

## COMMON ERROR TYPES FOR ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Group A: These first five errors usually have a BIG IMPACT ON A READER and are RULE BASED. If these occur repeatedly, it makes sense to address them first and to CONSULT RESOURCES as needed. Tutors will find SCAFFOLDING a useful technique here. (adapted from “Editing Line byline” by Cynthia Linville)

### ☐ Subject-Verb Agreement Errors

- Occur when the subject does not agree with the verb in person or number.
- Explained in more detail in Azar,\* chapter 6.

Example: He *walk* every morning.

Correction: He *walks* every morning.

Another Example: Every teenager knows how to choose clothes that *flatters* her.

### ☐ Verb Tense Errors

- Occur when an incorrect time marker is used.
- Explained in more detail in Azar,\* chapter 1 (summary on page 4).

Example: I *was* working on my paper since 6:00 am.

Correction: I *have been* working on my paper since 6:00 am.

Another Example: Even though this is my first day on the job, I have already found out that there *were* some difficult people here.

### ☐ Verb Form Errors

- Occur when a verb is incorrectly formed.
- Explained in more detail in Azar,\* chapter 1 (summary on page 4).

Example: I will *driven* to the airport next week.

Correction: I will *drive* to the airport next week.

Another Example: I was *cook* dinner last night when you called.

### ☐ Singular/Plural Noun Ending Errors

- Often occur when there is confusion about which nouns are countable and which aren't.
- Explained in more detail in Azar,\* chapter 7.

Example: I have turned in all my *homeworks* this week.

Correction: I have turned in all my *homework* this week.

Another Example: I set up six more *desk* for the afternoon class.

### Word Form Errors

- Occur when the wrong part of speech is chosen.
- Explained in more detail on our Word Form Handout.

Example: I'm happy to live in a *democracy* country.

Correction: I'm happy to live in a *democratic* country.

Another Example: I feel very *confusing* this morning.

Group B: These next two errors are LESS SCAFFOLD-ABLE than the previous five, but they may have LARGE IMPACT ON READABILITY. Because these errors may or may not be rule-based, depending on the error, the tutor MAY NEED TO ACT AS THE NATIVE SPEAKER RESOURCE to help resolve the issue.

**Sentence Structure Errors**

- Refer to a broad range of errors that occur for a variety of reasons: a word (often a to be verb) is left out; an extra word (often a duplicate subject) is added; word order is incorrect; or clauses that don't belong together are punctuated as one sentence.
- Note that sentence structure errors often contain other types of errors within them.
- Sentence structure error may be repeated or may vary greatly.
- Asking intended meaning may be the best strategy for this error.

**Word Choice Errors**

- Refers to a broad range of errors, from completely incorrect word use, to connotation being off, to substitution of antiquated forms for more common ones, to using words together that do not typically appear with each other.
- For meaning and basic grammatical/usage information, consult a learner's dictionary in the Writing Center or online: [wordsmith.com](http://wordsmith.com) or [learnersdictionary.com](http://learnersdictionary.com).
- For information about which words are typically used together in English, consult the collocation dictionary in the Writing Center or one online: [ozdic.com](http://ozdic.com)

Group C: Issues that may be frequent, and that are RULE-BASED, but that have LESS IMPACT ON A READER. These do not tend to interfere with meaning, but rather with the impression of fluency. If these errors are repeated, RESOURCES and SCAFFOLDING should help students build the necessary skills.

**Articles**

- See Writing Center handout.

**Prepositions of Location, Time or Direction**

- See Writing Center handout.

**Phrasal Verbs**

- See Writing Center handout for a collection of common phrasal verbs and their meanings.

Group D: Errors that do not appear on this handout are UNLIKELY TO BE RULE-BASED OR TO MAKE A STRONG IMPACT ON A READER. These may include the occasional idiom, cultural references, more complicated lexical questions, and exceptions to rules. For this type of issue, unless they have specialized ELL training or access to appropriate resources, tutors should feel free to act as the NATIVE SPEAKER RESOURCE.