

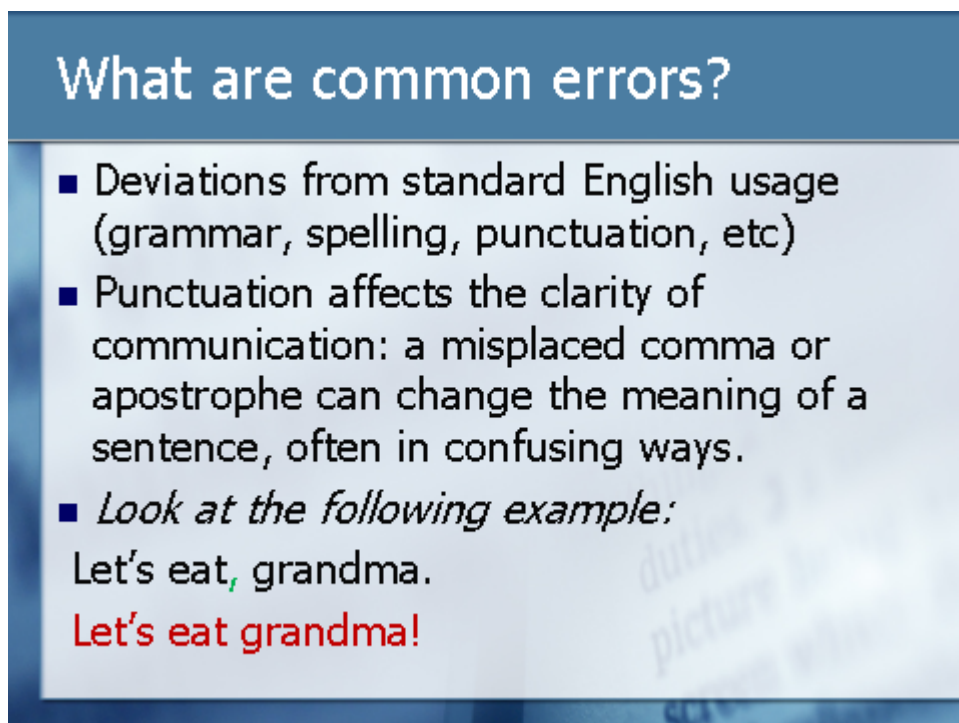
Communication Skills: Lecture No.39

Module 12

Lecture 2

Common Errors

Welcome back to the module on *common errors*! Common errors are deviations from Standard English usage. The deviations can happen in terms of grammar, spelling, pronunciation, and punctuation.



What are common errors?

- Deviations from standard English usage (grammar, spelling, punctuation, etc)
- Punctuation affects the clarity of communication: a misplaced comma or apostrophe can change the meaning of a sentence, often in confusing ways.
- *Look at the following example:*
Let's eat, grandma.
Let's eat grandma!

Here, the first sentence is clear: *Let's eat, grandma.* This is an invitation, a request, asking grandma to sit with the children for food. However, the next sentence without comma creates a very disastrous and funny situation: *Let's eat grandma,* means that the children decide to eat the grandmother! So it's ridiculous, it is not possible unless the children happen to be cannibals! The error is caused because of the misuse of comma or not using the comma here at all. Therefore, avoiding common errors ensures your speech, as well as writing, is clear, precise, comprehensible, and free from ambiguity. However, the audience will take note if you are a bad communicator in terms of English language usage. They note common errors easily as

ambiguity in communication forces them to reread the text or makes them ask you to repeat what you said. Accuracy in communication causes a positive impression.

Advantages

- Effective Communication relies on correct use of grammar, spelling and punctuation.
- Avoiding common errors ensures your speech as well as writing is clear, precise, comprehensible and free from ambiguity.
- Readers note common errors easily as it forces them to re-read the text
- Accuracy in communication causes a positive impression—important in professional/academic communications

Spot the Common Errors in the following sentences:

Answers & Explanations

- ✗ 1. I am **awaiting for** my appointment order.
 ✓ I am **awaiting my** appointment order.
 - ✗ 2. I will be **waiting your** reply by e-mail.
 ✓ I will be **waiting for your** reply by e-mail.
- await* is a transitive verb—so, it can have a direct object (**I await your reply**).
- wait* is an intransitive verb and cannot have a direct object; so a preposition, usually FOR, must be added.

