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Common Grammar Mistakes Among ESL Learners

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Abstract

Grammar is one of the most important components of language learning. However, English as a Second Language (ESL) learners often face difficulties in using grammar accurately. These grammatical errors may affect communication, writing quality, and speaking confidence. This article discusses the most common grammar mistakes among ESL learners, including errors in tenses, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, sentence structure, and word order. The paper also examines the causes of these mistakes and suggests effective teaching strategies to reduce grammatical errors. The study concludes that continuous practice, communicative activities, and proper grammar instruction can significantly improve learners' grammatical competence.

Keywords: grammar mistakes, ESL learners, English grammar, language learning, grammatical errors, grammar teaching, communication skills.

Introduction

English has become one of the most widely used international languages in the world. Millions of learners study English for education, business, travel, and communication. However, mastering English grammar remains a major challenge for many ESL learners.

Grammar provides the structural foundation of language. Correct grammar helps learners express ideas clearly and accurately. When learners make grammatical mistakes, communication may become confusing or unclear. Although errors are a natural part of language learning, some mistakes occur repeatedly among ESL learners.

Many grammatical errors are influenced by learners' native language structures. In addition, limited exposure to English, lack of practice, and insufficient grammar instruction can contribute to mistakes. Some learners focus heavily on vocabulary and neglect grammar, while others memorize grammar rules but struggle to apply them in communication.

Understanding common grammar mistakes is important for both teachers and students. Teachers can design effective lessons to address learners' difficulties, while students can become more aware of their weaknesses and improve accuracy.

This article examines the most common grammar mistakes among ESL learners, their causes, and methods for overcoming them.

The Importance of Grammar in Language Learning





Grammar is essential for effective communication. It helps learners organize words into meaningful sentences. Without grammar, communication becomes unclear.

For example:

Incorrect:

She go to school yesterday.

Correct:

She went to school yesterday.

In the incorrect sentence, the listener may still understand the meaning, but the sentence sounds unnatural and grammatically incorrect.

Good grammar improves:

speaking accuracy

writing quality

reading comprehension

listening understanding

academic performance

Therefore, grammar instruction plays a vital role in ESL education.

Common Grammar Mistakes Among ESL Learners

Errors in Verb Tenses

One of the most common problems among ESL learners is incorrect use of tenses.

English has many verb tenses, and learners often confuse them.

Examples:

Incorrect:

I am go to school every day.

Correct:

I go to school every day.

Incorrect:

She have finished her homework.

Correct:

She has finished her homework.

Learners may also misuse past tense forms:

Incorrect:

Yesterday I go to the market.

Correct:

Yesterday I went to the market.

Causes:

confusion between tense forms

differences between native language and English

insufficient practice

Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

ESL learners often make mistakes when matching subjects and verbs.





Examples:

Incorrect:

He go to university every day.

Correct:

He goes to university every day.

Incorrect:

The students studies English.

Correct:

The students study English.

Causes:

forgetting singular/plural rules

influence of native language structures

Article Mistakes

Articles (a, an, the) are difficult for many learners because some languages do not use articles.

Examples:

Incorrect:

I bought book yesterday.

Correct:

I bought a book yesterday.

Incorrect:

Sun rises in east.

Correct:

The sun rises in the east.

Causes:

absence of articles in native language

misunderstanding definite and indefinite articles

Preposition Errors

English prepositions are often confusing because one preposition may have several meanings.

Examples:

Incorrect:

She is married with a doctor.

Correct:

She is married to a doctor.

Incorrect:

I arrived to school late.

Correct:

I arrived at school late.

Causes:

direct translation from native language





memorization difficulties

Word Order Mistakes

English sentence structure usually follows Subject + Verb + Object order. ESL learners sometimes use incorrect word order.

Examples:

Incorrect:

Always I study at night.

Correct:

I always study at night.

Incorrect:

Very beautiful is this city.

Correct:

This city is very beautiful.

Causes:

native language interference

lack of sentence structure practice

Problems with Plural Forms

Many learners forget plural endings or use them incorrectly.

Examples:

Incorrect:

Two student came late.

Correct:

Two students came late.

Incorrect:

Informations are important.

Correct:

Information is important.

Causes:

irregular plural forms

confusion about countable and uncountable nouns

Misuse of Auxiliary Verbs

Learners often misuse helping verbs such as do, does, did, have, and be.

Examples:

Incorrect:

She don't like coffee.

Correct:

She doesn't like coffee.

Incorrect:

Did you went there?

Correct:

Did you go there?





Causes:

misunderstanding question structures

confusion in negative sentences

Run-On Sentences and Sentence Fragments

Some learners write incomplete or overly long sentences.

Examples:

Incorrect fragment:

Because I was tired.

Correct:

I went home because I was tired.

Incorrect run-on sentence:

I like English it is interesting.

Correct:

I like English because it is interesting.

Causes:

lack of punctuation knowledge

insufficient writing practice

Causes of Grammar Mistakes Among ESL Learners

Native Language Interference

Learners often transfer grammar patterns from their native language into English.

Lack of Exposure to English

Limited listening and reading practice reduce grammar awareness.

Memorization Without Practice

Some learners memorize grammar rules but cannot apply them in communication.

Fear of Making Mistakes

Learners may avoid speaking because they are afraid of grammatical errors.

Limited Vocabulary

Insufficient vocabulary may lead learners to create incorrect sentence structures.

The Role of Teachers in Reducing Grammar Mistakes

Teachers play an important role in helping students improve grammar accuracy.

Teachers should:

explain grammar clearly

provide communicative activities

encourage speaking practice

give constructive feedback

use games and interactive tasks

correct errors patiently

Teachers should also focus on both fluency and accuracy.

Effective Strategies for Improving Grammar

Regular Practice





Students should practice grammar daily through speaking and writing.

Reading English Materials

Reading books and articles improves grammar awareness naturally.

Listening to Native Speakers

Listening helps learners understand sentence structures and grammar usage.

Using Grammar Exercises

Exercises reinforce grammar rules and improve accuracy.

Communicative Activities

Role plays, discussions, and conversations help learners apply grammar in real communication.

Error Correction

Learners should analyze their mistakes and learn from corrections.

Modern Approaches to Grammar Teaching

Modern language teaching combines grammar instruction with communication.

Teachers no longer focus only on memorization. Instead, grammar is taught through meaningful activities.

Communicative grammar teaching helps learners use grammar naturally in real-life situations.

Technology also supports grammar learning through:

grammar applications

online quizzes

educational videos

interactive games

These tools make grammar learning more engaging.

Conclusion

Grammar mistakes are a natural part of learning English as a second language. ESL learners commonly face difficulties with tenses, articles, prepositions, subject-verb agreement, and sentence structure. These errors are often caused by native language interference, lack of practice, and limited exposure to English.

Despite these challenges, grammatical accuracy can be improved through regular practice, effective teaching methods, and communicative activities. Teachers should create supportive learning environments where students feel comfortable practicing English.

In conclusion, understanding common grammar mistakes helps both teachers and learners improve language learning outcomes. With continuous effort and proper guidance, ESL learners can develop strong grammatical competence and communicate effectively in English.





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