a counterpart to the Italian *anche*, is a particle that generally introduces semantic properties of inclusion or addition. Other particles that introduce inclusion or addition are *too*, *as well*, *likewise*, and even *either*. With the exclusion of *either*, these words do not have any ordering effect, or scalar interpretation, over a relevant value, however, operate over an 'unordered set of contextually relevant values' (König 1991). This is exemplified in (19).

(19)   a. John also met Mary.

   b. John met Mary.

   c. John met Mary and John met Jane.

d. David met Mary and John met Mary.

e. John bought wine for the party and John met Mary.

It is assumed that a sentence with a simple additive particle, like *also*, presupposes the relevant sentence without the particle as always being true, as shown in (19b) and then further presupposes another alternative sentence, as in (19c) One complexity to this, however, is that (19a) can be considered ambiguous in some ways, since further interpretations of this seemingly straightforward sentence include (19d) and (19e) and therefore further context or prosody is needed to be able to correctly interpret the intended meaning.

2.1.3.3.   The adverb *even*

Even, like *also*, is considered an additive or inclusive Focus Adverb, however it also implies inclusivity on a scale which considers a specific set of values and, therefore, is better called a "scalar additive particle" according to König (1991). While they are similar to other additive particles, in English, as well as many of the world's languages, they have a slight lexical distinction from the simple additive particles *also/too,* which makes them both additive and scalar. The interpretation of this scalar value is that the complement of the sentence is the least likely thing that could have happened and may also express some value of surprise (König 1991).

(20)   a. John even met Mary.

b. John met Mary.

c. John did many things and he met Mary.

d. John met many people and he met Mary.

As was seen in (20), there can be different interpretations of the scope of the Focus Adverb, and one simple sentence can take on different meanings. In (20), the effects of

scope are the same, and therefore allow for multiple interpretations, depending heavily on other features the speaker gives. There is an underlying value of surprise with *even,* as it expresses that the event was unlikely to a degree.

2.2   Variation of Focus Adverb Placement in English and Italian of *only*, *even*, and *also*

Focus Adverbs, when used strictly in their adverbial sense, i.e. modifying the VP, generally seem to have a strict word order of SVA. This is different from Italian which allows for two options in its placement, both before and after the verb as seen in examples c. and d. in (22) through (24).

As discussed in the previous sections, in English the Focus adverb's scope is seemingly ambiguous, allowing for the interlocutor to express a number of ideas with one structure, as long as prosodic features are implemented and interpreted correctly. In Italian, the choice of the word order changes the semantic meaning of the sentence. This simple variation of word placement in Italian allows for the speaker to shift the Focus from the event, i.e. the verb, to the object.

In English, however, one issue that may arise during the process of interpreting such elements is when they modify the VP. According to König (1991), the 'meaning of a sentence depends on the meaning of two components of that sentence': (a) its focus and (b) its scope. When a Focus Adverb finds itself as a modifier of the VP, as in (21), it can take scope over both the VP and its complement, and therefore can be interpreted in two ways, as demonstrated in (21b and c):

(21) a.   John only bought the flowers.

b.   John only **bought** the flowers – he didn't put them in a vase.

c.   John only bought **the flowers** – he didn't buy the oranges.

(21a) shows us the simple sentence where the Focus Adverb only precedes the verb. This sentence has two interpretations, as shown in (21b) and (21c). In (21b), *only* takes scope over the verb and allows for the interpretation that there were no other events involved. (21c), however, puts emphasis on the fact that he did not buy anything but the flowers, and therefore excludes other objects. While the most neutral interpretation would be that of perceiving the event as being under the scope of Focus, therefore the SAV structure, with the right prosodic features either one is a plausible construction for all native speakers.

The following examples of English sentences (22) through (27) will be observed and compared against their Italian translations. They will then be discussed with the syntactic differences in the adverb placement in mind.

In (22) through (24) a series of sentences highlighting the differences in adverb placement in English and Italian are presented. The a. examples show the only possible word order in English, which is SVA, while examples b. show that the post-verbal positioning of the Focus Adverb is ungrammatical. Examples c. and d. show their Italian translations, which are both possible in Italian.

(22)   a.   She only drew a picture.

       b.   *She drew only a picture.

       c.   Ha solo fatto un disegno.

       d.   Ha fatto solo un disegno.

In (22) the only grammatical option in English is a., or the SAV word order, which as previously discussed can take on two different interpretations and induce focus onto either the event or the object. In Italian, on the other hand, the word order is very important, and the meaning can change depending on word order. In (22c) the focus is placed on the event, i.e. the participle of the verb "fare", while in (22d) the focus is placed on the object. Because of the verb-raising parameter, in the Italian examples the

adverb is never raised over the inflected verb, and its two possible locations are either below the inflected verb or below the entire VP.

(23) a.   He *even* saw Mary.

        b.   *He saw *even* Mary.

        c.   Ha *persino* visto Mary.

        d.   Ha visto *persino* Mary.

In (23), much like in (22), the only grammatical option for English is (23a), whereas Italian allows for both positions, each with its distinct meaning. The interpretation of (23c) means that the entire event is somewhat of a surprise to the speaker and includes information that was not expected. (24d), on the other hand, emphasizes that the subject of the sentence saw many people and, while it may have been someone unexpected, Mary was included amongst these people.

(24) a.   He *also* brought a gift.

        b.   *He brought *also* a gift.

        c.   Ha *anche* portato un regalo.

        d.   Ha portato *anche* un regalo.

Finally, in (24) we find the Focus Adverb *also,* which once again presents possible positions similar to those found in (22) and (23). In English (23a) is the only position which has a grammatical word order, while the examples in Italian are both possible. As was explained in both (22) and (23), (24c)'s adverb focuses on the event, whereas in (24d) it is on the object.

     In sum, we can conclude that in Italian the interpretation of the postverbal positioning is generally viewed as putting focus on the object, whereas the preverbal is focusing on the entire event. This difference in Italian, though it may seem tedious,

and the fact that there are two available positions in the language, can be viewed as potential reasons adverb placement is an issue for this group of speakers. The next section (Section 1.4.2) will discuss the learnability of these elements and the way they are taught in the FL classroom.

2.3.   English Adverbs in the EFL Classroom

FL and L2 acquisition researchers claim that the teaching of adverbs is one of the more arduous tasks for EFL teachers. Adverbs are extremely difficult to learn, especially when compared to other word categories such as nouns, verbs and adjectives, due to their variability in placement (Firsten & Killian 1994; Solís Hernández 2006).

Generally speaking, EFL teachers must use textbooks that give grammatical rules of adverb placement, often resulting in teachers asking students to memorize them using tables of information that focus on lists of rules for positioning. These resources are usually found in the back of the textbook and many students normally do not refer to them as they should. Many times, this process happens quickly: the adverbs are introduced, the rules are explained, and then they are never formally spoken about again. The teaching methods for Focus Adverbs are quite similar, however they are never formally taught and often merely expected to be eventually learned by the student.

2.3.1. Previous Studies of EFL Adverb Positioning in the EFL Classroom

Language acquisition and learnability theories have been widely studied by linguists over the years, especially with regards to how the input of language interacts with UG (cf. Lightfoot 1989; Pinker 1984, 1989). Furthermore, the study of foreign language acquisition (FLA) and the influence the L1 has over the FL have both been extensively studied more recently (see Formisano 2013, Stringer 2013). However, while modifiers, such as adverbs, adjectives and those of the prepositional phrase have been studied in

the field of early language acquisition (for adverbs see e.g. Crain *et al.* 1992, 1994; Paterson *et al.* 2003; Gualmini *et al.* 2003; Notley *et al.* 2009; Höhle *et al.* 2009) they have been slightly less touched on in foreign and second language acquisition. This is true for the case of Focus Adverbs in these groups of language learners, as well (Stringer 2013: 77).

It is claimed that these core grammatical elements and their parameters are so tightly woven into the syntactic system of the speaker that there is a high probability of them interfering with the speaker's L2 grammar when learning a foreign or second language later in life (White 1991: 134). Experimental studies have been done to attempt a reset of these parameters in foreign language learners, in particular, e.g. White (1989a, 1989b) argues that L2 and foreign language learners use the UG parameter settings learned in the acquisition of the L1 and incorrectly generalize and then apply them to the L2. She also states that in specific circumstances they are able to reset them, and that negative evidence can be used as a tool to do so. She later investigates the learnability issues of adverbs and their placement that arise in French-speaking learners of English by using negative evidence, i.e. informing the learner of errors and the use of form-focus strategies in the classroom (cf. White 1991). It was proven in this study that the use of negative evidence worked as a short-term solution for "resetting parameters" of adverb placement in this group of learners.

In another study done on EFL learners, graduate students and experienced teachers of the Teaching English as a Foreign Language (TEFL) program at the University of Costa Rica, Solís Hernández (2006) found that both students and teachers failed to identify sentences with incorrect adverb placement in grammaticality judgement tasks. They were asked to identify any errors, if any, in sentences and then correct the errors. Her study used different categories of adverbs, however it did not include Focus Adverbs. Across the board it was found that there was a high percentage of participants who failed to recognize the sentence as ungrammatical in more complex sentences and with auxiliaries such as *be*. She claims this can be troublesome

and a more effective method should be introduced to clarify any doubts and to reinforce general adverb placement rules, as well as to raise linguistic awareness. She also offers as a solution that English teachers should often review the rules themselves since this is an area where mistakes are easily made.

In another more recent experimental study, Formisano (2013), following White (1991), successfully used the teaching of syntactic verb movement from a cross-linguistic perspective with the goal of resetting the parameters of adverb placement in Italian middle school and high school students learning EFL. Formisano begins by stating that while UG has a great role over the acquisition of the L1, several different theories attempt to explain the role it has over the acquisition of the L2 or FL. The first theory, the *Minimal Trees Hypothesis* (Vainikka & Young-Scholten, 1994), postulates that there is first a transfer of the lexical category of the L1 onto the L2 that follows the linear order, which is then carried over to the interlanguage stage, and then finally there is a progressive transfer of the functional categories, from bottom to top. Another possible hypothesis for how the UG interacts with the L1 in the acquisition of the L2 or foreign language is that of the Weak Transfer (Eubank 1993), which states that both functional and lexical categories of the L1 are transferred onto the L2, but in their weak forms. The value of the features is not transferred in the initial stage, however only at the more advanced stage of the interlanguage. While this hypothesis is interesting, it is still not the most-widely accepted one.

The most-widely accepted hypothesis of this language learning phenomenon is that of Schwartz and Sprouse's (1994) *Full Transfer Full Access Hypothesis* (FT/FA). It states that there is an initial full transfer of the parametric values of an L1 onto the L2, which is then followed by a failure-driven period of readjustment guided by UG. This hypothesis best explains why Italian students of English, even at higher levels of proficiency, commit errors in the placement of adverbs. This can account for their failure to move the verb in English, resulting in a transfer of a linear word order and therefore an ungrammatical structure. Another struggle for learners of English is that

most grammars used in schools do not overtly explain this difference in position to pupils, but only give prescriptive explanations of their various positions for the different categories of adverbs, glossing over the parametric differences between English and Italian. In some cases, they even exclude explanations for certain categories of adverbs altogether. Considering this group of elements appears to give rise to great difficulty in students of English, even those who have attained a high level of proficiency, this thesis will use the FT/FA theory to account for this phenomenon in this group of students.

The FT/FA theory now taken into account, the goal of her study was to attempt to reset the parametric values for the verb-movement setting, as was much the goal in White's (1991) study. Formisano conducted a study on four groups, two groups of younger students and two groups of older students, from a high-school in Italy and found that there was indeed a difference in the results of adverb placement. All students were given a pretest, an explanation of adverb placement (either traditional or linguistic), and finally, an immediate post-test and a secondary post-test. Both one group of the younger students and one group of older students were given a traditional explanation of adverb placement. The other two groups were given a more linguistic explanation of adverb placement explaining the differences between Italian and English regarding verb-movement.

She later found that the younger group of students that did not receive a linguistic explanation of adverb placement did not see any noticeable change from their pretest scores. The students that received the linguistic explanation of verb-movement, however, seemed to have a much better understanding of adverb placement and nearly doubled their accuracy on the immediate post-test. They also did better in the long-run and had about an 11% increase from the original pretest in their correct response accuracy after 10 weeks.

Formisano found that in the group of older students, there was a slight improvement in the score with the traditional teaching method which was also retained

after the 10-week mark (from 54% accuracy to 60% in the second post-test). The most extraordinary score, however, was found in the older students who received the linguistic explanation. Formisano found that these students performed very well both after the explanation and the second post-test (79% in the 10-week mark post-test). She finally concludes that though further research is needed, this study seems to be evidence for the FT/FA theory and that a linguistic approach to the teaching of adverbs in the EFL classroom is, indeed, more effective than a traditional descriptive one, which demonstrates the important role of linguistics in the field of second language acquisition and language teaching.

2.4. Summary

Section 1.4 strove to outline the complexities in adverb structure according to theoretical accounts and took into account adverb placement with regards to English, as well as the differences between English, a language with a negative value for the verb-movement parameter, and Italian, a language with verb movement.

Research from across the field of L2 acquisition was discussed and different approaches to teaching adverb placement were analyzed. It was found that negative evidence proved to be successful in the short-term in maintaining correct adverb placement in French L1 learners of English (White 1991), while in a study conducted by Solís Hernández (2006), it was found that there was a high rate of errors among both advanced and proficient graduate students of English and teachers from the faculty when recognizing erroneous placement of adverbs. Solís Hernández suggested that while more research is needed, one strategy for teaching placement is to review the rules of the grammar often. Finally, Formisano proposed that a more linguistic approach is useful and effective in Italian EFL learners, and found that both older and younger high-school aged students improved in their accuracy in adverb placement after a lesson based on the phenomenon of verb-movement.

