

Module Eleven
GRAMMAR

Common Mistakes P2

2

Module 11

Teaching Grammar:

Avoiding Common Mistakes (Part 2)

As English language teachers, we play a crucial role in helping our students develop a strong grasp of grammar. However, there are some common mistakes that can hinder the effectiveness of our grammar instruction. In this module, we'll explore some key principles to keep in mind when teaching grammar.



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Avoid teaching more than one structure in the same lesson, especially with lower levels.

1 **Concentration is Key**
When teaching grammar, it's important to focus on one structure at a time. Introducing multiple structures in the same lesson can overwhelm students and make it difficult for them to grasp the nuances of each one.

2 **Gradual Progression**
By addressing one structure per lesson, you can ensure that students have the time and opportunity to fully understand and practice the grammar. This gradual progression helps solidify their learning and enhances their ability to apply the grammar effectively.

3 **Avoid Confusion**
Presenting too many grammar structures at once can lead to confusion and make it challenging for students to differentiate between the various forms and usages.



Moderation in Grammar Explanations

Avoid Overwhelming Students

When teaching grammar, it's important not to overwhelm students by covering all the potential uses of a particular structure. This can be especially true for more advanced learners, who may benefit from a more comprehensive exploration of a grammar point.

Focus on Core Concepts

For most students, it's more effective to focus on the core functions and usages of a grammar structure, rather than delving into every possible nuance. This allows students to develop a strong foundation and gradually build upon their understanding as they progress.

Tailor to Proficiency Level

The depth and complexity of your grammar explanations should be tailored to the proficiency level of your students. Younger or lower-level learners may benefit from more concise and simplified explanations, while advanced students can engage with more detailed and comprehensive discussions.



Balancing Teacher Talk and Student Participation

1

Avoid Excessive Teacher Talking Time

One common pitfall in grammar instruction is relying too heavily on teacher-centered explanations and activities. While providing clear explanations is important, it's crucial to balance your talking time with opportunities for student participation and practice.

2

Encourage Active Engagement

By incorporating more student-centered activities, such as guided discussions, task-based exercises, and collaborative learning, you can foster a more engaging and interactive learning environment. This helps students actively process and apply the grammar concepts, rather than passively receiving information.

3

Promote Communicative Practice

Ultimately, the goal of grammar instruction should be to enable students to use the target structures effectively in real-world communication. By balancing teacher-led explanations with opportunities for students to practice and apply the grammar, you can help them develop both their understanding and their ability to use the language.

Selecting Appropriate Instructional Materials

Matching Student Proficiency

When using text or audio materials to teach grammar, it's important to carefully select resources that align with the proficiency level of your students. Choosing materials that are too challenging can lead to confusion and the need for excessive clarification, hindering the effectiveness of your instruction.

Accessibility and Familiarity

The instructional materials you use should be accessible and familiar to your students. Avoid introducing too many unfamiliar vocabulary words or complex concepts that could distract from the primary grammar focus of the lesson.

Scaffolding and Support

To ensure your students can successfully engage with the instructional materials, consider providing appropriate scaffolding and language support. This might include pre-teaching key vocabulary, offering guiding questions, or breaking down the activities into manageable steps.

Authentic Language Use

Whenever possible, strive to use materials that reflect authentic language use, rather than contrived or artificial examples. This helps students develop a more natural and contextual understanding of the grammar structures.

Structuring Grammar Practice Effectively

1

Controlled Practice

Begin with controlled practice activities that guide students through the proper use of the target grammar structure. This could include fill-in-the-blank exercises, sentence transformation tasks, or other structured activities that provide a clear framework for students to apply the grammar.

2

Free Practice

Finally, give students the opportunity to engage in free practice, where they can use the target grammar structure in more open-ended and communicative tasks. This could include storytelling, role-play, or discussions that encourage them to use the language spontaneously and with greater fluency.

Designing Authentic Grammar Tasks



Authentic Language Use

When planning grammar practice activities, it's important to design tasks that reflect authentic language use. This helps students develop a more natural and contextual understanding of the grammar structures. Encourage students to use the grammar structures in communicative tasks that simulate real-world scenarios, such as discussions, storytelling, or role-play.



Scaffolding and Support

Provide appropriate scaffolding and language support to help students succeed in the communicative tasks. This might include offering useful vocabulary, sentence starters, or guiding questions to help them organize their thoughts and express themselves effectively.

Avoiding Overly Complex Terminology

Use Simple Language

Minimise the use of complex grammatical terminology, especially when working with lower-level learners. Aim to explain grammar concepts in clear, straightforward language that your students can easily understand.

Adjust to Proficiency Level

The level of grammatical jargon you use should be tailored to the proficiency level of your students. More advanced learners may be able to engage with more technical terminology, while younger or lower-level students may benefit from a more simplified approach.

Focus on Practical Application

Instead of emphasizing the jargons and definitions of grammar structures, focus on helping students understand how to use the language effectively in practical, real-world situations. This will better support their communication goals.

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