

English for Study Purposes

Unit 2A: Common Errors

General Aims for Common Error Correction

The aim is to get students to reflect on their errors, and rather than shrugging their shoulders and deciding they are just weak in English, to actively look for ways they can improve their performance. It is not to be thought for a moment that by going through these exercises the students will suddenly cease making these particular errors. The point of going through them is to make the students realise that there are rules, and that there is a vocabulary available for them to discuss and understand language in. Throughout this unit, the enhancement of metalinguistic awareness is the goal.

The teacher should encourage the students in pairs or small groups to go through the questions. It should be stressed to them that although correct answers are desirable, the most important thing is that the students can work out and express clearly some rules of language use. Give the students time to do the first five, then open a general discussion on the points raised. Continue in the same manner.

You may not want to work through the entire unit in one three-hour session but prefer to use 5-10 common errors/exercises throughout any other modules or units as 'warmers' or 'coolers'.

Answer Key

1.

b. *According* to is followed by the source of the view, normally a name, but possibly, a noun, such as *research* or *a survey* - and then the statement itself. *I think/opinion/they say* merely try to repeat the meaning of the phrase.

If there are any doubts about comprehension, elicit correct examples from the students. This applies to all the questions.

2.

The point is that it is not a verb. It can be a preposition; I walked *across* the road. It can be an adverb; I ran *across*.

3.

No, *advance* is a noun, a verb, or an adjective. As an adjective, 'advance' means happening or done before the proper time. To qualify 'technology' in this sentence, 'advanced' which means far on in development should be used.

4.

Most commonly an object of purchase

Can you afford that car?

Sometimes, what it will cost

Can you afford the time/\$1,000?

[also an infinitive. Can you afford to go on holiday?]

Common error: afford his life/living etc.

5.

a & b.

afraid is an adjective so you must have *feel* or *be*. In c it is misused as a verb.

6.

agree is a verb. There is no sense to I+be+verb.

7.

a: strange. Everyone and Everybody are the preferred forms.

c: wrong. Negatives are put at the front. None of us would do it.

8.

It is misused to mean last in a list (*lastly*). At last means there has been what seems like a long wait: *At last, you've come!*. It expresses impatience, or pleasure.

9.

a. wrong. It cannot be followed by an infinitive. *Going* would be possible. Note the verb implies success. He definitely did not go to school. If it is merely a wish, *d* is the correct form (try to avoid).

10.

Adjective.

I wasn't aware of that.

I wasn't aware that you were coming.

She's very politically aware.

11.

boring, the present participle, has an active sense. Something that is boring bores someone. *bored*, the past participle, has a passive sense. Someone who is bored, is bored by someone or something else. *Interesting* and *exciting* work in a similar way.

12.

born is a past participle of *bear*. Your mother carries you in her womb - she bears you.

When were you born?

I was born in 1967.

13.

It is an irregular verb. *broadcast* is the past tense, and the past participle.

ATV *broadcast* the show.

The concert was *broadcast*.

It is also used as a noun:

That was an interesting programme/broadcast.

14.

Items that cost little - as you don't buy a price, it can't be cheap.

[Cheap people are mean, ungenerous, vulgar]

15.

choice: noun You have no choice.

choose: verb present tense. Which course will you choose?

chose: verb past tense. He chose to go to Australia, and lived there for 10 years.

chosen: past participle (adj). Shatin was chosen for the party.

16.

Wrong really. Home is the original centre, so you come to school and go back home in the evening.

17.

complained/complaining

complaint - noun

complainer/complainant - people, noun

complainingly

The main purpose is to distinguish between *complain* and *complaint*.

18.

- a. Parents show concern for their children. We should show more concern for the environment.
- b. Are there any questions concerning the exam?
I'm writing concerning your bill of 3rd May.
- c. The concerned investors waited for the news.
His parents felt very concerned.
- d. Contact the department concerned.
I'll try to see the man concerned.

19.

A *cook* is a *person*; a *cooker* is a *machine*.

20.

a verb

intransitive

No - intransitive verbs cannot be passive, as there is no object to turn into subject.

dead is a related adjective.

[The common error is *They were died*]

21.

Basically, *difficult* is used for an act or process (or subject)

[Learning] English is difficult.

When 'difficult' is used to describe a person, it means he or she is hard to deal with.

22.

discuss+direct object:

discuss the matter

discuss it

discuss how to solve the problem

It cannot be intransitive.

It is not followed by a preposition.

23.

Mainly *make*. Sometimes put in. [not 'pay']

24.

Find has a strong sense that you know where the object is. *Look for* means you don't know.

I'm looking for my wallet. I've found my wallet.

I'll go and find him implies I am sure I know where he is.

The purpose of life is to find happiness, means you aren't interested in the process of looking, but in the moment of success.

25.

(a). *happen* is an intransitive verb

26.

to try and make it plural, but *work* is uncountable. [*homeworks* - is wrong]

27.

a & d. *In my opinion* is similar to *According to...*, and should be followed by a statement.

As *In my opinion* is the same as *I think*, *In my opinion I think* is very strange.