2.5.   Pilot Study – April/May 2018

A pilot study was administered in the Venice area of Italy in April and May of 2018 to test whether there were still occurrences of word position errors in adjectives and adverbs in students who had obtained advanced levels, by comparing them with that of their peers. It was found that adolescent students of English of a high school, ages ranging from 15 to 19 years old, generally judged the grammaticality of the placement of modifiers, in this case adverbs and adjectives, with varying degrees of accuracy according to their level of English.[9] It was also found, however, that certain elements created more difficulty than others, in particular adverbs, and even more specifically Focus Adverbs. The test included two sections, section 1 tested for adjective placement using a grammaticality judgement forced-choice type task, while section two tested for adverb placement by means of Likert scale in which they had to order 5 sentences with the adverb placed in various positions and order the sentences from the most grammatical (5) to the least grammatical (1).

In Part 1, the students were very accurate and correctly judged the sentences with only few instances of errors, with a rate of accuracy of 94.5%. It was found there were only a few errors and they occurred in the students who had a level B1 or lower. On the other hand, Part 2 proved to be more challenging and the students struggled with correctly ordering the sentences concerning adverb placement from most grammatical (5) to least grammatical (1), especially in the tasks containing Focus Adverbs. Only four Focus Adverbs were included in the test, but the two most troublesome for the students proved to be *only* and *just* as there was a tendency to judge the most grammatical position of these elements following the verb phrase and

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[9] The students were in high school and in different grades, ranging from the first year to the fourth year, and had different levels of English, varying from A2 to C1. They were instructed to self-evaluate their levels and therefore may not be 100% accurate, although many of the students had completed some sort of language certification.

preceding the verb's complement, a position which would normally be judged as ungrammatical by native speakers, especially if prosodic information cannot be interpreted.

The results of the pilot study gave the preliminary hypothesis for this thesis, which demonstrated that learners with lower levels of English struggle with the placement of all modifiers, especially in the beginning stages of learning the language and when word order is different from that of their L1, while intermediate learners struggle mainly with adverbs, and finally advanced and proficient learners struggle most with Focus Adverbs.

3. Empirical investigation: Focus Position as a Function of English Language Proficiency

In this chapter, I will present and discuss the results of two studies conducted on Focus Adverb placement in two groups of English speakers: monolingual, native speakers of English and a group of Italian EFL learners with advanced and proficient levels of English. I will focus on the acceptability of Focus Adverbs in two different word orders and investigate their acceptability in the two groups of speakers. I will do this while bearing in mind the syntactic reasoning for the acceptance of one word order over the other, or perhaps both word orders.

In section 3.2, Experiment 1 is introduced and outlined and the methods of how the experiment was conducted on the group of native speakers of English are thoroughly described and discussed. The subsequent section focuses on the research questions and the null hypotheses, which is then followed by the description of the research design and in-depth details of the participants who were involved in the study. Following that, I will review the instruments used, the procedure, the coding, and finally go into the discussion of the results.

Section 3.3, on the other hand, goes over Experiment 2, which deals with the Italian group of EFL learners. The same format will be followed as in Experiment 1.

3.1.   Introduction

Focus can be introduced on almost all elements in a sentence and can be interpreted in different ways, depending on its positions and any prosodic information which the speaker may add verbally:

(25) a.   Only Mary wore a dress.

     b.   Mary only wore a dress.

     c.   *Mary wore only a dress.

     d.   ??Mary wore a dress only.

The examples illustrated in (25a-d) show that Focus can modify almost any element in the sentence, however there is an interesting restriction which does not allow for the Focus to impose itself post-verbally in English, due to the absence of a parametric setting known as verb movement. This difference is demonstrated as such in (25b-c), allowing for (25b) to be the only grammatical sentence in English, while (25c) is considered ungrammatical.

In other languages of the world, and as is the case for Italian, there are different options for the parametric setting which allows for verb movement. Italian, being a morpho-syntactically richer language than English, allows for verb movement, therefore allows for the linear word order as seen above in (25c) and as is compared in the Italian example in (26d):

(26) a.   Solo Maria ha indossato un vestito.

     b.   ??Maria solo ha indossato un vestito.

     c.   Maria ha solo indossato un vestito.

     d.   Maria ha indossato solo un vestito.

e.   Maria ha indossato un vestito solo.

The following studies strive to investigate the acceptability of Focus Adverbs when placed in different word orders in native speakers of English, as well as advanced and proficient English language learners. Both groups will first be analyzed separately, then will be compared in order to find how advanced and proficient speakers perform compared to their native speaker peers. If differences are found, it will be clear that Focus Adverb placement can be used to test proficiency in EFL speakers.

3.2 Experiment 1: Focus Position Placement in Native Speakers of English

The goal of this experiment was to investigate the nature of Focus Adverb placement in native speakers of English. This study was designed to test the grammaticality of the position of a complex subcategory of adverbs, known as Focus Adverbs. The questionnaire was created to test the acceptability of Focus Adverb placement in this group of speakers, hoping to shed light on the nature of these elements and discuss any irregularities and then compare findings of the results of Italian EFL learners, which will later be discussed in Chapter 4. More specifically, it was designed to be able to examine whether advanced and proficient Italian EFL learners differed in their mastery of the understanding of Focus Adverb placement when compared to that of their native speaker counterparts. It was assumed that native speakers of English have a strict grammatical word order for adverbs and therefore would not accept SVA structures when confronted with grammaticality judgement tasks.

In the Experiment 1, 48 subjects were tested. The subjects were carefully selected primarily based on their age and if they were raised monolingual, therefore were required to answer if they grew up speaking another language fluently or if they had ever lived outside of the United States for a longer extended period of time.

The questions proposed are twofold and strive to find the nature of Focus Adverbs in Italian English language learners and native speakers when used as modifiers of a VP and then test to see if they create placement issues in proficient and advanced EFL learners.

The hypotheses of this thesis are outlined:

Hypothesis 1: There is a strict word order preference in native speakers of English, that of SAV, and they generally judge SVA word order as ungrammatical.

Null Hypothesis 1: There is no strict word order preference in native speakers of English, and they accept both SAV and SVA word orders as grammatical.

3.2.1 Method

3.2.1.1. Participants

One of the main aims of the present study was to bring to light the nature of Focus Adverbs in English L1 speakers. Another aim was to investigate if there was one clear word order they preferred when faced with grammaticality judgements. The Focus Adverbs used in the study were *even*, *only*, and *also*.

The first experiment included a total of 48 participants from the United States of America, primarily from or having grown up in California. They were contacted via social media platforms, primarily Facebook, and, after having answered a few preliminary questions, if they agreed to participate in the study, they were electronically sent a link to one of the twelve questionnaires. Participation in the study was on a voluntary basis and the participants were informed that they would not be compensated in any way, shape, or form and could exit the survey at any time during the completion process or contact the researcher or advisors if there were any questions. The consent for is included in Appendix A.

Of the 48 native speakers of English 23 were female, 24 were male and one person identified as genderqueer, however this person was raised as female. The

participants were all within the age range of 18 to 40, the majority of them, a total of 71%, falling between the range of 18 to 30.

The English native speaking participants' level of education ranged from having only a high school diploma (7%) to one person having a Ph.D. A total of 54% of the participants had a bachelor's degree, while the other participants had taken some college courses (9%) and others had obtained an associate degree (4%).

3.2.1.2 Materials

This study was designed to quantitively study Focus Adverb placement, first in 48 native speakers of English. It was decided to use a questionnaire consisting in grammaticality judgement tasks where subjects would be asked to give a judgement of a given sentence, to decide if it was grammatical or not. The questionnaire consisted of 72 questions which included 24 test questions and 48 filler questions for a 1 to 2 ratio of test questions to filler questions. The scale which was used was based on a Likert scale of 1 through 5, 1 being the least grammatical option and 5 being the most grammatical option, although they were not labeled quite as such due to the negative connotations with word choice such as "grammatical" and "ungrammatical", as that wording can evoke thoughts of a traditional, prescriptive test to test grammar, as one would see in school. This would not allow for more natural judgements to be given by the participants, especially those who were native English speakers.

The questionnaire's scale was labeled "no one would say this" for 1 and "this is perfect" for 5. The numbers between were left blank, so subjects were free to give their judgements without much external pressure.

The questionnaire was designed considering there would need to be at least six conditions tested, and therefore the subjects were presented with a total of 24 test questions which consisted in sentences using three different Focus Adverbs, *only*, *even*, and *just*, found in alternating word order positions: Subject Adverb Verb (SAV) and Subject Verb Adverb (SVA). This highlighted the true adverbial form of these

elements, as they would have to be viewed and understood as modifying the verb and, as the hope was, not any other element in the sentence. Surprisingly, in a few sentences it was found to be considered otherwise, which will be discussed in the results.

Experiment 1 consisted of a grammaticality judgement task administered through Google Forms. Participants were first asked to consent by filling in a consent form prior to beginning the experiment. Participants were not told that the experiment was investigating adverb placement of any kind, however they were aware of the fact they were giving judgements of grammaticality for certain linguistic elements. They were asked to give a grammaticality judgement from 1 to 5 and were confronted with 72 judgement tasks where they were required to give each one rating. The questions included different types of adverbs, Focus Adverbs: *only*, even and also, and a number of frequency and manner adverbs, in the two different word orders of SAV and SVA (e.g., "Sarah only asked a question" vs. "Sarah asked only a question").[10]

Six experimental lists were constructed, randomized and then the question numbers were reversed in order to create a total of twelve lists. This was done to verify that the lists were counterbalanced and ensured that only eight participants saw each questionnaire, and therefore condition.

The twelve experimental lists were then assigned to the participants, each containing 24 experimental items, based on six conditions, as listed below, in Table 2. and 48 filler questions, separated into two groups of adverbs of frequency and adverbs of manner, in two conditions, as outlined in Table 3. Each participant was assigned to one of the twelve lists, and only 4 participants were assigned to each questionnaire.

Since the items were counterbalanced, four participants were needed to fill in each questionnaire, and since there were two versions of each questionnaire, a total of eight participants responded to each of the six main experimental lists.

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[10] An example of one of the questionnaires is provided in Appendix B.

Table 2. Experimental Conditions

Adverb Type	Word Order	Example
Only	SAV	*She only found a book.*
Only	SVA	*Sarah asked only a question.*
Even	SAV	*He even knew Mary.*
Even	SVA	*She played even soccer.*
Also	SAV	*Sofia also needed a pen.*
Also	SVA	*Robert painted also some pictures.*

Table 3. Filler Conditions

Adverb Type	Word Order	Example
frequency	SAV	*He often found a solution.*
frequency	SVA	*She asked seldom a question.*
manner	SAV	*She calmly found a seat.*
manner	SVA	*Mark asked anxiously a question.*

Each participant was presented with a total of 72 questions organized in the following way:

- 24 experimental questions:
- 4 with *only*, SAV word order
- *Example: She only found a book.*
- 4 with *only*, SVA word order
- *Example: Sarah asked only a question.*

- 4 with *even*, SAV word order

- *Example: He even knew Mary.*

- 4 with *even*, SVA word order

- *Example: She played even soccer.*

- 4 with *also*, SAV word order

- *Example: Sofia also needed a pen.*

- 4 with *also*, SVA word order

- *Example: Robert painted also some pictures.*

- 24 adverbs of frequency filler questions:

- 12 with SAV word order

- *Example: He often found a solution.*

- 12 with SVA word order

- *Example: She asked seldom a question.*

- 24 adverbs of manner filler questions:

- 12 with SAV word order

- *Example: She calmly found a seat.*

- 12 with SVA word order

- *Example: Mark asked anxiously a question.*

A complete example list of experimental materials for the 6 main experimental lists are given in Appendix C.

Each experimental question (item) occurred in one of the six conditions across the experimental lists in hopes to elicit a grammatical/ungrammatical judgement from the participants. The same verbs were used in each subcategory of the list; therefore,

each verb was used 3 times during the experiment, however with different types of adverbs and different word orders and were taken from an English textbook in order to ensure that they were, indeed, among the most frequent verbs used in the language. This was also done to ensure later the second test group subjects would know the verbs, as they are all EFL learners.

In order to balance the sentences as well as to see if there were any effects determiners could have on the placement of Focus Adverbs, the verbs were organized as shown in Table 4. Each verb was paired with either a proper noun, no article, some + plural noun, definite article + singular noun, definite article + plural noun, an indefinite article. This organization was carried into the filler questions as well, therefore the same verbs are used with the same determiners throughout the test.

Table 4. Questionnaire verb selection

Definite article + singular noun	Indefinite article	Proper noun	No article	Some + plural noun	Definite article + plural noun
SET	FIND	KNOW	PLAY	PAINT	HELP
FEEL	ASK	SEE	TALK	KEEP	WRITE
BRING	NEED	IGNORE	EAT	WANT	LIKE
LOSE	HAVE	INVITE	TUTOR	TAKE	NEED

One issue that was found, especially in the case of the filler sentences, was that certain sentences did not seem to make sense semantically. The reason for this was to try to keep the sentences as similar as possible throughout the test. An example of this is seen here:

(27) a.   He only needed the cups. (SAV *only*)

b. He insistently needed the pencils. (SAV manner – filler)

c. He quarterly needed the statistics. (SAV frequency – filler)

(27) exemplifies how similar sentences were created in order to control the questions as much as possible. Both (27b) and (27c) while grammatically correct, can be perceived as strange for semantic reasons, therefore sentences like this may have received slightly lower acceptability scores.

The verbs were presented in the past simple tense for ease of construction of logical sentences and consistent word order. There were also two attention questions to check that the subjects were paying attention, and these questions asked the subjects to mark a specific number and contained no experimental information. The experimental items were pseudo-randomized to ensure that no more than two consecutive experimental sentences shared any of the features important to the investigation. Lastly, to control for order effects, the six main experimental lists were reversed to create a version b. of each list, which resulted in the grand total of twelve questionnaires.
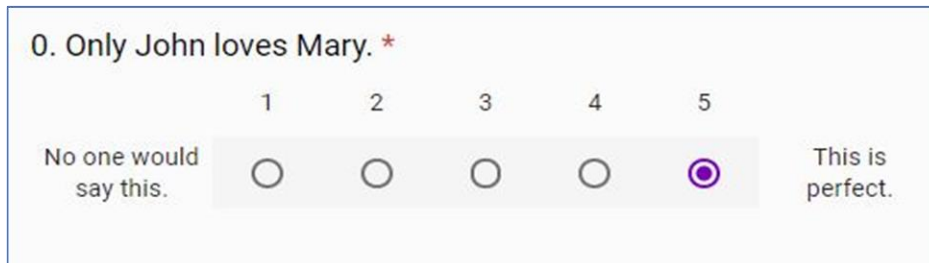
At the end of the experiment each participant was asked to answer a number of demographic questions including their gender, level of education, country of residence, age range, if they were willing to participate in a follow-up survey, their presumed level of English, how many years they had studied English, if they had obtained any language certification, and if they speak English at school, home or work. The questionnaire was expected to take about 10 to 15 minutes for the native speakers to complete, depending on factors such as reading speed.