Note that the expression, “Waiting your” is wrong because the correct form is” I will be waiting for your reply by e-mail.” Waiting will take the preposition ‘for’ in the sense of

‘awaiting’. ‘Wait’ is an intransitive verb and cannot have a direct object; so it needs to have a preposition in between, the object and the preposition that is usually used is ‘for’. Look at the next two examples dealing with the use of ‘one of’.

Answers & Explanations

- × 3. One of **the girl** in our class has won the prize.
 - × 4. One of the girls in our class **have** won the prize.
- One of (or any other number of) must be followed by a plural noun or pronoun.*
- ✓ 3. One of **the girls** in our class has won the prize.
Here, the verb is singular—sub. is *one*, not *girls*
 - ✓ 4. One of the girls in our class **has** won the prize.

Note that *one of*, *two of*, *many of*, *a majority of* must be followed by a plural noun or pronoun. For examples: *one of the boys*, *one of the girls*, *one of the teachers*, *one of the chairs*, *one of the tables*, *two of the girls*, *three of the children*. One of the girls, also means *only one* girl, not many girls, hence it takes the singular form of the verb *has*.

Look at the next two sentences and try to identify the errors:

Answers & Explanations

- × 5. Many of the **rats is** dead.
 - × 6. Much of the grain **are** in storage.
- Many refers to number, and is plural. Hence—*
- ✓ Many of the **rats are** dead.
- Much refers to amount or quantity, and is singular. Hence—*
- ✓ Much of the grain **is** in storage.

Let us look at some more sentences at a stretch.

More Examples . . .

7. When do you have the dinner?
8. I play the hockey.
9. Chinese live in the China.
10. Chinese speak the Chinese.
11. She has worked hardly today.
12. Deepika is more taller than Kareena.
13. Madhuri refused to answer to me.
14. We approached to the house.
15. We entered into the room.

I hope you have quickly identified the errors; let's look at the answers and explanations.

Answers & Explanations

- × 7. When do you have **the** dinner?
the is **NOT USED** before the names of meals in general, routine sense.

✓ When do you have dinner?

the is used is it specifies the meal
The dinner will be held at the Taj Hotel.

Look at the next one, again an interesting example in terms of use of articles: *I play the hockey.*

Answers & Explanations

- × 8. I play **the** hockey.
- the* is not used before names of games
- ✓ I play **hockey**. (chess, cricket, tennis, etc)
- × 9. **Chinese** live in **the** China.
- ✓ *the* is not used before the names of countries
- ✓ **China, France, Italy, India**
- ✓ But, *the* is used before a country that is made up of smaller units or constituent parts
- ✓ The United States, the Netherlands, the U. K.

Now most of you play hockey, you know that you must be using this kind of expression, but then, “the” is not used before names of any games. Look at the next example, again interesting because there are two errors in this. *The* is not used before the names of countries, so you cannot say *the China, the France, the Italy, the India, the Germany*. The exception to the rule is, *the* is used before a country that is made up of smaller units or constituent parts like, *the United State of America, the USSR before, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands*. Besides, “the” is used before the inhabitants of a country collectively or as a community. So, the correct form is: The Chinese live in China.

Answers & Explanations

- Chinese** live in China.
- ✓ *the* is used before the inhabitants of a country collectively or as a community
- ✓ **The Chinese** live in China.
- ✓ But, *the* is NOT used before their languages
- × 10. Chinese speak the Chinese.
- The Chinese speak Chinese.**
- The French speak French and live in France.**

Look at the next example.

Answers & Explanations

- × 11. She has worked **hardly** today.
Hard (adverb) means *diligently, strenuously*.
Hardly (adverb) means *barely, scarcely, almost not*
- ✓ She has worked **hard** today.
- × 12. Deepika is **more taller** than Kareena.
More/most is not used before suffixes of comparative (-er) and superlative (-est) degrees.
- ✓ Deepika is taller than Kareena.
- ✓ Amitabh is the tallest actor in Bollywood. (**not the most tallest**).

Look at the remaining examples.

