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**FAKULTAS KEGURUAN DAN ILMU PENDIDIKAN
UNIVERSITAS HKBP NOMMENSEN (UHN)
MEDAN**

Jl. Sutomo Nomor: 4A Medan, Kode Pos 20234 Medan Timur.
Telepon: (061) 4522922;4522831, Faks : 4571426;
Email: jurnalsuluhpendidikanuhn@gmail.com

DAFTAR ISI

1. Desain model Pembelajaran Based Learning dalam peningkatan Kemampuan Pemahaman Kosep Mahasiswa jurusan Pendidikan Matematika Semester 3 FKIP-UHN Medan. Adi Suarman Situmorang	1-9
2. Students' Ability In Avoiding Misplaced, Dangling Modifier In Writing Paragraph Sahlan Tampubolon	10-17
3. Penerapan Model based learning di SMP Negeri 1 Bilah barat untuk Peningkatan Kemampuan Pemahaman Konsep Siswa. Sintong Nainggolan	18-26
4. Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Time Token Terhadap Hasil Belajar Akuntansi Siswa Kelas XII SMK Negeri 1 Sidikalang Tahun Ajaran 2013/2014 Dearlina Sinaga	27-34
5. Pengaruh Model Pembelajaran Aktif Tipe Quis <i>Team</i> Terhadap Kemampuan Pemecahan Masalah Matematik Friska B. Siahaan 34-40.....	35-45
6. Pengaruh Disiplin, Semangat, dan Cara Mengajar Instruktur Terhadap Peningkatan Nilai Ujian Kompetensi Peserta PLPG Tahun 2012 Efron Manik	46-54
7. Efektivitas Teknik Dramatik dalam Pembelajaran Menganalisis Tokoh Cerpen pada Prodi Bahasa dan Sastra Indonesia FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen Pontas Jamaluddin Sitorus	55-63
8. Desain Model Pembelajaran Kooperatif Tipe STAD untuk Meningkatkan Pemahaman konsep matematika Siswa di Kelas VII SMP N 4 Percut Sei Tuan Rosinda Situmorang	64-72

STUDENTS' ABILITY IN AVOIDING MISPLACED, DANGLING MODIFIER IN WRITING PARAGRAPH

Sahlan Tampubolon
Prodi Pendidikan Bahasa Inggris FKIP Universitas HKBP Nommensen Medan

Abstract:

Penelitian ini dimaksudkan untuk melihat sejauh mana kemampuan mahasiswa Prodi Bahasa Inggris angkatan 2010/2011 dalam menghindari misplaced dan dangling modifier dalam penulisan sebuah paragraph. Deskriptif kualitatif merupakan design penelitian yang dipakai dalam penelitian ini, sementara sampel yang dipakai sebagai objek penelitian berjumlah enambelas orang. Hasilnya mayoritas sampel mampu menghindari misplaced dan dangling modifier dalam menulis kalimat dalam sebuah paragraf. Hal ini barangkali dipengaruhi oleh telah seringnya para mahasiswa menulis paragraf dalam perkuliahan mereka di Prodi Bahasa Inggris FKIP Medan.

Kata Kunci : *Misplaced, Dangling Modifier, Writing Paragraph*

INTRODUCTION

Mastering of misplaced and dangling modifier is very important to make a qualified writing. Misplaced is words or word group and phrase that occurs in sentences which cause different meaning and dangles to understand by readers. Dangling modifier is misrelated clause in a sentence which makes the readers hard to understand. This topic sometimes is difficult to avoid by the writer when writing sentences and paragraph. For students of English department FKIP UHN Medan it is assumed that they have already known in avoiding these mistakes while writing paragraph for they have already discussed it in their lecture. To prove this assumption, this research was conducted to know whether they can avoid misplaced and dangling modifier or not while writing paragraph.

The Problems of the Study

The problem of the study is formulated as follows:

1. Are the students able to avoid misplaced and dangling modifier?
2. What are the difficulties found by the students in avoiding misplaced and dangling modifier?