3.2.1.3. Procedure

After accepting to participate in the study, each subject was sent one of the twelve questionnaires electronically. Once they had opened it, they were asked to sign the consent form and begin the tasks. They were first presented with the instructions and

then an example question which included a sentence with the Focus Adverb in a grammatical position and the example rating given of 5, seen in Figure 3.

Figure 3. Questionnaire Example Question

After this example, the subjects were presented with the questionnaire. The entire task took about seven to ten minutes, depending on the speed of reading.

Participants' results were then automatically saved to the Google Forms server, and then collected and downloaded by the researcher. Once downloaded, the responses were organized into one Excel spreadsheet and organized accordingly.

3.2.1.4 Coding

The use of the Likert scale was important for this study because it allowed for the participants to easily respond to multiple grammaticality judgement tasks in a short amount of time, ensuring that there would be a very limited number of participants who would return their questionnaires – if any. While the literature on judgement tasks (see Schütze & Sprouse, 2013) advises one of the limitations of using this type of scale is the fact that the interval is not uniform, and even more so when grouping two of the judgements together, it was decided to retain the use of this scale. It was best to then code the results as shown in Table 5:

Table 5. Likert Scale Coding

Numerical Score	Meaning	Coding
1	Completely unacceptable	Ungrammatical
2	Maybe unacceptable	Ungrammatical
3	I don't know	Unsure
4	Maybe acceptable	Grammatical
5	Acceptable	Grammatical

In Table 5, we find 1 and 2 were grouped together to mean "Ungrammatical", 3 remained alone to be interpreted as "Unsure", and 4 and 5 were grouped together as a "Grammatical" response.

3.2.2 Results and Discussion

The main goal of the first experiment was to collect data on native speakers' perception of grammaticality with the Focus Adverbs *only*, *also* and *even* and investigate if there were acceptable ratings of a typically ungrammatical word orders amongst the responses. Another goal was to confirm that the assumed most-grammatical word order, SAV, was indeed accepted as the most grammatical option for the L1 subjects. The breakdown of the overall results of the native speakers is shown in Figure 4.

Figure 4. Native Speakers' Acceptability Ratings

Figure 4. Native Speakers' Acceptability Ratings
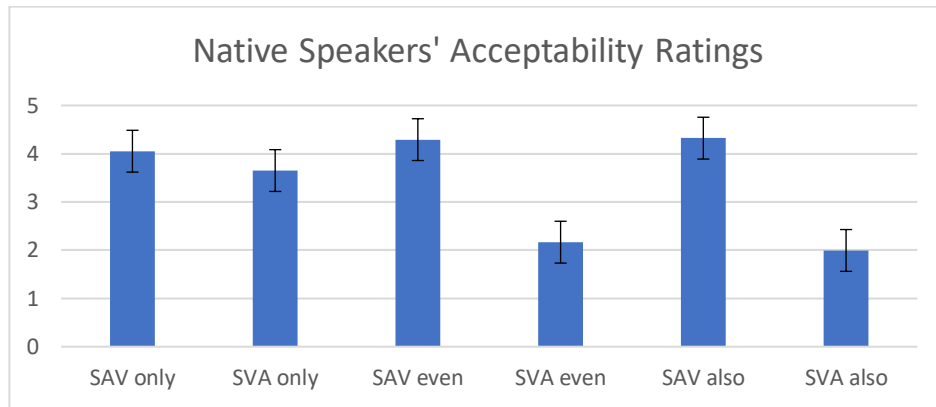
As seen in Figure 5, each condition was seen a total of 192 times. It shows that the exact response breakdown for each condition. The SAV conditions show to have received a very high number of grammatical responses, while the SVA conditions received ungrammatical responses, except for the case of SVA only, which was given 116 grammatical responses by the native speakers. The breakdown of the raw number of responses can be seen in Figure 5 and Table 6.

Figure 5. Native Speakers' Response Count by Acceptability Rating
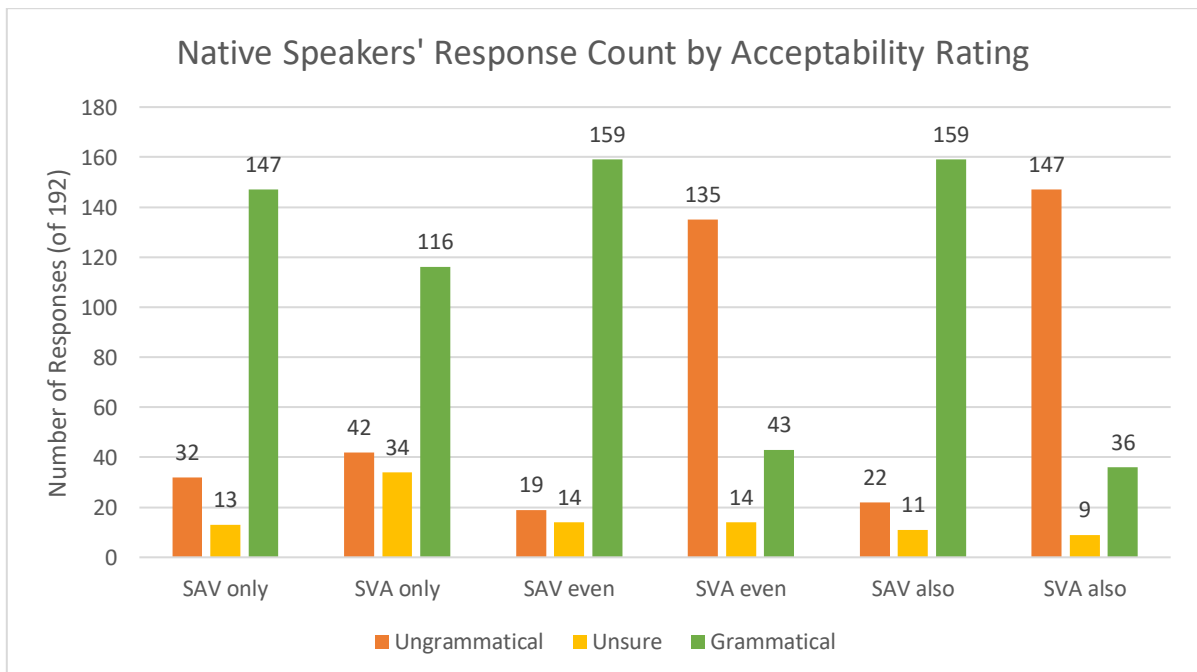
In Figure 5 we find the number of responses of 192 total data points per condition organized by acceptability rating. Table 6 reports the raw number (and percentage) of each type of response for each of the experimental conditions. In other words, this table breaks down the number of times the condition was judged by the subjects categorized by rating.

Table 6. English L1 speakers' judgements of each condition by coding category

Coding	SAV only	SVA only	SAV even	SVA even	SAV also	SVA also
Grammatical (4/5)	147 (76%)	116 (60%)	159 (83%)	43 (23%)	159 (83%)	36 (19%)
I don't know (3)	13 (7%)	34 (22%)	14 (7%)	14 (7%)	11 (6%)	9 (5%)
Ungrammatical (1/2)	32 (17%)	42 (18%)	19 (10%)	135 (70%)	22 (11%)	147 (76%)

The data collected confirm that native speakers of English undoubtedly find the SAV word order as the most preferred and the most grammatical when it comes to Focus Adverbs, with exception to the unexpected data found for *only*. In 76% of the responses, participants gave a grammatical rating to sentences with *only* in a pre-verbal position. The percentage of grammatical responses for pre-verbal *even* was higher still at 83%. Pre-verbal *also* matched pre-verbal *even* as grammatical in 83% of the responses. It is interesting to note that the native speakers did not take great advantage of the "I don't know" category, utilizing this choice in no more than 7% of the responses, except in the case of SVA *only,* where it is used for 22% of the responses, as shown in Figure 6.

Figure 6. Percentage of Responses for SVA *only*
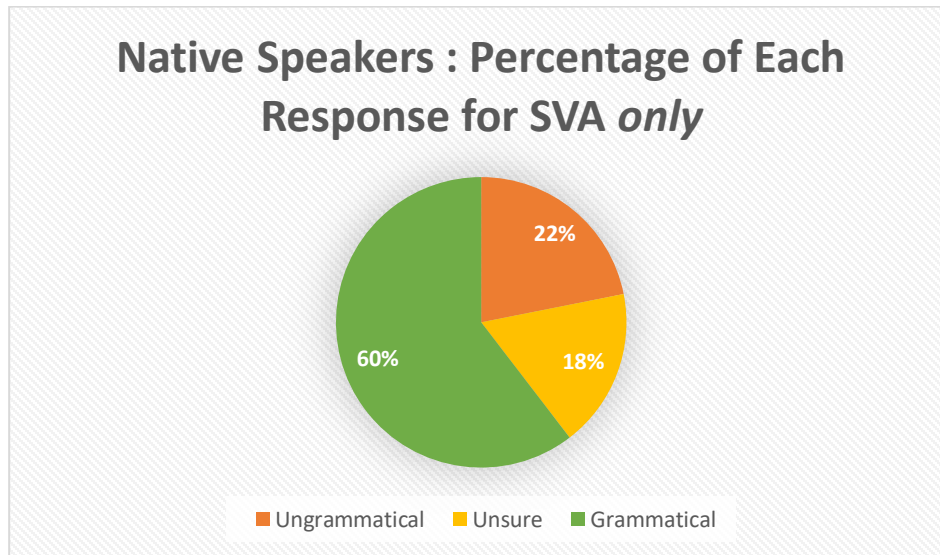
A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being English L1 on word order acceptability. An analysis of variance showed that the effect of being a native speaker on word order was significant, F (5, 282) = 59.07, p = .000. In other words, there was a significant difference between at least two of the word order groups for the native speakers, therefore *t*-tests were needed in order to identify the significant differences between the groups.

A *t*-test for paired two sample for means was performed between the two word orders for each of adverb types; *only, even* and *also*. For the Focus Adverb *only,* a paired-samples *t*-test was conducted to compare acceptability in the SAV word order and the SVA word order conditions. There was a significant difference in the scores for the SAV word order with the Focus Adverb *only* (M = 4.05, SD = .91) and the SVA (M = 3.65, SD = .91) conditions; t(47) = 2.03, p = 0.04. This shows that the difference between the SAV and SVA *only* conditions still differed enough to hold to the hypothesis, meaning native speakers accept the SAV condition over as more grammatical than the SVA condition.

For the Focus Adverb *even*, the results showed a significant difference in the scores for the SAV word order (M = 4.29, SD = 1.37) and the SVA word order (M = 2.17, SD = 1.37) conditions; $t(47)$ = 12.18, p = 0.000. This result shows that the two conditions differed significantly, and the native speakers rated the SVA *even* condition much lower than the SAV *even* condition and it did not happen by chance.

Finally, there was a significant difference in the results with Focus Adverb *also* in the SAV word order (M = 4.32, SD = 1.57) and the SVA (M = 1.99, SD = 1.57) conditions; $t(47)$ = 8.14, p = 0.000. As seen in the results of the other Focus Adverbs, the native speakers' ratings of the conditions were not due to chance, and they gave much higher ratings to the SAV *also* condition.

SVA *only* had the most unexpected results from the native speakers. It was predicted that native speakers would not accept any of the Focus Adverbs in post-verbal positions as grammatical, or better, would not judge any of the SVA conditions above a rating of 2. Instead, while its acceptability was not as high as the other pre-verbal positions, it was quite high compared to the other Focus Adverbs in post-verbal positions. The differences in the ratings are outlined in Figure 7 and Figure 8.

The two other SVA conditions were judged by the native speakers at about a rating of 2 (*even* at 2.16 and *also* at 1.99) while the native speakers judged SVA *only* as nearly grammatical at 3.65. This rating is a full point and a half higher than the others, as is shown in Figure 7. The SVA *only* condition was judged similarly to the acceptable SAV conditions, although it was still not quite as high. The SAV conditions were judged as 4 or higher, so they were all considered as being judged as grammatical.

