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ESL Tutoring Strategies

Most Common Mistakes

- Incorrect Verb Tense
- Ambiguous Use of Prepositions
- Incorrect Use of Definite/Indefinite Articles: (*a(n)* and *the*)
- Incorrect Plural Count & Non-count Nouns
- Repeated Subject
- Disordered Modifiers (ie. Adjectives, adverbs)
- Incorrect formations of complex verbs
- Subject/Verb Agreement
- Pronoun/Antecedent Agreement

Source: Fawcett, Susan. "8 Common ESL Errors." *Evergreen: A Guide to Writing*. 7th ed.

Four Areas of Focus

It is best if the tutor tries to incorporate all four of the focus areas in a session. For example, getting students to read their work out loud to find their own mistakes not only incorporates 3 & 4, but it also helps with proofreading.

1. Listening

- Listening allows an ESL student to gain an understanding of the particular nuances of English like idiomatic expressions and euphemisms that are inherent for native English speakers.

2. Speaking

- Speaking is the application of the skills obtained through listening. After listening to a native speaker of English, speaking English in a more standard way is easier for ESL students because they can mimic what they hear to some degree.

3. Reading

- Learning the written style of English is largely accomplished simply through exposure, and reading allows for one to become familiar with the standard practices of the written language.

4. Writing

- Like the relationship of speaking to listening, writing is the practiced form of reading. It helps ESL students to apply what they learn through reading and is critical in developing an understanding of the language.

The Hierarchy of Concern

It is a must to prioritize during any tutoring session, but this is of even greater concern when working with ESL students. Because learning a new language is more than grammar or style, often mistakes in the execution of argument are prevalent. As such, a progression from macro-level errors to micro-level errors is necessary.