Answers & Explanations

- × 13. Madhuri refused to answer **to** me.
- × 14. We approached **to** the house.
- × 15. We entered **into** the room.

Verbs like *answer, approach, enter*, etc., are transitive in English and DO NOT follow a preposition (as in some other languages).

- ✓ Madhuri refused to **answer me**.
- ✓ We **approached the house**.
- ✓ We **entered the room**.

Of course all the remaining three are wrong examples. All of them pertain to one set of common errors, that is, the usage of preposition. Verbs like *answer, approach, enter*, etc., are

transitive in English, which means they can take the direct object, or the direct one that is next to them immediately, preposition need not come in between. So these are errors generally we commit when we try to literally translate what we want to speak in English from our own languages. So what it means: you should pay attention to the grammatical rules of the language that you want to use for communication, in this case, English. Let us look at some more sentences, and try to identify the common errors in them.

Identify the Common Errors . . .

- 16. Many people died from cholera.
- 17. Balram died of over-eating.
- 18. He married with my sister.
- 19. She is my cousin sister.
- 20. I'm afraid I speak English very bad.
- 21. The course is for students with a basis knowledge of English.
- 22. Let me congratulate you for your grand success in the Civil Service Exams.

Answers & Explanations

- × 16. Many people died **from** cholera.
- × 17. Balram died **of** over-eating.

People die *of* a disease or illness,
but they die *from* doing something.

- ✓ Many people died **of** cholera.
- ✓ Balram died **from** over-eating.

Answers & Explanations

× 18. He **married with** my sister.

Married—as a verb can be used transitively/intransitively.

No preposition is needed in its intransitive use:

He **married my sister**. (Also, not *to my sister*)

× 19. She is my **cousin sister**.

Cousin brother or cousin sister are words developed in India through daily usage. In English usage it is just "cousin."

Answers & Explanations

Cousin brother or cousin sister are commonly used in India owing to the cultural variation.

In English usage it is just "Cousin."

✓ She is my **cousin**.

✓ He is my **cousin**. (not cousin brother).

× 20. I'm afraid I speak English very **bad**.

Do not use an adjective (**bad**) in the place of an adverb (**badly**).

✓ I'm afraid I speak English very **badly**.

Let us look at the next few examples.

Answers & Explanations

× 21. The course is for students with a **basis** knowledge of English.

Do not use a noun (**basis**) in the place of an adjective (**basic**).

✓ The course is for students with a **basic** knowledge of English.

■ × 22. Let me congratulate you **for** your grand success in the Civil Service Exams.

✓ You **congratulate somebody on** (doing) something (NOT **for**).

Now, let us look for more errors in these sentences:

Answers & Explanations

× 23. She talks as if she **is** the Prime Minister of this country.

For wistful thinking, past tense form of the verb (**was/were**) is used

✓ She talks as if she **was/were** the Prime Minister of this country.

■ Similarly you say—

✓ **I wish I were an apple.**

✓ **I wish I was an elephant.**

Answers & Explanations

× 24. I **enjoyed** during the vacation.

When “enjoy” is used in the past form (enjoyed) a reflexive of the subject (myself/herself) follows the past form of the verb.

✓ I **enjoyed myself** during the vacation.

■ In the present form, you **enjoy doing something**. So, you say—
I **enjoy speaking** Swahili.

Answers & Explanations

× 25. He **absented from** college for the entire semester.

You *absent yourself* from something.

✓ He **absented himself** from college for the entire semester.

× 26. Sujatha **has bought** this Kimono dress in Tokyo.

Use simple past to refer to an event happened in the remote past.

✓ Sujatha **bought** this Kimono dress in Tokyo.

Answers & Explanations

× 27. He is very fond of **hearing** the radio.

✓ He is very fond of **listening to** the radio.

listen (to) = hear and pay attention (to)

28. Harish is **speaking** a lie.

You 'tell the truth', 'speak the truth' and 'tell a lie' but '*speak* a lie' is incorrect.

✓ Harish is **telling** a lie.

Harish speaks the truth or Harish is speaking the truth, Harish is telling a lie are all acceptable, but *Harish is speaking a lie* is not acceptable in Standard usage and is incorrect.

In the next, and the last lecture of this module, we will look at some difficult examples.

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