Figure 7. Native Speakers' Acceptability of SVA conditions

Native Speakers' Acceptability of SVA conditions
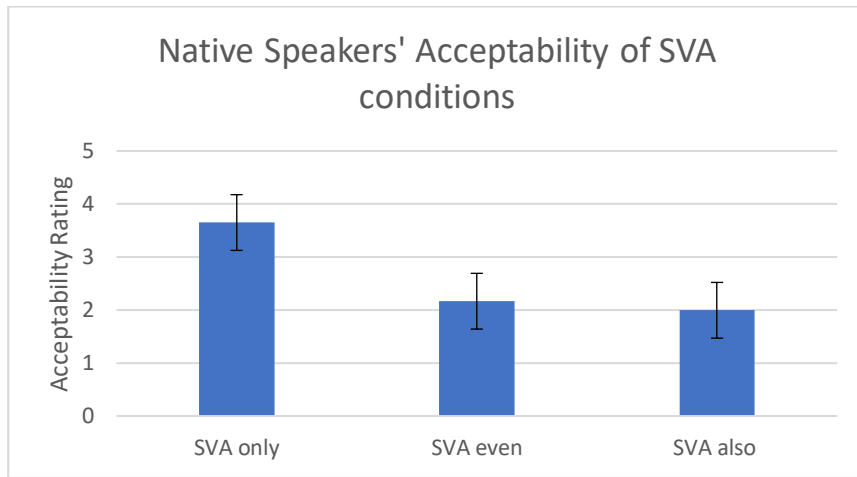
Figure 8. Native Speakers' Acceptability of SAV conditions and the SVA *only* condition

Native Speakers' Acceptability Ratings SAV conditions + SVA *only*
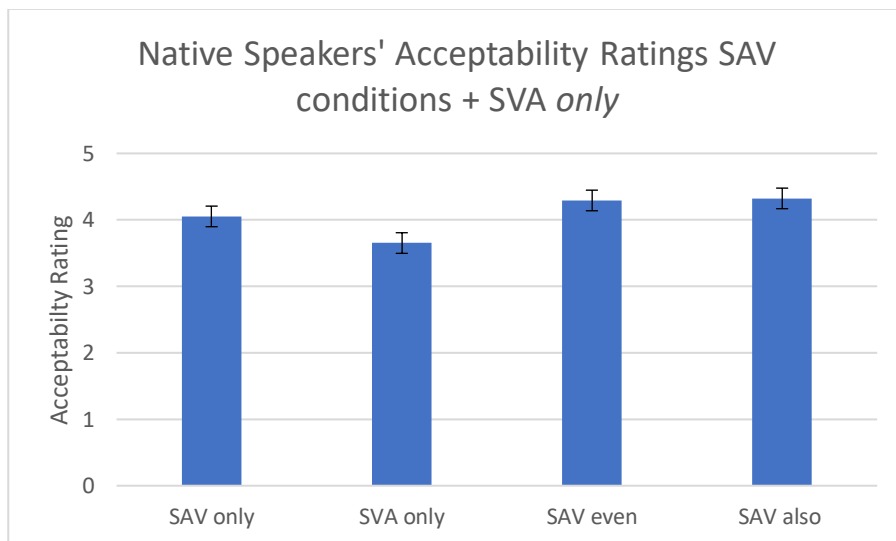
The discrepancy found with the condition SVA *only* is very interesting and is worth being discussed. The entire list of sentences can be seen in Table 7. When each sentence is individually analyzed, the type of determiner or lack thereof influences the acceptability of the sentence. Another factor was if a verb was used in a commonly used expression such as "have a party", "feel the earthquake", or "ask a question". These three sentences were given acceptability scores below 3. This was interesting

because other sentences using similar determiners were judged rather high, especially in the case of *the*.

Sentences with the indefinite article *a* were judged as a 3.5 or lower, therefore interpreted as ungrammatical. Sentences with no article were given scores of 3 or above, therefore generally judged as grammatical. Most interestingly, however, is that all sentences with proper nouns were given high acceptability ratings at 4 or above, making them all grammatically correct in the eyes of the native speakers. This is an unexpected result which could be further investigated in a dedicated study.

Table 7. Native Speakers' SVA *only* sentences and ratings

Sentence	Average rating
She had only a party.	1.875
He took only some flowers.	2.375
She felt only the earthquake.	2.375
Sarah asked only a question.	2.75
Jack tutored only math.	3.125
Lucy brought only the wine.	3.25
Robert painted only some pictures.	3.25
She found only a book.	3.25
She helped only with the dishes.	3.25
Sofia needed only a pen.	3.5
He needed only the cups.	3.625
Bill set only the table.	3.75
He ate only salad.	3.875

Sam wrote only the letters.	3.875
Hubert saw only John.	4
Mary lost only the key.	4
He knew only Mary	4.25
John kept only some photos.	4.25
She played only soccer.	4.25
Nick invited only Jane.	4.5
He talked only about astronomy.	4.625
She ignored only Sarah.	5
She liked only the books.	5

Fillers received similar results from native speakers in terms of acceptability. The SAV word order was accepted at much higher rates than the SVA word order, as is shown in Table 8. As was aforementioned, the grammaticality of some of the sentences was likely skewed due to the fact that some of the sentences did not make sense semantically, even if they were grammatically correct. Because of this the "I don't know" rating of 3 is slightly higher in the SAV word order sentences. On the other hand, the SVA word order responses with "I don't know" are very similar to the other test experimental sentences 7% or under.

Table 8. English L1 speakers' judgements of each condition by coding category for fillers

Coding	SAV frequency	SVA frequency	SAV manner	SVA manner
Grammatical	394 (68%)	46 (8%)	376 (65%)	98 (17%)
I don't know	72 (13%)	27 (5%)	64 (11%)	33 (6%)
Ungrammatical	110 (19%)	503 (87%)	136 (24%)	445 (77%)

3.3 Experiment 2: Focus Position Placement in Italian Learners of EFL

3.3.1 Methods

This study was designed to test the grammaticality of the position of Focus Adverbs, in a group of Italian leaners of English with advanced levels of proficiency in English. It was assumed that the participants would likely accept both possible word orders of Focus Adverb placement to varying degrees, i.e. SVA and SAV. The hypothesis was based on previous studies of modifiers paying particular attention to adverbs, conducted by White (1990, 1991) and Formisano (2013), as well as a pilot study conducted in April 2018 which dealt with grammaticality judgement tasks focusing on adjective and adverb placement in EFL high school students in Venice, Italy.

According to previous studies, groups of non-native English speaking EFL/ESL learners struggle with the placement of adverbs in the sentence and base their knowledge and intuition of adverb placement on parameters set by their native language (White 1990, 1991; Formisano 2013).

The pilot study tested modifiers in adolescent, high-school aged EFL learners in Venice, Italy, and showed that while, on whole, learners with lower levels of English struggled with recognizing ungrammatical positions of both adjectives and adverbs, participants with intermediate levels seemed to only have issues with adverbs, while

more-advanced language users primarily struggled with all types of adverbs, and even more specifically, learners who had declared themselves having a high level of proficiency, such as C1, seemed to mainly have issues with Focus Adverbs such as *only*, *just*, and *also*.

Based on this information, I claim that in contrast with native speakers of English, Italian learners, even those who have declared to have obtained an advanced or proficient level of English (B2 or higher), still struggle with placement of Focus Adverbs, both due to an interference with their L1 and the complexity of this group of elements, as has also been confirmed in other studies done on other types of modifiers by White (1990, 1991) and Formisano (2013).

If the hypotheses hold true, the placement of Focus Adverbs might be considered a function of nativelike fluency in speakers of EFL and therefore must become a focus in current English grammars and a focal point in foreign language and second language classrooms, especially in preparation for higher-level certifications or qualifications, such as the fields of interpretation or translation.

The questions proposed for this experiment were twofold and are outlined as:

Hypothesis 1: Italian EFL learners find both SVA and SAV grammatical constructions for the placement of Focus Adverbs.

Null Hypothesis 1: Italian EFL learners do not find both SVA and SAV grammatical constructions for the placement of Focus Adverbs and prefer only one of these orders.

The filler questions were structured similarly to the test questions, however used different categories of adverbs, such as frequency adverbs and adverbs of manner, all chosen from lists of the most frequent, as was discussed and outlined in Experiment 1.

3.3.1.1 Participants

In the second study of this thesis, 48 subjects were tested to match the number of subjects from the first study. This group consisted of Italian learners of English and they had to be selected based on the stringent criteria that they did, indeed, have an advanced (B2+) or proficient (C1/C2) level of English and were age-matched with the participants from the first study of Focus Adverb placement in native speakers of English, therefore the majority of these subjects were between the ages of 18 and 40.

The Italian group consisted of 23 female English learners and 25 males and their age ranged from 18 years of age to 42, which, overall, matched with the demographic information provided by the native speakers. The majority of the participants were between the age of 18 and 30, making a total of 75% of the subjects falling in this age range, which was still well in range with the group of native speakers. Only one participant was over the age of 40. The male-female ratio was nearly a perfect match with almost half of the participants female and the other near-half being male.

The criteria for the Italian foreign language English learners were a bit more stringent and required a few more preliminary questions to be asked by the researcher prior to sending the questionnaire to be filled out. It was pertinent that they had at least a B2 level or higher in order to participate, as the hypothesis states that this phenomenon of adverb placement and acceptability still happens despite the fact the learners have had a number of years of English language education and exposure to different sources of English material, either via studying in the classroom, and therefore by default conversation classes with native speakers, television, books, films, and perhaps trips or long stays in English-speaking countries. Most of the participants had some sort of certification of their level of English, either having obtained a degree in English language and literature, linguistics, having passed a certification given by an accredited university or having passed an internationally recognized certification, verifying their level of English. Only 5 participants declared to never have received

some sort of verification of their level of English and of those 5 only 1 had declared to have studied English for less than 5 years.

The Italian participants' level of English varied however, and they were asked to indicate if they had a B2 level, C1 level, or C2 level, all of which will be defined in the following paragraphs. 16 participants had a level B2. 28 participants declared to have a level C1, while 4 declared to have a C2. In order to make it clearer what these three levels mean, I will now give brief definitions for each according to the Common European Framework of Reference for Languages (CEFR).

The British Council gives the following definition for the competencies a learner who has obtained a B2 level possesses, according to the CEFR for languages. The learner can understand main ideas of complex text on concrete ideas, as well as abstract, including technical discussions in their specialized fields. They can interact with native speakers in a way that requires no strain for either party, and they can produce clear and detailed text on a wide range of subjects, while giving and defending their opinions.

The following level, C1, is characterized by a learner possessing the following skills. They should be able to understand a wide range of longer, more demanding texts and understand and recognize implicit meaning, express themselves fluently without having to search for the right expression, and use the English language flexibly for a number of different purposes, including social, academic, and professional. This level also requires the learner to show correct use of organizational patters, connectors, and cohesive devices.

Finally, level C2, which very few of the participants listed as having obtained, means a learner has obtained a near-native level of the language. This level requires the learner to be able to understand everything he or she hears or reads, possess the ability to summarize information from different sources concisely and coherently, and finally express themselves very fluently, showing finer shades of meaning even in complex situations.

With regards to level of education, interestingly, the Italian participants had an overall higher level compared with the native speakers of English, as well as a higher instance of subjects with only a high school diploma. Overall, 83% of the Italian participants had obtained some sort of degree, although they seemed to have higher levels of graduate level education, while the group of American participants had a much lower instance of graduate level education.

3.3.1.2 Materials

The questionnaire for Experiment 2 was created using Google Forms and consisted in 72 questions and was identical to the experiment structure explained in Experiment 1: the questionnaire consisted of 72 questions which included 24 test questions and 48 filler questions for a 1 to 2 ratio of test questions to filler questions. The scale which was used was based on a Likert scale of 1 through 5, 1 being the least grammatical option and 5 being the most, although they were not labeled this way since participants may feel that they are being subjected to a grammar test, as one would see in the language classroom and therefore would not allow for natural judgements to be given by the participants. The questionnaire's scale was instead labeled "no one would say this" for 1 and "this is perfect" for 5. The numbers between were left blank, so subjects were free to give their judgements without too much external pressure. This format was also used in Experiment 1.

Much like Experiment 1, Experiment 2 consisted of a grammaticality judgement task administered through Google Forms. Participants were first asked to consent by filling in a consent form prior to beginning the experiment. Participants were not told that the experiment was investigating adverb placement of any kind, however they were aware of the fact they were giving judgements of grammaticality for certain linguistic elements. Using the same questionnaires as the native speakers in Experiment 1 saw, they were asked to respond to the sentences and give a judgement from 1 to 5. The subjects were given 72 judgement tasks where they were required to

give each one a rating. As in Experiment 1, the questions included different Focus Adverbs: *only*, *even* and *also*, and a number of frequency and manner adverbs, in the two different word orders of SAV and SVA (e.g., "Sarah only asked a question" vs. "Sarah asked only a question.").

At the end of the experiment the Italian subjects were asked to respond to a number of questions referring to demographic information, as was the same in Experiment 1.

Experiment 2 included more linguistic questions pertaining to the knowledge the participants had of the English language, how long they had studied, the level they had obtained, and so on.

Six experimental lists were constructed, randomized and then the question numbers were reversed in order to create a total of twelve lists. This was done to verify that the lists were counterbalanced and ensured that only eight participants saw each questionnaire, and therefore condition.

3.3.1.3 Procedure

Like in Experiment 1, each of the Italian participants was electronically sent one of the twelve questionnaires after accepting to participate in the study. Once they had opened it, they were asked to sign the consent form and begin the tasks. They were first presented with the instructions and then an example question which included a sentence with the Focus Adverb in a grammatical position and the example rating given of 5. It was expected that it would also take about 10 to 15 minutes for the Italian participants to complete the entire questionnaire.

3.3.1.4 Coding

The coding was conducted the same way as in Experiment 1. It follows the guidelines described in Section 2.2.1.4.

3.3.2 Results and Discussion

As was expected in the hypothesis, the Italian participants judged both word orders at above a 3 or higher, meaning they did not find either word order overtly ungrammatical. They either judged the word order as "grammatical" or as "unsure". The results are shown organized by rating and by condition. As in Experiment 1, there were 192 data points for each condition. The raw data of the results are shown in Table 9:

Table 9. EFL learners' judgements of each condition by coding category

Coding	SAV only	SVA only	SAV even	SVA even	SAV also	SVA also
Grammatical (4/5)	139 (72%)	121 (63%)	141 (74%)	86 (45%)	143 (74%)	102 (53%)
I don't know (3)	23 (12%)	20 (10%)	16 (8%)	34 (18%)	13 (7%)	22 (12%)
Ungrammatical (1/2)	30 (16%)	51 (27%)	35 (18%)	72 (37%)	36 (19%)	68 (35%)

A one-way ANOVA was conducted to compare the effect of being an Italian EFL learner on the acceptability of word order. The ANOVA showed that the effect of being an Italian EFL learner on the acceptability of word order was significant, $F(5,282) = 6.84$, $p = 0.000$. T-tests were then conducted in order to understand the differences between the conditions.

There was a significant difference in the scores for the Focus Adverb *only* in the SAV word order acceptability ($M = 4.04$, $SD = .99$) and the SVA word order ($M = 3.64$, $SD = .99$) conditions, $t(47) = 2.204$, $p = 0.03$. A paired two sample for means t-test was performed for the Focus Adverb *even* in the SAV and SVA conditions. There

was a significant difference between the SAV word order ($M = 3.98$, $SD = 1.02$) and SVA word order ($M = 3.14$, $SD = 1.02$); $t(47) = 5.4$, $p = 0.000$. There was also a significant difference in the scores from the Focus Adverb *also*. The SAV word order ($M = 3.99$, $SD = 1.14$) differed from the SVA word order ($M = 3.33$, $SD = 1.14$) condition significantly; $t(47) = 2.81$, $p = 0.007$.