28.

the.....st in the world.

If you don't use a superlative form, the phrase becomes empty of meaning.

29.

noun. There's a lack of space in HK.

verb. The school lacks good facilities.

adj. She's lacking in talent.

30.

One is a verb expressing pleasure in *I like basketball*.

The other is a rather unusual preposition expressing similarity.

It didn't look like a restaurant.

31.

Standard of living - quality of life, number of appliances, luxuries etc.

cost of living - prices

earn a/your living - make money

living creatures - all animals/*living death* - to be alive but not functioning properly/*living room* - the main room in a house or flat/*living wage* - a wage that supports a person properly/*living it up* - living expensively

[not 'support your living']

32.

Will you marry me? (v)

He married her. (v)

He is married to her. (p.p./adj.)

33.

It means the exact moment of 12 o'clock at midnight.

It does not mean in the middle of the night.

34.

a piece of news

an item of news

(some news; a news story)

35.

at=near

in=inside

on=on top

Further examples :

I'll meet you at Rm22

I'll meet you in Rm22

36.

one of the + superlative

(one of the best in the world)

one of the + plural

one of the ways

one of the universities

This includes words that have a plural meaning

One of the people

One of the staff

One of the committee

37.

to mean switch on an electrical appliance (or tap)

38.

- a. incorrect-Hong Kong is not in the category *Western countries*.
- b. If spoken by a Chinese person, it is wrong as China is not a foreign country.
If spoken by a non-Chinese, it works: the non-Chinese person likes the food of his own country, and of China, but none other.
- c. Japan is an Asian country. Correct.

39.

misused to mean appearance. It means view, expected result etc.

40.

painful = causing pain.

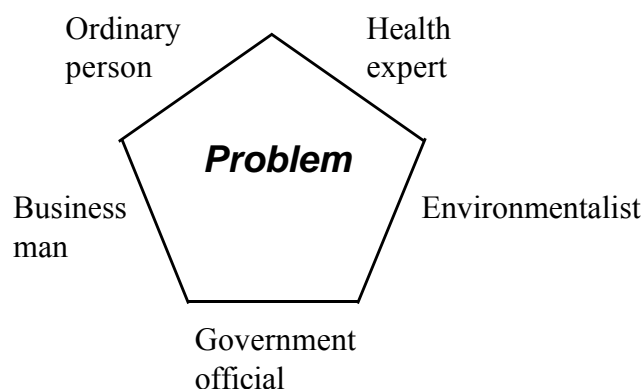
a & b. The arm is causing pain to the person, the action of falling off causes pain. In c this is not true.

41.

The pillars of society are special people who make society a better place. Only a few people at any time can be so-described. The phrase is not a very natural one anyway and can be accused of being a cliché. It is rather old fashioned too.

42.

Correct. *A point of view* is not an opinion; it is a special way of looking at something.



Each looks at the problem from a different *point of view*.

43.

Police is a collective noun.

A policeman/woman/officer.

44.

a. Correct. The + adj. = class noun. (All poor people)

b. Incorrect.

c. Correct. Normal adjective use.

d. Incorrect. Adjectives cannot have plurals.

45.

Usually intransitive.

Let's relax.

No need for reflexive pronouns.

46.

Hot air rises. The aeroplane rose in the sky.

Raise your hands. The crane raised the machinery.

47.

safety is a noun.

safe is the adjective.

48.

a *sale* is an act of selling.

Sales can be an adjective, e.g. Sales Department, sales assistant, sales man etc.

49.

all types of money, time, energy

50.

It has one, or maybe from another point of view, three: teaching, office and cleaning.

Staff is a collective noun.

51.

noun. Use mainly with put.

The deadline put stress on the students.

52.

Success is a noun: The project was a great success.

Succeed is a verb: I think you will succeed.

Successful is an adjective: I hope you are successful.

53.

such as must go next to its reference. It cannot be delayed.

an American city, such as New York or Chicago, and start a new life.

54.

a noun I suggest a new approach.

a gerund I suggest leaving at once.

a clause I suggest we see her tomorrow.

(not an infinitive)

55.

noun, like, all the - cide words. There is no *He suicided*. Use *commit*.

56.

(i) physical. The walls supported the roof.

(ii) emotional, mental. I support that idea.

(iii) financial. He supported his elderly parents.

In this sense you need to have a word that refers to people (his sister, the group).

[common mistake: support his living]

57.

Totally is an intensifying adverb.

It means the same as *completely*.

It must be followed by an adjective.

You are totally wrong.

[Though see also: Do you agree? Totally.]

In total means when everything is counted.

There should be 7 pages in *total*.

58.

As a noun, 'transport' means the act/process of moving people/things. There are many forms and means of transport; there is transport policy. There is no physical object that is a *transport*.

As a verb, 'transport' means to carry goods or people from one place to another.

59.

up-to-date: modern

updated: that has recently been revised and made more modern.

This music is really up-to-date.

Make sure you buy the updated version of the microwave oven.

[Make sure you buy the new edition of the book].

60.

nouns/gerunds. e.g. twenty dollars, a lot, seeing.