Misplaced and dangling modifier.

The Misplaced modifier.

Kriszner and Mandell (1989:235) explained that a misplaced modifier is a word or word group whose placement suggests that it modifies one word or phrase when it is intended to modify another, a misplaced modifier has no relationship with its headword. Similar to the above opinion John Langan (2003:228) defined that: misplaced modifier is words because of awkward placement; do not describe the words the writer intended them to describe. Misplaced modifier often confuses the meaning of a sentence. To avoid them, place words as close as possible to what they describe.

Revision in misplaced modifier.

John Langan et all (2003:166) stated that when a modifier is in the wrong place, the reader may not know just what it is meant to describe, misplaced modifier can lead to misunderstanding some of which are unintentionally humorous. To avoid them, place words as close as possible to what it describe, so that its meaning will be clearly understood. More over Diana Hacker (1976:67) stated that the meaning of English sentences is largely determined by the reader of its words, phrases, and clauses. If any of these elements is misplaced, the sentence will be unclear.

After getting the explanation from some sources, it can be understood that the meaning of misplaced modifier **The misplaced modifier sentences and its revision**

Langan (2003:228) gives the example sentence which has misplaced modifier like

“Our phone **almost** rang fifteen times last night.”

The sentence above suggests that the phone almost rang fifteen times. But in fact did not ring at all. Misplaced modifier can usually be corrected by moving the modifier to be a more sensible place in the sentence, generally next of verb. And the right one is will be: “Our phone rang **almost** fifteen times last night.”

The sentence has already have a meaning that the phone rang a little under fifteen times is now clear.

The wrong placement of the words in the sentences will make the sentence sound awkward, ridiculous or confusing. The writer also need to watch the placement of modifiers such as *almost, even, hardly, nearly, often,* and

only. A couple of examples should be enough that can be seen such as: big dog *almost* ran around the yard twenty times, and the sentence he *nearly* ate a whole box of treats. In both sentences--when he "*almost ran*" and "*nearly ate*"--nothing happened! He didn't quite get around to doing either thing. What is intended is: Big Dog ran around the yard *almost* twenty times, and he ate *nearly* a whole box of treats. Misplaced adjectives are incorrectly separated from the nouns they modify and almost always distort the intended meaning. Example: The child ate a **cold dish** of cereal for breakfast this morning. The sentences above as if that dish is taste cold, but actually the cereal is cold. So the right one by placing the adjective *next to the noun it modifies*, so the sentence becomes: The child ate a dish of **cold cereal** for breakfast this morning

The writer must also watch out for adverbs such as *only, just, nearly, merely,* and *almost*. They are often misplaced and cause an unintended meaning. This sentence, for example, means that I **only contributed** the money: I **only** contributed \$ 10.00 to the fund for orphaned children.

The sentences gives the meaning that the subject work only contributed the money, but actually the subject seldom do it, and he would like to share his money. However, the sentence means that I contributed **only \$10.00**. And after get revision the sentence becomes: I contributed **only** \$ 10.00 to the fund for orphaned children. Like adjectives, adverbs are commonly misplaced in everyday speech, and may not cause listeners difficulty.

However, such sentences are quite imprecise and, therefore. The dealer sold the Cadillac to the buyer with leather seats. The sentences above inform as if a buyer with leather seats but actually it refers to product Cadillac. So the right one is, The dealer sold the Cadillac with leather seats to the buyer

Misplaced clauses may cause a sentence to sound awkward and may create a meaning that does not make sense. The problem sentences below contain misplaced clauses that modify the wrong nouns. To fix the errors and clarify the meaning, put the clauses *next to* the noun they are supposed to modify. Example: The waiter served a dinner roll to the woman that was well buttered. The sentences above gives the meaning as if that is a buttered woman but the actually the dish of dinner. So the correct one is, "The waiter served a dinner roll that was well buttered to the woman". In correcting a misplaced modifier, don't create a sentence with two possible meanings. Example: The teacher said on Monday she would return our essays. The problem in the sentences is, did the teacher say this on Monday or will she