The data show that the Italian subjects judged the two word orders differently enough in order to find a significant difference in the responses in the cases of all three in all Focus Adverbs. In order to further investigate these differences t-tests were performed in order to see the differences between the two groups of learners; the B2 group and the C1/C2 group. To compare the two groups, it was necessary to sample and test only sixteen of the thirty-two responses from the C1/C2 level participants. Once the C1/C2 responses had been sampled the results of the two groups responses were compared by using two-sample *t*-tests assuming unequal variances. These were used to obtain the statistics for this comparison. There were no significant results found between the two groups, therefore the hypothesis that there would be a significant difference in the results of the B2 and C1/C2-level learners must be rejected, however the raw data can be commented on as there are some visible results that may prove to be interesting and could be further studied with a larger, equal sample size.

The EFL learners showed to judge all conditions as grammatical in an average of 63.5% of the responses. They accepted the SAV word order at higher rates at about 73%, while they accepted the SVA word orders at varying, lower rates. SVA *only* was accepted at 63%, SVA *even* at 45% and SVA *also* at 53%. Their use of the "I don't know" ranged from 7% to 18%. The traditionally grammatical SAV word order received "ungrammatical" in 16% to 19% of the responses. The SVA results show a bit more variation. SVA *only* was judged as "ungrammatical" in 27% of the responses, SVA *even* in 37%, and SVA *also* in 35%.

The averages of the responses show that each condition was accepted and judged at a 3 or higher. These results are outlined in Figure 7.

Fig. 7. Italian EFL learners' acceptability ratings – all conditions
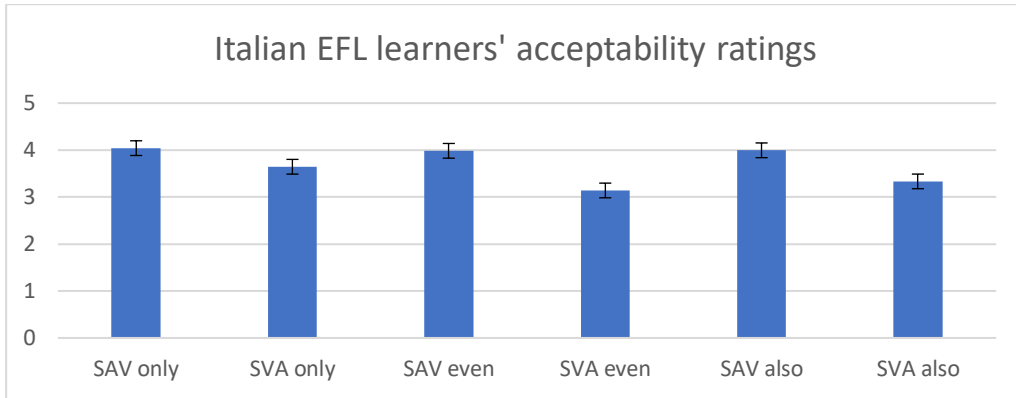
The lowest acceptability rating was given to SVA *even* and the highest to SAV *only*. There is also a visible trend of the SAV word order being judged as more grammatical than the SVA order, meaning that the participants, overall, understand that the SVA word order may be less grammatical than the SAV word order.

In the case of the SAV word order, the traditionally grammatical one, the EFL learners gave ratings at about 4. Felicitously, this was as expected in the hypothesis. The SAV values are shown in Figure 8.

Figure 8. Italian EFL learners' acceptability of SAV conditions
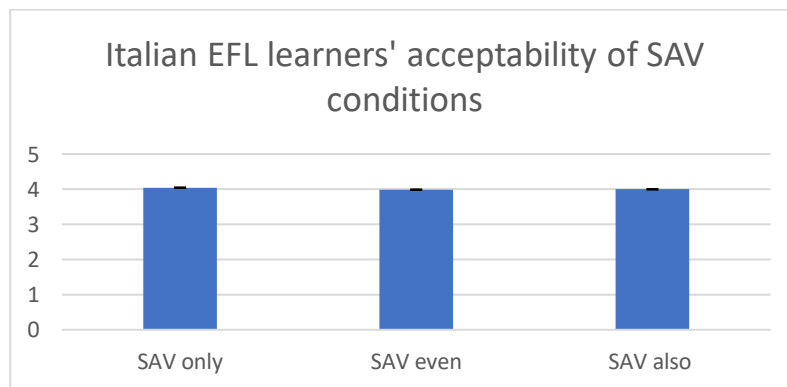
While it was predicted that the Italian EFL learners would find all word orders grammatical, no predictions were made on the level of acceptability they would give each condition. It was a surprise to find that the Focus Adverbs in the SAV word order were all judged at about 4. This result is very positive as it shows that learners generally understand this word order is grammatical and this result, overall, is stable amongst the participants.

For the SVA word order, on the other hand, the acceptability ratings were not quite as homogenous. While they were all between 3 and 4, the participants gave overall lower ratings of 3.14 (SVA *even*), 3.33 (SVA *also*) and 3.64 (SVA *only*), as shown in Figure 9.

Figure 9. Italian EFL learners' acceptability of SVA conditions
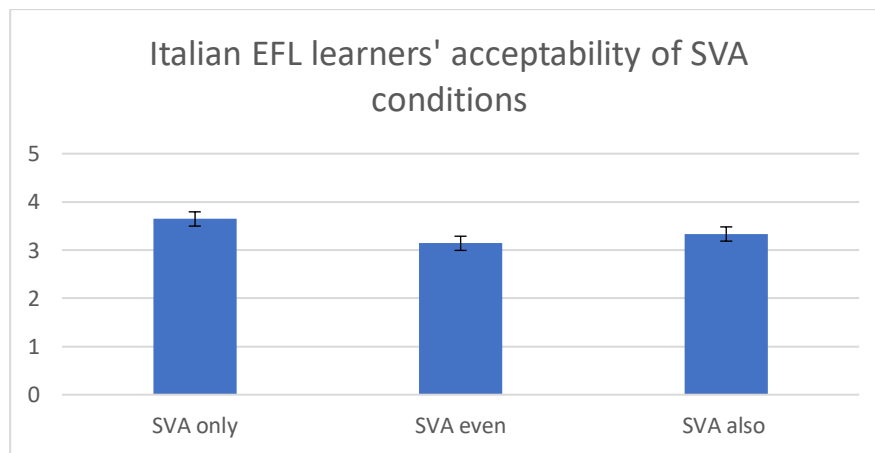
One of the aims of Experiment 2 was to investigate if level of English had any influence over the acceptability of Focus Adverb placement. The participants were asked to declare their level of English during the questionnaire. The participants were given three options: B2, C1 or C2. Because there were so few people who had declared to have a level C2, the C1 and C2 level participants were grouped together during the analysis. In total there were sixteen B2-level participants, while there were thirty-two C1/C2-level participants.

At first glance there does not seem to be a difference between the acceptability judgements given by the EFL participants. Overall, the two groups judged the SAV conditions at around 4, while the SVA conditions had varying responses. SVA *only*, a traditionally ungrammatical word order, received a higher acceptability rating from the B2 group, nearly a half rate higher than their C1/C2 level peers. SVA *even*, on the other hand, had nearly identical responses from the two groups. Finally, SVA *also* received a higher acceptability judgement from the B2 level group, more than a half-point higher. These ratings are outlined in Figure 10.

Figure 10. EFL learners' acceptability ratings compared by level
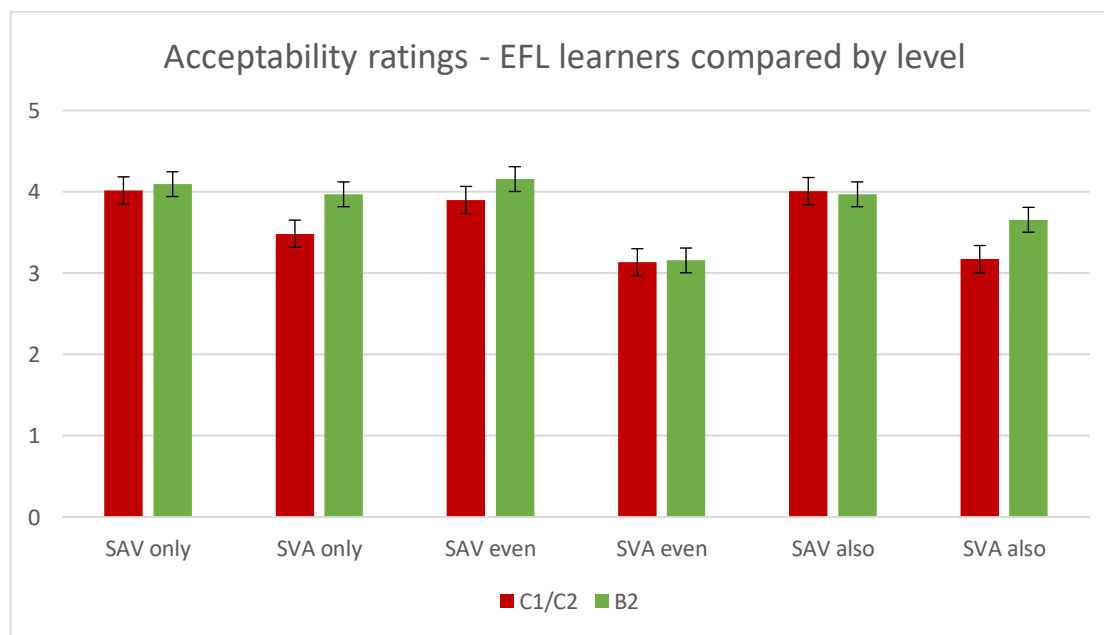
The results are quite interesting when further analyzed. In Table 10 and Table 11 there is the raw data for each group, which can be seen side by side. In the SAV condition, the traditionally grammatical one, the two groups gave similar responses and there are no noticeable differences between the two groups.

Table 10. EFL learners' judgements of SAV conditions by coding category

Coding	B2	C1/C2	B2	C1/C2	B2	C1/C2
	SAV only	SAV only	SAV even	SAV even	SAV also	SAV also
Grammatical (4/5)	48 (75%)	91 (71%)	49 (77%)	92 (72%)	48 (75%)	95 (74%)
I don't know (3)	7 (11%)	16 (13%)	6 (9%)	10 (8%)	3 (5%)	10 (8%)
Ungrammatical (1/2)	9 (14%)	21 (16%)	28 (14%)	26 (20%)	13 (20%)	23 (18%)

On the other hand, in the SVA condition, the groups seemed to perform differently. These differences are shown in Table 11.

Table 11. EFL learners' judgements of SVA conditions by coding category

Coding	B2	C1/C2	B2	C1/C2	B2	C1/C2
	SVA only	SVA only	SVA even	SVA even	SVA also	SVA also
Grammatical (4/5)	49 (76%)	72 (56%)	31 (48%)	55 (43%)	42 (66%)	60 (47%)
I don't know (3)	5 (8%)	15 (12%)	5 (8%)	29 (23%)	9 (14%)	13 (10%)
Ungrammatical (1/2)	10 (16%)	41 (32%)	28 (44%)	44 (34%)	13 (20%)	55 (43%)

In Table 11 the results of the SVA conditions given by the EFL learners are presented and divided into two groups based on their level of English. Overall both groups gave ratings of "grammatical" in a high percentage of the results. It was predicted that the

C1/C2 level participants would be able to identify the ungrammaticality more often than the B2 level learners and in some of the results this is validated.
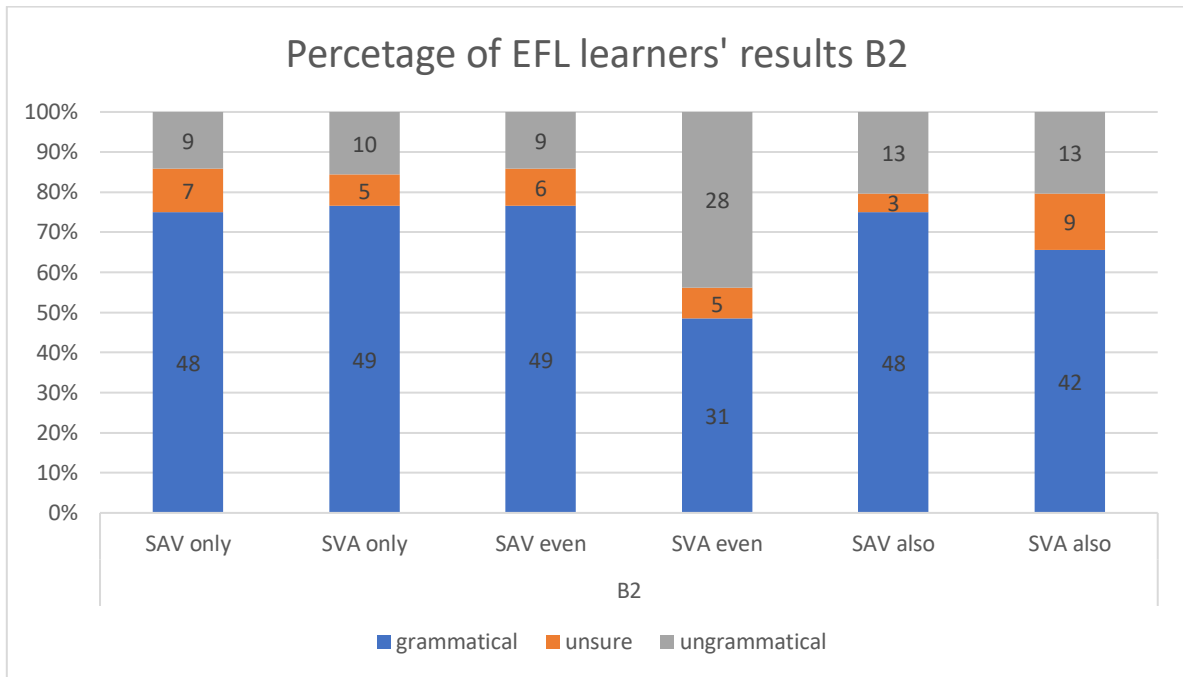
The C1/C2 level learners found the grammaticality of all three Focus Adverbs in the SVA word order lower than their B2 level peers. The SVA *only* condition received inhomogeneous responses from the two groups. The B2 group judged the SVA *only* condition as grammatical in 76% of the responses, while the C1/C2 group only finds that word order grammatical in 56%, leaving a 20% difference in the results between the groups. In SVA *even* the difference between the two groups was much lower at only 5%, while in SVA *also* it was at found at 19%, similar to what was found in SVA *only*.

