***University of M'sila Department of English***

***Second Year LMD Students Written* *Expression Courses***

**LESSON EIGHT: MISPLACED PARTS / DANGLING MODIFIERS**

**4.EFFECTIVE SENTENCES**

**4.1.COHERENCE : MISPLACED PARTS / DANGLING MODIFIERS**

The meaning of an English sentence depends largely on the position of its parts. Usually these parts (words, phrases, subordinate clauses serving as modifiers) can be placed in various positions.

Note how the meaning in the following sentences changes according to the position of the modifier “ only”

1-Jane said that she loved *only* her mother (she loved no one else)

2-Jane said that *only* she loved her mother (no one else loved her mother)

3-Jane said *only* that she loved her mother (she said nothing else)

* **A- Avoid needless separation of related parts of the sentence**

**1**-In standard written English, adverbs such as *almost, only, just, even, hardly, nearly, or merely* are regularly placed immediately before the words they modify

**Ambiguous:** He is ***just*** asking for a trifle

**Clear:** He is asking **just** for a trifle

**2-The position of a modifying prepositional phrase should clearly indicate what the phrase modifies**

A propositional phrase used as an adjective nearly always immediately follows the word modified

**Misplaced:** Mother gave date muffins to *my friends with pecans in them*

**Clear:** Mother gave my friendsdate muffins *with pecans in them*

**3- Adjective clause should be placed near the words they modify**

**Awkward:** I saw the horse stop at the edge of the precipice *that had raced ahead.*

**Clear:** I saw thehorse *that had raced ahead*stop at the edge of the precipice.

**4- Avoid “squinting” constructions (modifiers that may refer either to a preceding or to a following word)**

**Squinting:** I agreed*on the next day*to help him

**Clear:** I agreed to help him *on the next day*  **or** *On the next day*, I agreed to help him.

**5-Avoid awkward separation of parts of verb phrases and awkward splitting of infinitives**

**Awkward:** There stood the old car which we *had* early last autumn *left* by our lake cottage

**Improved:** There stood the old car which we *had* *left* by our lake cottage early last autumn.

* **B-Dangling modifiers**

**Avoid dangling modifiers**

The word *dangling* is applied especially to incoherent clearly and logically to some word verbal phrases and elliptical clauses .A dangling modifiers is one that does not refer to some word in the sentence

**Gerund phrase:** *After watching the late show*, Nancy was tired (Nancy watched the late show)

**Elliptical clause:** *When only a small boy*, I went with my father to Texas ( “*I was*” is implied in the elliptical clause)

**Note:** To correct a dangling modifier: **1-** rearrange the words in the sentence to make the modifier sensibly refer to the right word, or **2-** add words to clear up the meaning

**1-Avoid dangling participial phrases**

**Dangling :** *Taking our seats*, the game started ( “taking” does not refer to the subject “ game”, nor to any other word in the sentence)

**Improved :** Taking our seats, **we** watched the opening of the game ( “ taking” refers to “ we” , the subject of the sentence)

**Or :** *After we had taken our seats*, the game started ( Participial phrase expended into a clause)

**Note:** Participles do not dangle when they are used in an absolute phrase or used to introduce or refer to a generaltruth **.E.g.** *Generally speaking*, an optimist is a happy man.

**2-Avoid dangling infinitive phrases**

**Dangling :***To write well*, good books must be read.

**Improved :** *To write well,* **a student** must read good books.

**Note :** Infinitives do not dangle when they introduce a general truth rather than designate the action of a specific person or thing**. E.g.** *To be brief*, rats carry disease.

**3-Avoid dangling elliptical clauses**

An elliptical clause, which is a clause with an implied subject and verb, dangles unless the implied subject is the same as that of the main clause (**See the example above, B- Dangling modifiers)**

**Exercise 1:** Rewrite the following sentences to eliminate dangling or misplaced modifiers. (Keep in

mind that there is more than one correct way to revise these sentences.)

1-To be a successful student, good study habits need to be developed

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2- Published in the paper, the man believed the story.

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3- The dog ate the food with the brown fur.

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4. The woman driving the car wearing a bikini sped through town.

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5.All that glitters is not gold.

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6. When completely empty, the technician should refill the beaker.

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7.He even works during his vaccation

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8. Tightening his red tie, the microphone was approached by the announcer.

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9. Walking along the street, the fallen leaves were kicked up by the little boy.

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10. The book was on the table which she had read the day before.

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11-The house only costs $12.500.

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12- Opening the door, the fresh breeze tousled her hair.

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**SENTENCE FRAGMENT**

A **SENTENCE FRAGMENT** fails to be a sentence in the sense that it cannot stand by itself. It does not contain even one [**independent clause.**](http://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/clauses.htm) There are several reasons why a group of words may seem to act like a sentence but not have the wherewithal to make it as a complete thought.

**It may locate something in time and place with a prepositional phrase or a series of such phrases, but it's still lacking a proper subject-verb relationship within an independent clause:**

*In Japan, during the last war and just before the armistice.*

This sentence accomplishes a great deal in terms of placing the reader in time and place, but there is no subject, no verb.

**It describes something, but there is no subject-verb relationship:**

*Working far into the night in an effort to salvage her little boat.*

This is a [**verbal phrase**](http://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/definitions.htm#verbal) that wants to modify something, the real subject of the sentence (about to come up), probably the *she* who was working so hard.

**It may have most of the makings of a sentence but still be missing an important part of a verb string:**

*Some of the students working in Professor Espinoza's laboratory last semester.*

Remember that an *-ing* verb form without an auxiliary form to accompany it can never be a verb.

**It may even have a subject-verb relationship, but it has been subordinated to another idea by a dependent word and so cannot stand by itself:**

*Even though he had the better arguments and was by far the more powerful speaker.*

This sentence fragment has a subject, *he*, and two verbs, *had* and *was*, but it cannot stand by itself because of the dependent word (subordinating conjunction) *even though*. We need an independent clause to follow up this [**dependent clause**](http://guidetogrammar.org/grammar/fragments.htm#clauses): *. . . the more powerful speaker, he lost the case because he didn't understand the jury.*