Students' Ability in Avoiding Misplaced
return the essays on Monday?) . After get correction, the meaning of essays, that our essays will be returned on Monday and the sentences becomes, "The teacher said she would return our essays on Monday". The other correction is meaning that the teacher spoke on Monday, so the sentences becomes : On Monday the teacher said she would return our essays

Some modifiers, especially simple modifiers like *only, just, nearly, barely* have a bad habit of slipping into the wrong place in a sentence. For instance, in the sentence below, do the students seek advice frequently or can they frequently improve their grades by seeking advice?

Confusion	Students who seek their instructors' advice <u>often</u> can improve their grades.
Repair Work	Students who <u>often</u> seek their instructors' advice can improve their grades.
Repair Work	Students who seek their instructors' advice can <u>often</u> improve their grades.

More examples about misplaced modifier like below:

Examples of Misplaced Modifiers	Revisions
On July 20, 1969, American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin landed on the moon, <u>watched by nearly a fifth of the world's population</u> .	Watched by nearly a fifth of the world's population, American astronauts Neil Armstrong and Edwin "Buzz" Aldrin landed on the moon on July 20, 1969. (The world was not watching the moon; the world was watching the astronauts.)
An author who did not receive much attention until after her death, readers of all ages enjoy Emily Dickinson's poetry today or Readers of all ages enjoy Emily Dickinson's poetry today, an author who did not receive much attention until after her death.	Today, readers of all ages enjoy the poetry of Emily Dickinson, an author who did not receive much attention until after her death. (The phrase, <i>an author who did not receive much attention until after her death</i> , should modify Emily Dickinson rather than <i>readers</i> or <i>Emily Dickinson's poetry</i> .)
New York Stock Exchange members shout out opening bids and offers, acting on behalf of institutions and individual investors.	Acting on behalf of institutions and individual investors, New York Stock Exchange members shout out opening bids and offers. (Members of the New York Stock Exchange--rather than opening bids and offers-- act on behalf of institutions and investors.)

Based on Diana Hacker et al (1976:67) among the elements most easily, misplaced are the adverbs almost, just, merely, nearly, and only. The misplacement obscures meaning in these sentences:

1. By waiting for the sale, Amy **almost** saved ten dollars (Misplaced). By waiting for the sale, Amy saved **almost** ten dollars (correct)
2. According to George Meany, the law **merely** helped big business (Misplaced). According to George Meany, the law helped **merely** big business (correct)
3. Because none spoke German, Hans could smile **only** at them (Misplaced). Because none spoke German, Hans could **only** smile at them (correct).

In other that, Jessie Michael (1996:146) gave the examples of misplaced modifier like bellow:

1. You will **only** need to plant one package of seeds (Misplaced). You will need to plant **only** one package of seeds (correct)
2. Many students have, by the time they reach their seniors year, completed all the requirements for their major. (Misplaced). By the time they reach their seniors year, many students have completed all the requirements for their major (correct).

Er is a group of words and phrases that is not beat in a sentence which makes the sentence is unclear or inaccurate to describe, and make reader get misunderstanding when taking reading it.

The Dangling modifier

The same thing with the definition of misplaced modifier, here are some opinions from different sources like: Kirszner and

mandell et al (1989:243) mentioned that a dangling modifier is a phrase or word that can not logically, limit or restrict any word or word group in the sentence.

Beside that, John Langan et al (2003:234) explained that a modifier that opens a sentence must be followed immediately by the word it meant to describe. Otherwise, the modifier is said to be dangling and the sentence takes on an unintended meaning. Then, based on Diana Hacker (1976:65) a word group is said to dangle when it fails to stack its self sensibly to the next of the sentence.

This kind of it error occurs most often with phrase that contain verbal (participle, gerund and infinitives). And it is similar to this, a dangling modifier is a phrase or clause that modifier a word not clearly stated in the sentences or that does not connect grammatically with what it is intended to modify.