SVA *even* seemed to be problematic for the C1/C2 level participants, which was a surprising finding. Although they judged this condition as grammatical in 43% of the responses, they utilized the "I don't know" response 23% of the time. This was much higher than the B2 level subjects, who judged the condition at grammatical 48% of the time, however only used "I don't know" 8% of the time. These results show that the C1/C2 level subjects struggled with identifying the grammaticality in these sentences.

The differences are better seen in Figures 11 and 12, where the B2 level learners do not show much variation between the different conditions. The only condition which was judged relatively low in comparison was SVA *even*. SVA *also* was judged as "grammatical" slightly less than SAV *also*. It is interesting to note however that the "I don't know" responses, when added to the count in both SAV *also* and SVA *also*, equaled the same sum, leaving an entirely "ungrammatical" judgement of 13% for both word orders with that Focus Adverb.

An important aspect to notice in the C1/C2 level subjects is that there is a clear trend for the grammaticality between the two word-orders of each Focus Adverb. In general, SAV tends to be slightly more grammatical for this group of speakers. Figure 12 shows this clearly, as these subjects judge the SVA sentences from 15% to nearly 30% lower than the SAV sentences.

Figure 11. Percentage of EFL learners' results – B2 level participants

Percetage of EFL learners' results B2

	SAV only	SVA only	SAV even	SVA even	SAV also	SVA also
ungrammatical	9	10	9	28	13	13
unsure	7	5	6	5	3	9
grammatical	48	49	49	31	48	42

B2

■ grammatical ■ unsure ■ ungrammatical

Figure 12. Percentage of EFL learners' results – C1/C2 level

Percentage of EFL learners' results C1/C2

	SAV only	SVA only	SAV even	SVA even	SAV also	SVA also
ungrammatical	21	41	26	44	23	55
unsure	16	15	10	29	10	13
grammatical	91	72	92	55	95	60

C1/C2

■ grammatical ■ unsure ■ ungrammatical
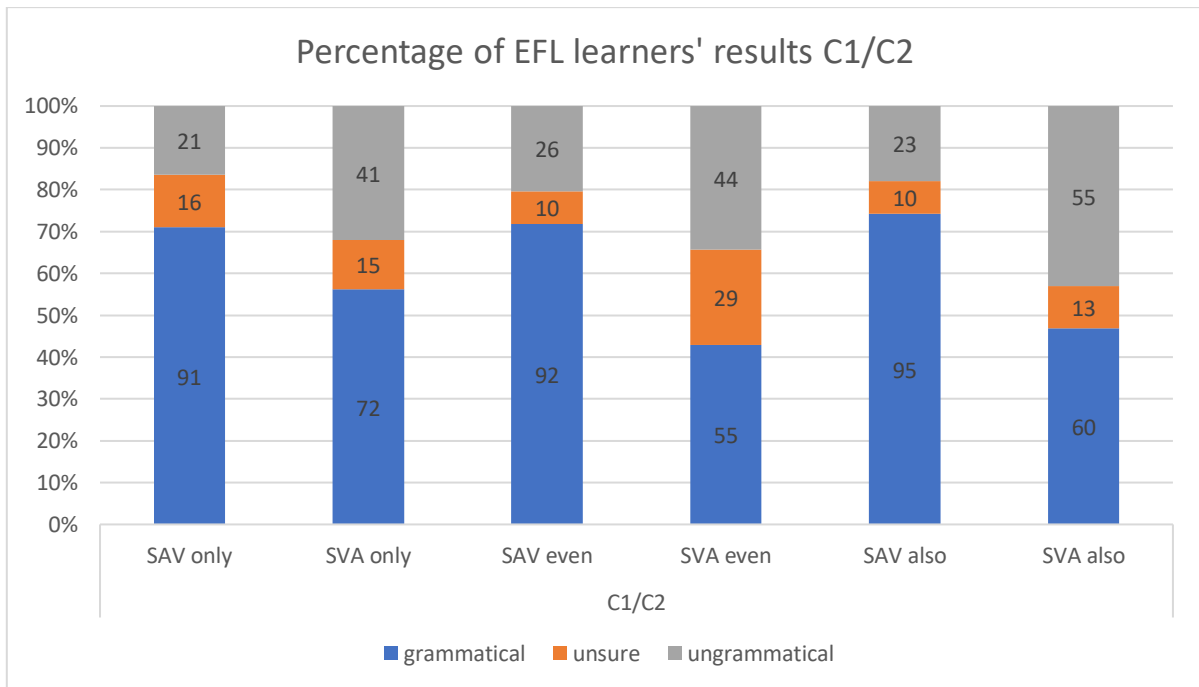
In sum, the two most interesting differences are found in the SVA conditions; SVA *only* and SVA *also*. With almost a half-point of difference between the response of these groups, it can be safe to say that EFL learners with a higher level of English generally understand this parameter better than their B2-level peers.

When compared to the filler questions, which were the same two word orders of SAV and SVA but with frequency and manner adverbs, it seems the EFL learners did better at correctly identifying and rejecting the ungrammatical SVA word order. These differences are shown in Figure 13.

Figure 13. EFL learners' results compared with results of filler sentences
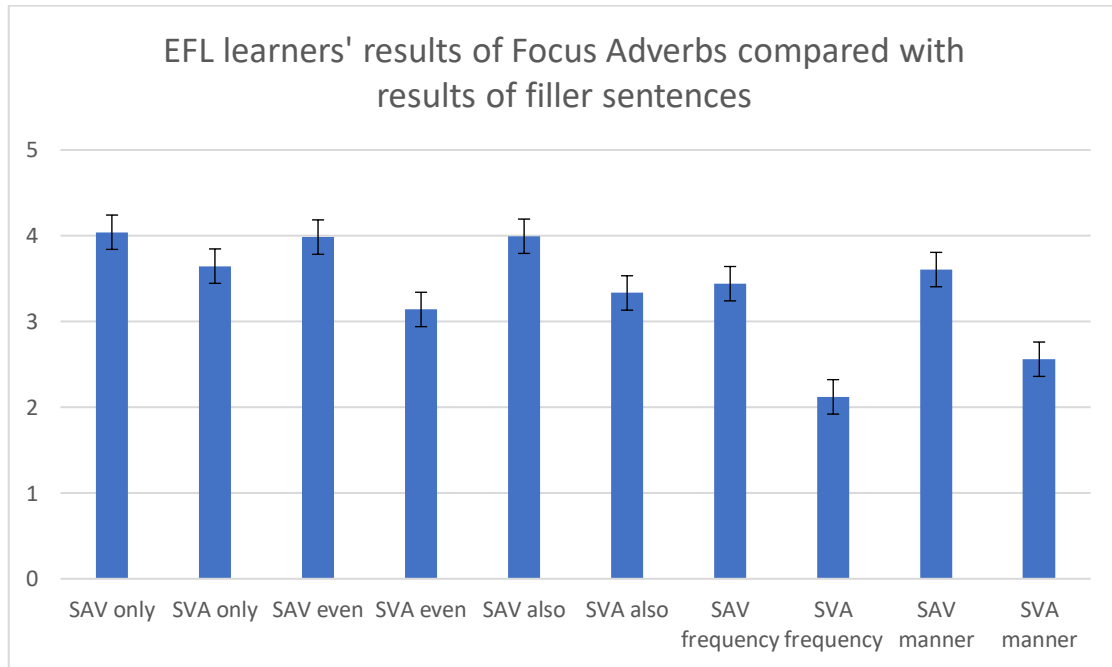
As shown, the EFL learners rate the SVA frequency and manner filler sentences much lower than the other SVA word order experimental sentences. SVA frequency is given a clearly ungrammatical score of 2.12, while SVA manner sentences are given about a 2.5. Interestingly, however, they do not rate the SAV sentences as high as the experimental questions. This could be due to lexical reasons, as was previously discussed.

4. General Discussion

In this chapter, the results of both Experiment 1 and Experiment 2 will be presented and discussed in comparison with one another to answer one of the main research questions:

Do Italian advanced and proficient EFL learners perform similarly to their native English-speaking peers when judging the acceptability of certain word orders of Focus Adverbs?

Later, in Section 4.1 the implications of this study will be discussed, followed by the pedagogical implications in Section 4.2. In Section 4.3 the limitations encountered in this study will be gone over.

As was confirmed in Section 3.3.2, there is a slight difference between advanced (B2) EFL learners and their proficient (C1/C2) level peers, although it is not statistically significant. At a glance, proficient EFL learners identify typically ungrammatical word order more accurately than their B2-level peers, however there is still the question of how they compare to their native speaker peers.

Overall, for the SAV word order, the Italian EFL speakers seemed to judge all sentences as more grammatical than the SVA word order, which was also found in the native speakers. However, the native speakers tended to find the SAV word order slightly more grammatical than the Italians, especially in the experimental sentences where they give a rating of 3.14 or above for the traditionally ungrammatical sentences. Except with the case of the Focus Adverb *only*, the native speakers judged the SAV conditions at least a quarter of a point higher than the Italian EFL subjects. Interestingly, in SAV *only*, the two groups gave nearly identical acceptability ratings, both giving an average of 4.

Both SAV and SVA *only* received nearly identical acceptability ratings from both groups. This was a surprise, especially in the case of SVA *only,* not only because the native speakers judged a typically ungrammatical word-order as grammatical, but also because it was given the highest acceptability ratings of the SVA word orders by the Italian EFL learners, as well, even though they had the tendency to give higher acceptability ratings to the SVA word order in general.

In the sentences with the SVA word order, on the other hand, the EFL learners gave overall higher ratings to this word order, while native speakers gave acceptability ratings of about 2 or lower. This was carried over into the filler questions, as well. The results of both groups are shown in Figure 14.

Figure 14. Average of acceptability scores between groups
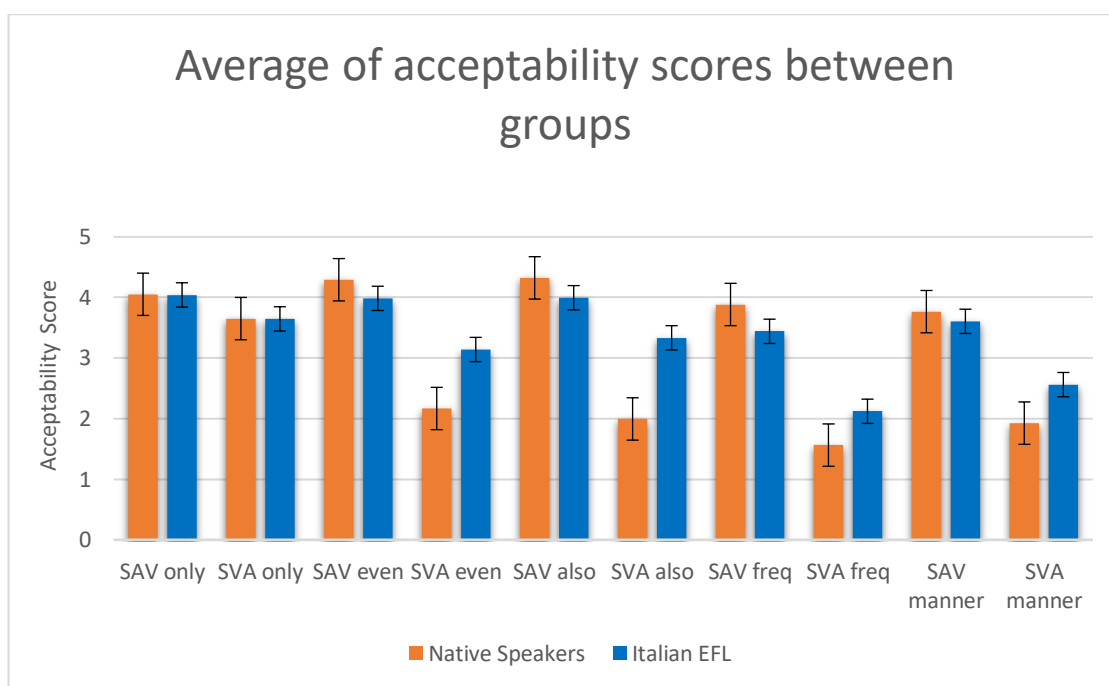
In Figure 14 it is clear that the native speakers are overall more decisive when giving grammaticality judgements, while EFL learners give lower acceptability judgements

for typically grammatical word orders, and higher acceptability judgements for typically ungrammatical word orders.

In Figures 15 and 16, the results of each word order are better outlined and analyzed in detail. Figure 15 shows the results between the two groups of the SAV conditions, which were almost identical, averaging at or just above 3, while Figure 16 shows the results of the SVA conditions.

