

Grammar Terms - Part I

Dangling participle

The term dangling participle refers to a participle which is not grammatically linked to the rest of the sentence. For example, in the sentence 'Standing at the gate, a scorpion stung him', the participial phrase 'standing at the gate' is dangling. It appears to be linked (wrongly) to *a scorpion*. It should therefore be rewritten as: '*Standing at the gate, he was stung by a scorpion*'. Dangling participles are not unusual in speech, but in formal writing they are considered inappropriate and should be avoided.

Declarative

The label declarative refers to the sentence type commonly used to make a statement. The following sentences are examples of declarative sentences:

Susie is a teacher.

Ann is my friend.

The cat chased the mouse.

Degree

The grammatical category which shows the degree to which some quality is present. English adjectives and adverbs show three degrees: *the positive, the comparative and the superlative*. The adjective or adverb in its base form is in the positive degree. The comparative form is formed with -er or more and the superlative form is formed with -est or most.

Degree modifier

A degree modifier is a word used to modify an adjective or adverb. It expresses the degree to which some quality is present. Degree modifiers are used to show the finer distinctions of degree. Examples are: very, too, rather, so, somewhat etc.

This book is very useful.

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She is too fat.

I am somewhat convinced.

In colloquial English some additional degree modifiers are also used. Examples are: pretty, kind of, sort of, bloody etc.

That is pretty good.