After getting some sources which informed about definition of dangling modifier, then the writer make definition dangling modifier as a group of words or phrase is not specific, illogically stated in the sentences, so it is not clear that who explain and what explanation is about.

Revision in dangling modifier

Dangling modifier can be seen like the example bellow:

Raised in Nova Scotia, it is natural to miss the smell of the sea. The introductory phrase in the

above sentence looks as if it is meant to modify a person or persons, but no one is mentioned in the sentence. Such introductory adjective phrases, because of their position, automatically modify the first noun or pronoun that follows the phrase -- in this case, "it." The connection in this case is illogical because "it" was not raised in Nova Scotia. So the right one is,

For a person raised in Nova Scotia, it is natural to miss the smell of the sea. (The phrase no longer functions as an adjective)

Raised in Nova Scotia, I often miss the smell of the sea. (The phrase functions as an adjective but now automatically modifies "I," a logical connection)

Sometimes the dangling modifier error occurs because the sentence fails to specify anything to which the modifier can refer. Example: **Looking toward the west**, a funnel shaped cloud stirred up dust. This sentence does not specify *who* is *looking toward the west*. In fact, there is nothing at all in the sentence to which the modifying phrase *looking toward the west* can logically refer. Since the modifier, *looking toward the west*, is sitting next to *the funnel shaped cloud*, the sentence suggests that the **cloud** is doing the looking.

Looking toward the west, I saw funnel shaped cloud stirred up dust.

Now the sentence means that **I was looking toward the west**.

Students' Ability in Avoiding Misplaced

Example: **When nine year years old**, my mother enroll in medical school

This sentence means that my mother enrolled in medical when she was nine years old.

When I was nine years old, my mother enrolled in medical school.

Now the sentence means that **I** (not my mother!) was nine years old when my mother enrolled in medical school.

There are some examples of dangling modifier

Confusion Changing the oil every 3,000 miles, there is an easy way to keep your car running smoothly.

Repair Work If we change the oil every 3,000 miles, we can keep our car running smoothly.

An infinitive phrase can also "dangle." The infinitive phrase below should probably modify the person(s) who set up the exercise program.

Confusion To keep the young recruits interested in getting in shape, an exercise program was set up for the summer months.

Repair Work To keep the young recruits interested in getting in shape, the coaching staff set up an exercise program for the summer months.

More examples of dangling modifier sentences,

Examples of Dangling Modifiers	Revisions
Cost-efficient and convenient, many of today's corporate employees are being trained through computer-assisted instruction.	Cost-efficient and convenient, computer-assisted instruction is being used by many companies to train employees. (The descriptive words, cost-efficient and convenient, modify computer-assisted instruction rather than today's corporate employees.)
Having submitted the conference registration form after the deadline, special permission by the chairperson was needed before she could give her presentation.	Having submitted the conference registration form after the deadline, Susan needed special permission from the chairperson before she could give her presentation. (The example doesn't make sense as it is written. Someone must have submitted the form late. According to the revision, Susan submitted the form late.)
When purchasing a cellular phone, the wide variety of calling plans and features overwhelms many people.	When purchasing a cellular phone, many people become overwhelmed by the wide variety of calling plans and features. (The calling plans and features aren't purchasing cellular phones. People purchase cellular phones.)

John A. Higgin in Erlina (1998 : 23) gives the example of dangling modifier and its revision. Example: (Wrong) To access the map program, a floppy disk must be inserted, (Who is doing the accessing? Not the disk) (Right) To access the map program, you must insert a floppy disk. (You are the person is doing processing). Similar to Jessie Michael et al (1996:12) makes the examples of dangling modifier like : Dangling: when watching a classic film such as gone with the wind, commercials are especially irritating. Repaired: when watching a classic film such as gone with the wind, I find commercials are especially irritating. Repaired: When I am watching a classic film such as gone with the wind, commercials are especially irritating.