Figure 15. Comparison of SAV conditions – native speakers and Italian EFL
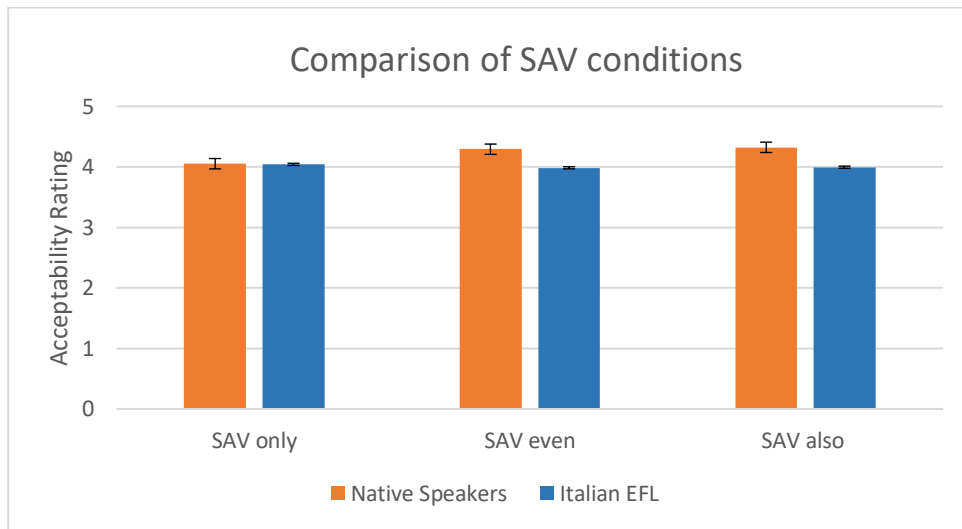
Figure 16. Comparison of SVA conditions – native speakers and Italian EFL
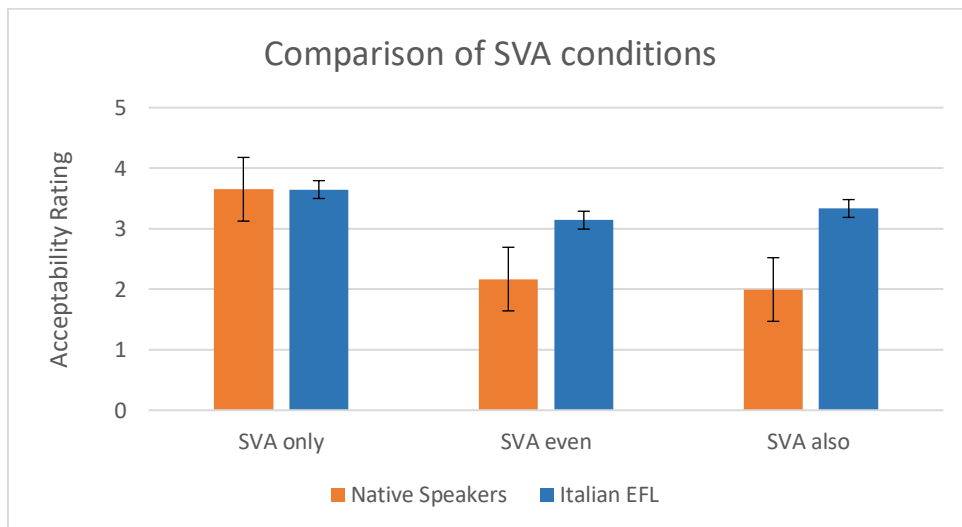
The Focus Adverbs with the SVA conditions are interesting, as they were judged as near identical in SVA *only*, but nearly a full point lower or even more in the other two conditions.

In order to understand if these results were significantly different, a two-way ANOVA with replication was performed. The *p*-value for the conditions (SAV *only*, SVA *only*, SAV *even*, SVA *even*, SAV *also*, SVA *also*) was found to be statistically significant; *p* = 0.000, concluding that the responses collected for each condition are statistically significant. The other *p*-value, which indicated the group of subjects tested: the Italian EFL group or the group of native speakers, also showed to be highly significant: *p* = 0.000. The interaction between these two factors; the type of speaker and Focus Adverb – word order combination also proved to be statistically significant: *p* = 0.000. This said, t-tests were needed to further investigate the interactions.

Two-sample *t*-tests assuming unequal variances were performed for the two groups of subjects for each of the conditions. In the conditions with the SAV word order, there was no significant difference found, which was as expected. On the other hand, there were interesting results in the other, SVA word order. For the Focus Adverb *only*, there was not a significant difference between the SVA word order for native speakers (*M* = 3.65, *SD* = 0.97) and SVA word order for the Italian EFL subjects (*M* = 3.64, *SD* = 0.97); *t*(48) = 0.02, *p* = 0.97. This result demonstrates that both groups of speakers accepted this word order almost identically, which was a surprising result.

The other two SVA word orders, however, were found to have significantly different results. For the Focus Adverb *even,* the native speakers' responses (*M* = 2.16, *SD* = 1.09) and the Italian EFL learners' (*M* = 3.14, *SD* = 1.09) differed significantly; *t*(48) = -4.79, *p* = 0.00. This was similar for the Focus Adverb *also.* The native speakers' results (*M* = 1.99, *SD* = 1.339) and the Italian EFL learners' results (*M* = 3.33, *SD* = 1.339) differed significantly; *t*(48) = -5.59, *p* = 0.00. The results in both the

Focus Adverbs *even* and *also* show that the hypothesis holds true and Italian EFL learners accept the SVA word order differently from the native speakers.

When further separated into the groups based on their level of English, we can see that native speakers clearly judge the two different word orders using 4 or above, for the case of the sentences with the SAV word order, and about a 2 or below for the sentences in the SVA word order. The comparison of these results is given in Figure 17:

Figure 17. Average of acceptability judgement score by level of English
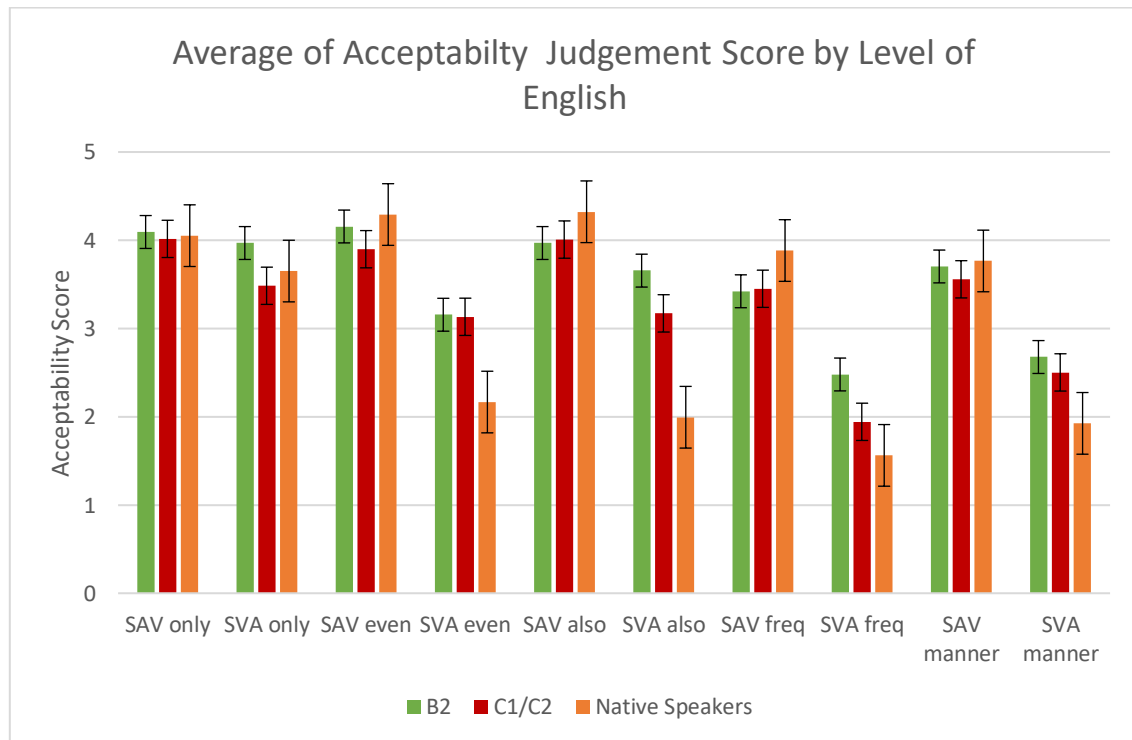
As was mentioned, the only condition to receive unexpected results was SVA *only*. With the Focus Adverb *only*, we find that all groups of speakers judged the SAV word order at about 4, while the SVA word order was still high for all groups, but in

particular the B2 speakers gave it the highest rating, as was expected, even if the native speakers also gave this sentence type an unexpectedly high rating.

Overall, all participants judged the sentences in the SAV word order as grammatical, although the native speakers generally seem to rate them the highest. As for the traditionally ungrammatical SVA word order, on the other hand, with exception to SVA *only,* it is clear that the native speakers find them the least grammatical, followed by the C1/C2 participants and finally the B2 participants.

For both SVA *even* and *also*, the Italian EFL participants found the sentences nearly one point higher than the native speakers, if not more. SVA *even* was given a rating of 2.16 by the native speakers and 3.13 and 3.15 by the C1/C2 and B2 level learners, respectively. SVA *also* saw an even more noticeable difference with the native speakers rating this sentence type as 1.99, while the EFL learners rated it 3.17 for the case of the C1/C2 level learners and 3.65 for those with a B2. These results also carry into the fillers, where, in the ungrammatical sentences, the native speakers find them the least grammatical, followed by the C1/C2 level learners and finally, the B2 level learners.

These results show that the level of English an EFL learner has reached does influence to some degree the awareness of the verb movement parameter, and for the case of this study, the awareness of the grammaticality of the positions of Focus Adverbs. As is seen in Fig. 17, the EFL learners performed more native like with the filler questions, which saw adverbs of frequency and manner in the two tested word orders in the experimental questions. In those sentences they judged the ungrammatical SVA word order under a three in all cases. The B2 level learners gave these sentence types 2.6 and 2.3, while the C1/C2 level learners gave these sentences 1.99 and 2.5. The group of native speakers gave these sentence types a 2 or lower.

4.1. Implications

This thesis has sought to find if there is difference in acceptability in word order with Focus Adverbs in English. Two groups of speakers were involved in the study and it was found that there is difference in the acceptability of the SAV word order and the SVA word order in both groups, although native speakers of English find the SAV word order the most grammatical. Interestingly, they also find grammatical the SVA word order with the adverb *only*. In the Italian EFL group of subjects it was found that they accepted both the SAV and SVA word orders, however the SVA word order was accepted at a much higher rate than the native speakers.

After observing the results of this study, the way Focus Adverbs are taught to EFL learners needs to be revised. This study has shown that students of English, even those with advanced (B2) and proficient (C1/C2) levels, still seem to struggle with recognizing the grammaticality of Focus Adverb positioning in typically ungrammatical positions, even after extensive English language education. This is crucial for those who work as interpreters or translators, as the position of a Focus Adverb can completely change the meaning of a sentence.

Another implication to this study is that of the acceptability and grammaticality of SVA *only,* which happened to be a surprising result from the native speakers. This finding implies that the Focus Adverb *only* behaves slightly differently than the others and needs to be further studied in order to better understand the reasoning for this.

4.2. Limitations

There were a few limitations that this study faced. These include both the materials and the subjects. One limitation that was found was with the questionnaire. In order to control different aspects of the sentence design and because I wanted it to be as uniform as possible, I tried to create sentences that were both grammatically and semantically correct while using the same verbs, the same number of certain

determiners, and similar objects for each one. This, however, did not work out perfectly. I found that even if some sentences were grammatically correct, they were semantically strange and in some cases this led the subjects to give lower ratings for these sentences.

Another limitation this study faced was with the subjects. There were two particular issues related to subjects that were in the Italian EFL learner group. The first was that each subject was allowed to declare their own level of English since it would have been very difficult to ask them to provide me with copies of certifications or diplomas, and also since I had no way of compensating them for their time, it would have been difficult to ask them to perform an additional placement test. The other issue in this group was finding an even number of test subjects with each level of English, especially in the case of subjects with a B2 and C2 level participants, therefore it was difficult to perform some of the statistical tests.

While the findings of this study were interesting and stimulating, further research could have been performed. Even if grammaticality judgement tasks were crucial to this study, other types of tests could have been used to better understand these phenomena, such as written production tasks, repetition tasks and oral production tasks. With the use of these more extensive testing methods, I could have better understood the reasoning of my subjects when they responded with unexpected answers. This could have led to understand if prosody was at play in the acceptability of traditionally ungrammatical word orders or if there is truly something else going on with these structures.

Another implication was that of the use of the Likert scale. The fact that it was on a scale of five was both an advantage and disadvantage. While using either a scale of five or seven is traditionally widely used in grammaticality judgement tasks, it does make it difficult to understand what a response of three should be categorized as. While in this study it was believed to be understood as an "unsure" response, in

hindsight, it may be better to use an even-numbered scaler in order to label the responses as more (or less) grammatical or more (or less) ungrammatical.

5. Future Directions

The results of this study have shown that Focus Adverbs are particularly difficult for Italian EFL students to master and have also shown that native speakers also do not necessarily agree on their positioning one-hundred percent of the time. The first result is crucial in that it shows that Focus Adverb placement can potentially be used to identify a native speaker from a non-native speaker and even test for near-nativelike or mastery in EFL students. These results also reveal that Focus Adverb placement may serve as a function of nativelike fluency and therefore specific exercises can be developed and used to train and test highly-proficient language users.

A few different projects could be developed to confront the issue of the assumed uncertainty in this group of EFL learners. Following the works of White (1991), Solís Hernández (2006) and Formisano (2013), a dedicated project may be developed and proposed in order to clarify the rules of adverb positioning, especially in the case of Focus Adverbs or perhaps attempt to "turn off" the verb raising parameter in this group of learners in English. Other types of adverbs may benefit from such a study, as well, as Solís Hernández (2006) found issues in adverb placement in general in a group of university students and EFL teachers. An advanced or highly proficient group of Italian EFL speakers could be taken into consideration in order to understand if they may benefit from a syntactic approach to teaching adverbs in general, and more importantly, Focus Adverbs.

Another finding of the study was that native English speakers judged the SVA word order with the Focus Adverb *only* almost as grammatical as the SAV word order. This finding was unexpected and, although this thesis has proposed a few reasons for this anomalous result, further study of the SVA word order with *only* is necessary in

order to better understand its grammaticality in certain sentences or perhaps even in certain speakers. It may also assist in understanding if the word order truly depends on the determiner of its complement or if it may have another reason to be considered grammatical.

All things considered, the discrepancy in the responses from the EFL learners in comparison with their English L1 peers suggests that Focus Adverbs are still troublesome elements for advanced and highly proficient EFL learners. It is very likely that interference from their first language may be at fault and that they fail to fully reject the SVA word order due to the active parameter known as verb-movement, following the FT/FA hypothesis (Schwartz and Sprouse 1994). Another factor in the overall higher acceptance rates of the SVA order in the EFL learners could be due to the complexity in the positioning of these adverbs, as they can be found in a number of positions throughout the sentence. This is not usually the case with other categories of adverbs. The fact that they are also not as frequently addressed in the EFL classroom, which could contribute to the difficulty the EFL speakers find with them, even if the students claim to be advanced or proficient.

