Common Grammar Errors for English Language Learners

Type A: rule based, high impact, good first step

- Subject-verb agreement: The subject does not agree with the verb in person or number.
  - Incorrect: She eat eggs for breakfast.
    Correct: She eats eggs for breakfast.
  - Incorrect: We read the articles our teacher assigned, which describes global warming.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Get students to underline the subjects and circle the verbs and ask them if they match?

- Verb tense: The incorrect tense is used in a sentence or clause.
  - Incorrect: I am studying since 6 am.
    Correct: I have been studying since 6 am.
  - Incorrect: Even though I have always loved cats, I have been allergic to them.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Ask students about the context, the time period, and whether they see any time words. Use visualizations.

- Verb form: A verb is formed incorrectly.
  - Incorrect: We have been drove all night long.
    Correct: We have been driving all night long.
  - Incorrect: We will eating at a restaurant for dinner.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Use simpler examples that students might recognize. Be open to multiple possibilities. Suggest students copy it into google.

- Singular/Plural: The noun ending doesn't match its number or (un)countable status.
  - Incorrect: She needs to do her homeworks.
    Correct: She needs to do her homework.
  - Incorrect: The teacher gave them a lot of task to complete.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: A learner's dictionary will say if something is (un)countable. Usually liquids and abstract ideas are uncountable. Sometimes it depends on context.

- Word form: The wrong part of speech is chosen.
  - Incorrect: It is a beauty day today.
    Correct: It is a beautiful day today.
  - Incorrect: She became frustrate when no one would help with the group project.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Ask students what part of speech the word should be and reference a dictionary.

Type B: not rule based, high impact, good second step

- Sentence structure: There is no single rule and often happens when students create more complex sentences.
  - Incorrect: Although he ran to school, but he was still late.
    Correct: He ran to school, but he was still late.
  - Incorrect: Walking to school, a car hit a boy.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Get students to read sentences out loud. Ask them what they mean. Have them separate the sentence into clauses and see how they relate.
• Word choice: It often results from not knowing the definition or connotation of a word or translating directly from the native language.
  o Incorrect: The immature woman was full of energy.
    Correct: The youthful woman was full of energy.
  o Incorrect: The tea tasted beautiful.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Check a thesaurus or collocations dictionary. Try rephrasing the sentence. Suggest they download the "writefull" app.

Type C: rule based, lower impact, good third step

• Articles: The, a, an, and "no article" are used incorrectly.
  o Incorrect: The education is important for a democratic society.
    Correct: Education is important for a democratic society.
  o Incorrect: It is beautiful day today.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Refer to the CLAS handout. Look at the whole noun phrase. Ask if it is general/undescribed or specific.

• Prepositions: The incorrect preposition of location, time, or direction is used.
  o Incorrect: Meet me in the bus stop.
    Correct: Meet me at the bus stop.
  o Incorrect: We met on 2013.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Help students visualize the prepositional phrase. Refer to the CLAS handout or Purdue OWL website.

• Phrasal verbs: Phrasal verbs are misused or used with the wrong preposition.
  o Incorrect: The thief told us to give back our money.
    Correct: The thief told us to give up our money.
  o Incorrect: Pass up the message for me.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Refer to a phrasal verb dictionary.

Type D: not rule based, lower impact

• Idioms: Idioms are misunderstood, phrased incorrectly, or translated from the native language.
  o Incorrect: They learned the poem in their heart.
    Correct: They learned the poem by heart.
  o Incorrect: Please don't hang noodles on my ears.
    Correct: ???
    Tip: Ask students what they mean by the phrase. You can be more directive. Suggest they use google.

• Cultural references
  Tip: Have a conversation with the student. Ask questions to gauge their level of understanding. Refer back to any texts they might not have understood.

• Exceptions
  Tip: You can be more directive. If there are repeated errors, refer to previous errors to show a pattern.
General Grammar Tutoring Tips:

1. Ask students if they know what errors they struggle with
2. Focus on one paragraph at a time
3. Get the student to read out loud
4. Take shorthand notes to remind yourself of what comes up most often
5. Start with high impact or high frequency errors
6. Use scaffolding techniques

AWPE E-Designated Sample Essay – “Hello Stranger”

Read the paper and identify and try to correct any errors you find. What would you do if this was a student’s paper?

The modern psychology is based on the study of behavior and mental processes. Many of the pinorner psychologists had focused on cure mental disease; however, less of them care about what makes people happy. Nowadays, the pressure of society had pushed people into a working machine—the drive of money and authorities are making people less happier than usual. This social phenominon had made people questioned: What can we do to make life easier? How can we achieve the “self-actualization”?

In fact, smiling to every people you meet will provide you an easier life. According to a study of social psychology, people with a “smiling expression” on their face tend to receive a smiling face back from the passager. And the happy expression that they receive is likely to bring them a positive mood. Therefore, smiling before interacting with strangers not only makes yourself happier, but also save a favor to others.

There is a phenominon called “Benjamin effect” which states that people are likely to show a positive side to a stranger instead of their close partner. Thus, while interacting with a stranger, people will likely to show off their best side and also receive a positive impression from others. Even though connecting with other might break the social norm in some culture, people should try to communicate with strangers.

In my country of birth, people are unlikely to say hello and smile to a stranger. Every time when I was walking down the street, there was a sence of lonely and embaressing. People walk fast enough to avoid eye contact, which increase the anxiety of traveling outcide. The assumption of Dunn and Norton that having people break the social norm and connect to each other is an interesting method to reduce the anxiety which was origined by this fast pace society. By interact with each other with our pleasant behavior and cheerful thought, we might just forget about our negative side and therefore become more happier person and achieve our goal in a better perspective.

This humanistic psychologist Maslow had once promoted this hyanohic of need which indicated that after we finished that basic need of survived, we will facing on a more critical problem, which is the method of dealing with our mood and reduce anxiety to achieve a better person, I personally agree with this theory the society today had created us a better living condition and also a high pressure environment. Interacting with strangers and show off your best expression, helps to create a better world.