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

In research, method has an important role, because all activities which is done in finding or improving something is by

analyzing. To do this research, the writer will use the descriptive quantitative research that is one method in getting data by doing experiment. According Best and khan (2006 : 13), population is the whole subject of the research while sample is small subject which is taken from population to be examined. The population used in this study is the first year students of English Department academic year 2010/2011, while the sample is one class from the population is chosen out randomly.

In doing a research, the instrument of collecting data determines the quality of data is collected and quality of data determines its research. To get the expected data, it is very important to use the instrument collecting data sweetly.

To know the ability of EB.1.08 students in mastering misplaced and dangling modifier and avoiding them in writing paragraph, the writer makes a writing test. The writer gives

the assignments in three types of questions like the understanding of misplaced and dangling modifier, changing the misplaced and dangling modifier sentences into good sentences and writing paragraph with three topics. Then the writer gives the students chance to do the test at their home so that they have much time an be concentrate in doing it, analyze the data and tabulation and the average of score result.

The Scoring the test

Test	Kind of question	Score
1.	Definition of misplaced and dangling modifier	10
2.	Changing the misplaced and dangling modifier sentences into a correct sentences.	30
3.	Writing paragraph with three topics.	60
Total		100

Findings and discussions

Findings.

After analyzing the data, it is found that the findings as the followings:

8 students are categorized excellent

1 student are categorize good

3 students are categorize average

0 student are categorize fair

4 students are categorize bad

The percentage of students ability in answering the questions

No	Category	Total	Percentage	ability
1	excellent	8	50%	able
2	good	1	6.25%	able
3	average	3	18.75%	able
4	fair	0	0%	-
5	bad	4	25%	unable

Based on the table above, the writer takes the conclusion that 4 students unable in mastering misplaced and dangling modifier and 12 students are able in mastering misplaced and dangling modifier.

Based on the result of research which has been done by the writer, so the writer concludes that:

1. The ability of the first year 2013/2014 students of English department students FKIP Nommensen in avoiding misplaced and dangling modifier is good enough, that is 75% or 12 students are able to do the exercise. It can be proved from their writing test result
2. There were 8 students or 50% who were regarded as having category excellent, 1 student or 6.25% who were regarded as having category good, 3 students or 18.75% who were regarded as having category average and 4 students or 25% who were regarded as having category bad. It can be said that 12 or 75% are able and 4 or 25% are unable in mastering misplaced and dangling modifier.
3. There are some problems and difficulties are found by the first year 2013/2014 students of English department FKIP Nommensen Medan :
 1. Some of them did not fully understand about misplaced and dangling modifier.
 2. Lack of vocabulary makes students difficult to answer the questions.

3. Some of them does not know to answer the questions and just guess the answer.
4. The laziness of students makes them get low knowledge in understanding misplaced and dangling.
5. Misplaced and dangling modifier are new subject so it make them difficult to understand.

Discussions

To avoid the misplaced and dangling modifier is not easy for students when writing paragraph. The students need carefulness and the right meaning of every sentence. But when writer give them writing test, most of them have known well of misplaced and dangling modifier and can avoid them in the test. Misplaced and dangling modifier always occur when students do not know the placement of some modifier such as *almost, even, hardly, nearly, often,* and *only*, some of them get influence of Indonesia. They also make incompletely structure that they always forget to have subject in the sentences.

Although most of the students are able to avoid misplaced and dangling modifier, but some of them still gets difficult in understanding it. These cases wee caused by three factors:

1. The bad habitual of students in studying at college. They are always active less

- and did not want to increase their ability in mastering every subject, did not master more vocabularies. They are lazy to do some exercises and do not want to know about something new.
2. The unqualified lecturers in teaching every subject. The lecturers do not explain the whole subject well and seldom give the writing exercises and does not care of the weak students.
3. The incomplete college facilities. The college did not have the wifi area to access internet and did complete the English books especially about writing.

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