Further study will be needed to find the exact cause and extent of this error type in Italian EFL speakers, however this thesis has shown that there is difference in acceptability in Focus Adverb placement between advanced and highly-proficient EFL learners and native speakers and that it is an area in their grammar that must be addressed.

6. Conclusions

The goal of this thesis was to investigate word order acceptability with Focus Adverbs in two groups of English speakers using grammaticality judgement tasks with the Focus Adverbs *only, also*, and *even* in two word orders: the SAV and the SVA word order. It has explored the idea that there is a preferred and most acceptable word order

when dealing with Focus Adverbs in English, namely SAV. This was predicted in the main hypothesis. This preference can be observed in (28)-(30), where three examples of the native speakers' responses are given (the numbers shown in parentheses are the averages of the judgements given by the 8 subjects who viewed a given example sentence).

(28) a.   She only played soccer. (5)

      b.   She played only soccer. (2.98)

(29) a.   She even played soccer. (4.7)

      b.   She played even soccer. (1)

(30) a.   She also played soccer. (5)

      b.   She played also soccer. (1.12)

In (28) through (30) it can clearly be seen that the native speakers prefer the SAV word order over the SVA order. In all three cases of this example the SAV order was accepted at a very high rate of 5, 4.7, and 5. On the other hand, the SVA word order received a much lower result, scoring a 1 or just above a 1, except for the case of *only*, which must be further studied in order to understand why it received an unexpected result from native speakers. In this instance the SVA *only* condition received a rating of 2.98, which was found to be significantly different in comparison to the other two SVA conditions.

This is the word order that the native speakers of English found as most grammatical in all three cases of the Focus Adverbs and it has been concluded that Italian EFL speakers recognize this order as the most grammatical, as well. In spite of this result, the Italian EFL participants also accept its alternative order, SVA, as more grammatically correct than not, which visibly and significantly differed from the

results of the native speakers. This result was predicted for this group of subjects (see Chapter 4, Fig. 14).

The difference in the two groups of speakers is clear. While native speakers of English showed to reject the SVA word order, their Italian peers do not seem to do so as readily. While it was found that there is, indeed, a difference in the acceptability of the two word orders, the SVA word order conditions were never as "ungrammatical" as the native speakers' ratings, leading us to believe there is uncertainty in this group of speakers (see Section 3.3.2, Table 9, and Chapter 4, Figures 15 and 16).

Another finding of the study, albeit unexpected, was that native English speakers find the SVA word order with the Focus Adverb *only* almost as grammatical as the SAV word order with *only* (see Section 2.2.2, Figure 4, 6, and 7, and Table 6). It was proposed that native speakers would reject the SVA word order and clearly rate it as ungrammatical. While that was found to be true in the case of two of the three Focus Adverbs, *even* and *also*, as would traditionally be found with other types of adverbs, it was not so with the SVA *only* condition.

In conclusion, Focus Adverbs have been found to be i) accepted as most grammatical in the SAV word order by native speakers, as well as EFL speakers and ii) accepted in the SVA word order at higher rates by the Italian EFL students. This is true even after having reached proficient levels of English and can be used as a function of near-native fluency. Further study is needed in order to find out if errors are committed in production tasks, as well. Efficient methods of increasing EFL learners' accuracy in identifying more nativelike placement for Focus Adverbs also merits further research.

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Appendix A.

Hello!

You are invited to participate in a web-based online survey on how speakers judge sentences with different orders of elements in English.

This study is being conducted by Michaela Vann, an MA student in Language Sciences at Ca' Foscari – University of Venice, in partial fulfillment for her MA degree.

It should take approximately 10 minutes to complete.

PARTICIPATION:

Your participation in this survey is voluntary. You may refuse to take part in the research or exit the survey at any time without penalty.

BENEFITS:

You will receive no direct benefits from participating in this research study. However, your responses may help us learn more about certain linguistic phenomena.

RISKS:

There are no foreseeable risks involved in participating in this study other than those encountered in day-to-day life.

CONFIDENTIALITY:

While I am asking you to provide me with your email address, your identity and survey responses will remain 100% anonymous. Your survey answers will be sent to a link using Google Forms where data will be stored in a password protected electronic format. No one will be able to identify you or your answers, and no one will know whether or not you participated in the study.

DATA TREATMENT:

Our interest in this study is on how speakers respond to the different sentences as a group, not as individuals. Your responses will be aggregated with the responses of other participants and the data will be analyzed as averages.

CONTACT:

If you have questions at any time about the study or the procedures, you may contact me, Michaela Vann, at 833317@stud.unive.it or my research supervisors, Professor Giulia Bencini at giulia.bencini@unive.it or Giuliana Giusti at giusti@unive.it.

ELECTRONIC CONSENT:

You may print a copy of this consent form for your records.

Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that

*You have read the above information

*You voluntarily agree to participate

*You are 18 years of age or older or have consent of a parent or guardian.

Electronic Consent: Clicking on the "Agree" button indicates that a. You have read the above information, b. You voluntarily agree to participate, c. You are 18 years of age or older or have consent of a parent or guardian.

    ☐   I agree to participate.

Appendix B.

Screenshot Sample of Questionnaire on Google Forms

1. Sam always needed a pen. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No one would say this.	○	○	○	○	○	This is perfect.

2. She had consistently a headache. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No one would say this.	○	○	○	○	○	This is perfect.

3. He innocently wanted some sweets. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No one would say this.	○	○	○	○	○	This is perfect.

4. She even found a book. *

	1	2	3	4	5	
No one would say this.	○	○	○	○	○	This is perfect.

Appendix C.

List 5A (not randomized)

Number	Condition	Sentence:
1	e	*She also found a book.*
2	f	*Sarah asked also a question.*
3	a	*He only knew Mary.*
4	b	*She played only soccer.*
5	c	*Sofia even needed a pen.*
6	d	*Robert painted even some pictures.*
7	e	*He also talked about astronomy.*
8	f	*Hubert saw also John.*
9	a	*She only helped with the dishes.*
10	b	*John kept only some photos.*
11	c	*She even ignored Sarah.*
12	d	*Sam wrote even the letters.*
13	e	*Anne also wanted some muffins.*
14	f	*He ate also salad.*
15	a	*Bill only set the table.*
16	b	*He took only some flowers.*
17	c	*She even liked the books.*
18	d	*She felt even the earthquake.*
19	e	*Lucy also brought the wine.*
20	f	*Nick invited also Jane.*
21	a	*He only needed the cups.*
22	b	*She had only a party.*
23	c	*Jack even tutored math.*
24	d	*Mary lost even the key.*
25	a	*She calmly found a seat.*
26	b	*Mark asked anxiously a question.*
27	a	*He undoubtedly knew about chemistry.*
28	b	*She played cheerfully tennis.*
29	a	*Lydia clearly needed a car.*
30	b	*Ted painted correctly some pictures.*
31	a	*Phil carelessly talked about money.*
32	b	*Mary saw happily Carl.*
33	a	*He safely helped the children.*
34	b	*She kept easily some books.*
35	a	*He truly ignored James.*
36	b	*She wrote kindly the letters.*
37	a	*He innocently wanted some sweets.*

38	b	Jan ate enthusiastically salad.
39	a	Carla frantically set the table.
40	b	He took nervously some photos.
41	a	She naturally liked the gardens.
42	b	John felt suddenly the earthquake.
43	a	She merrily brought the cake.
44	b	Liz invited quickly Gary.
45	a	He insistently needed the pencils.
46	b	He had slowly a coffee.
47	a	Josh perfectly tutored Lisa.
48	b	She lost mysteriously the book.
49	a	He often found a solution.
50	b	She asked seldom a question.
51	a	He rarely knew about art.
52	b	Mary played infrequently basketball.
53	a	Sam always needed a pen.
54	b	She painted constantly some pictures.
55	a	He perpetually talked about Mary.
56	b	Nick saw weekly Josh.
57	a	Sarah generally helped the children.
58	b	He kept occasionally some mementos.
59	a	He normally ignored Sam.
60	b	Janice wrote never the letters.
61	a	He often wanted some snacks.
62	b	She ate rarely cake.
63	a	Mark nightly set the table.
64	b	Sarah took monthly some medications.
65	a	He hardly liked the books.
66	b	She felt sometimes the water.
67	a	Matt routinely brought the music.
68	b	Anne invited repeatedly James.
69	a	He quarterly needed the statistics.
70	b	She had consistently a headache.
71	a	He invariably tutored science.
72	b	She lost habitually the notebook.

Appendix D.

Entire List of Experimental Conditions

Focus Adverbs	Noun types (4 each)
only	Singular noun/ indefinite article
even	Singular noun (uncountable or PP)/ no article
also	Proper Noun (singular)
	Singular noun/ definite article
	Plural noun/ some
	Plural noun/ definite article

1

FIND
ind. Art

1a	She only found a book.
1b	She found only a book.
1c	She even found a book.
1d	She found even a book.
1e	She also found a book.
1f	She found also a book.

2

ASK
ind. Art

2a	Sarah only asked a question.
2b	Sarah asked only a question.
2c	Sarah even asked a question.
2d	Sarah asked even a question.
2e	Sarah also asked a question.
2f	Sarah asked also a question.

3

KNOW
PropNoun

3a	He only knew Mary.
3b	He knew only Mary
3c	He even knew Mary.
3d	He knew even Mary.
3e	He also knew Mary.
3f	He knew also Mary.

4

PLAY
No Art

4a	She only played soccer.
4b	She played only soccer.
4c	She even played soccer.
4d	She played even soccer.

		4e	She also played soccer.
		4f	She played also soccer.

	5		
NEED		5a	Sofia only needed a pen.
ind. Art		5b	Sofia needed only a pen.
		5c	Sofia even needed a pen.
		5d	Sofia needed even a pen.
		5e	Sofia also needed a pen.
		5f	Sofia needed also a pen.

	6		
PAINT		6a	Robert only painted some pictures.
some+plu		6b	Robert painted only some pictures.
		6c	Robert even painted some pictures.
		6d	Robert painted even some pictures.
		6e	Robert also painted some pictures.
		6f	Robert painted also some pictures.

	7		
TALK		7a	He only talked about astronomy.
No Art		7b	He talked only about astronomy.
		7c	He even talked about astronomy.
		7d	He talked even about astronomy.
		7e	He also talked about astronomy.
		7f	He talked also about astronomy.

	8		
SEE		8a	Hubert only saw John.
PropNoun		8b	Hubert saw only John.
		8c	Hubert even saw John.
		8d	Hubert saw even John.
		8e	Hubert also saw John.
		8f	Hubert saw also John.

	9		
HELP		9a	She only helped with the dishes.
plu (def)		9b	She helped only with the dishes.
		9c	She even helped with the dishes.
		9d	She helped even with the dishes.
		9e	She also helped with the dishes.
		9f	She helped also with the dishes.

10

KEEP

some+plu

10a	John only kept some photos.
10b	John kept only some photos.
10c	John even kept some photos.
10d	John kept even some photos.
10e	John also kept some photos.
10f	John kept also some photos.

11

IGNORE

PropNoun

11a	She only ignored Sarah.
11b	She ignored only Sarah.
11c	She even ignored Sarah.
11d	She ignored even Sarah.
11e	She also ignored Sarah.
11f	She ignored also Sarah.

12

WRITE

plu (def)

12a	Sam only wrote the letters.
12b	Sam wrote only the letters.
12c	Sam even wrote the letters.
12d	Sam wrote even the letters.
12e	Sam also wrote the letters.
12f	Sam wrote also the letters.

13

WANT

some+plu

13a	Anne only wanted some muffins.
13b	Anne wanted only some muffins.
13c	Anne even wanted some muffins.
13d	Anne wanted even some muffins.
13e	Anne also wanted some muffins.
13f	Anne wanted also some muffins.

14

EAT

No Art

14a	He only ate salad.
14b	He ate only salad.
14c	He even ate salad.
14d	He ate even salad.
14e	He also ate salad.
14f	He ate also salad.

15

SET

def art(sing)

15a	Bill only set the table.
15b	Bill set only the table.
15c	Bill even set the table.

	15d	Bill set even the table.
	15e	Bill also set the table.
	15f	Bill set also the table.

16

TAKE
`some+plu`

16a	He only took some flowers.
16b	He took only some flowers.
16c	He even took some flowers.
16d	He took even some flowers.
16e	He also took some flowers.
16f	He took also some flowers.

17

LIKE
`plu (def)`

17a	She only liked the books.
17b	She liked only the books.
17c	She even liked the books.
17d	She liked even the books.
17e	She also liked the books.
17f	She liked also the books.

18

FEEL
`def art(sing)`

18a	She only felt the earthquake.
18b	She felt only the earthquake.
18c	She even felt the earthquake.
18d	She felt even the earthquake.
18e	She also felt the earthquake.
18f	She felt also the earthquake.

19

BRING
`def art(sing)`

19a	Lucy only brought the wine.
19b	Lucy brought only the wine.
19c	Lucy even brought the wine.
19d	Lucy brought even the wine.
19e	Lucy also brought the wine.
19f	Lucy brought also the wine.

20

INVITE
`PropNoun`

20a	Nick only invited Jane.
20b	Nick invited only Jane.
20c	Nick even invited Jane.
20d	Nick invited even Jane.
20e	Nick also invited Jane.
20f	Nick invited also Jane.

	21		
NEED		21a	He only needed the cups.
plu (def)		21b	He needed only the cups.
		21c	He even needed the cups.
		21d	He needed even the cups.
		21e	He also needed the cups.
		21f	He needed also the cups.

	22		
HAVE		22a	She only had a party.
ind. Art		22b	She had only a party.
		22c	She even had a party.
		22d	She had even a party.
		22e	She also had a party.
		22f	She had also a party.

	23		
TUTOR		23a	Jack only tutored math.
No Art		23b	Jack tutored only math.
		23c	Jack even tutored math.
		23d	Jack tutored even math.
		23e	Jack also tutored math.
		23f	Jack tutored also math.

	24		
LOSE		24a	Mary only lost the key.
def art(sing)		24b	Mary lost only the key.
		24c	Mary even lost the key.
		24d	Mary lost even the key.
		24e	Mary also lost the key.
		24f	Mary lost also the key.