

Good Writing Practice

SECTION EDITORS



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Grammatical disagreement in function:

Modifier to modifée



Introduction

Knowledge of the grammatical function of a modifying syntactic unit facilitates understanding a dysfunctional distraction and, in turn, its revision option.

Experimental sections

Part 1 – Materials and Methods section: Method

Example: Propositional phrase

Increased mandibular growth was determined for the animal with the protrusion appliance.

Revision

Increased mandibular growth was determined

*for the animal **treated** with the protrusion appliance.*

Notes

In the Example, it is not clear whether *with the protrusion appliance* is an adjectival modifying *animal* or an adverbial modifying *was determined* as in *Increased mandibular growth for the animal was determined **by using** the protrusion appliance*. The underlining cause is the ambiguity of the preposition *with*. In the Revision, replacement by the adjectival past participle *treated* explicitly marks *animal* as the modifée of *with the protrusion appliance*.

Likewise, the adverbial modification can become explicit by usage of a syntactic unit with

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a decidedly adverbial function (such as the preposition-gerund phrase *by using the protrusion appliance*) and by transposing *for the animal* so that the verb phrase *was determined* is contiguous to *by using*. Although this adverbial alternative is syntactically plausible, the meaning is erroneous.

The preposition-gerund phrase is so frequent in research writing that its consideration as a unique structure seems justified. This structure

primarily functions as an adverbial, e.g., *Ascorbic acid was determined by using alpha, alpha-dipyridyl.*

Part 2– Results section: results statement and preliminary interpretation

Example: Preposition-gerund phrase

Mutated PTEN that has lost only lipid phosphatase activity failed in mediating repression.

Revision

Mutated PTEN that has lost only lipid phosphatase activity failed to mediate repression.

Notes

Which is more effectively matched as the direct object of the transitive verb *failed*: a preposition-gerund phrase or infinitive phrase? The infinitive phrase *to mediate* sounds better, probably because it can function as a nominal, whereas *in mediating* cannot. In this example, the preposition-gerund phrase could be functioning as a modifier of the transitive verb *failed*, but the intent is *failed something*; thus, a nominal is needed as a complement (direct object).

Contextual Sections

Part 2 – Title

Example: Preposition-gerund phrase

The Ability for Synthesising Proline in Streptozotocin-Induced Diabetic Rats

Revision 1

The Ability to Synthesise Proline in Streptozotocin-Induced Diabetic Rats

Revision 2

The Proline-Synthesising Ability in Streptozotocin-Induced Diabetic Rats

Revision 3

Proline Synthesis in Streptozotocin-Induced Diabetic Rats

Notes

Many descriptive nature-of-study titles, in contrast to message titles, are noun and prepositional phrase rich and formal. In contrast, the preposition-gerund phrase (Example) and infinitive phrase (Revision 1) are more animated, but are less familiar than the noun + participle also functioning as an adjectival (Revision 2). The advantage of this structure is its highly thematic focus *proline-synthesising ability*. However, Revision 2 could be further revised to Revision 3 by deletion of the self-evident *ability*.

Part 2 – Introduction section: research problem background

Example: Adjective

Raf-1 is a common messenger in mitogenic stimulated signal transduction pathways.

Revision 1

Raf-1 is a common messenger in mitogenically stimulated signal transduction pathways.

Revision 2

Raf-1 is a common messenger in mitogen-stimulated signal transduction pathways.

Notes

In the Example, what word class is required to modify *stimulated*? An adjective such as *mitogenic* traditionally modifies a noun, but not an adjectival participle such as *stimulated*. In Revision 1, usage of the adverb *mitogenically* is grammatically correct (adverbs modify an adjective or an adjectival) but seems a hypercorrection (i.e., unfamiliar and stilted). In Revision 2, *mitogen-stimulated*, a noun-participle compound adjectival, is a familiar type of modifier (see Part 1). The compound nature,

common for a noun followed by a participle modifier, is reinforced by hyphenation.

Part 3 – Introduction section: research importance

Example: Adverb

Lymphedema results in chronic inflammation, fibrosis, infection, and frequently loss of joint function (motion, muscle strength).

Revision

Lymphedema results in chronic inflammation, fibrosis, infection, and frequent loss of joint function (motion, muscle strength).

Notes

Usage of the adverb *frequently* is dissonant. Modification of the noun *loss* requires the adjective *frequent* not the adverb *frequently*. However, if commas segregate *frequently*, then *frequently* could back-modify the phrasal verb *results in*.

Summary

The following are examples of modifier-to-modifiee misfunction:

Experimental sections

1. Prepositional phrase ambiguous function either adjectival *animal with the protrusion appliance* or possibly adverbial *determined with the protrusion appliance*.
2. The adverbial preposition-gerund phrase *in mediating* misused as a nominal direct object *failed in mediating*.

Contextual sections

1. The adverbial preposition-gerund phrase misused as an adjectival *ability for synthesising*.
2. The adjective *mitogenic* misused before another adjectival *mitogenic stimulated*.
3. The adverb *frequently* misused before a noun phrase *frequently loss of joint function*.



This is called the hash, pound, or number character. A hashtag is a keyword or set of keywords that is preceded by the # character. It is used in social media to create a thread of conversations around a specific theme or topic conveyed in short texts or microblogs. It is commonly used in Twitter, Instagram, YouTube, Pinterest, etc.

A dictionary of most common hashtags can be found at <https://www.hashtags.org/definition/~h/>. For your info, EMWA is compiling a list of standardised hashtags for our social media use.



This is called the "at" sign or symbol. The @ sign is part of email addresses and social media user names ("handles"). Our EMWA handles are as follows: @Official_EMWA (Twitter), @EMWA (LinkedIn), and @europeanmedicalwritersassociation (Facebook)

The two most important keys on your keyboard