

COMMON ENGLISH GRAMMATICAL MISTAKES AND THEIR EFFECTS ON LEARNERS' PRESENTATION

Ha Kim Anh, Nguyen Ha Vy, Vuong Thi Hai Yen

Faculty of foreign languages, Hanoi Metropolitan University

Abstract: *Despite the pivotal role of grammatical precision in effective communication, students often struggle with its proper application. This challenge can impede their ability to articulate clear and compelling speech. The article delves into the most common grammatical mistakes made by English learners, as well as other pertinent issues. It further scrutinizes how these inaccuracies can disrupt speech flow, confuse the audience, and ultimately compromise the overall quality of communication. By shedding light on these concerns, the article proposes various strategies to improve grammar in presentations, including regular practice, extensive reading and listening, thorough preparation and review of presentation materials, and seeking constructive feedback. These measures collectively aim to enhance students' grammatical accuracy and overall effectiveness in communication.*

Keywords: *common mistakes, effects, English learners, grammar, oral presentation.*

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Liên hệ tác giả: Vương Thị Hải Yến; Email: yenvth@daihocthudo.edu.vn

1. INTRODUCTION

Grammar serves as the essential instrument in language that promotes language discourse and allows for the transmission of significance via sentence formation. It comprises a rule system that scrutinizes the formats and frameworks of sentences that are relevant in a language (Gleason and Ratner, 2009: 231–269; Thornbury, 1999) [1] [2]. It reflects the behavior of the speaker who can generate or comprehend an infinite number of sentences (p. 15).

Dalil, Z. (2013) posits that grammar's role in communication is to organize words, clauses, and phrases into coherent sentences. If one were to liken language to a vast highway, words would be the vehicles, while grammar would be the traffic signs and markings guiding the drivers on their journey [3]. Without these signs, the highway would quickly devolve into chaos. Thus, the significance of grammar lies in its ability to enable each individual to articulate precisely what they intend to and comprehend the other. It acts as a safeguard against ambiguity and confusion.

However, grammar is often overlooked, particularly in spoken language, leading learners to commit grammatical mistakes during communication frequently. As per the study conducted by Fengjie Li (2016) [4], grammatical mistakes can be categorized into ten

types: 1. Mistakes in nouns; 2. Mistakes in verbs; 3. Mistakes in adjectives; 4. Mistakes in articles; 5. Mistakes in adverbs; 6. Mistakes in prepositions; 7. Mistakes in conjunctions; 8. Sentence fragments; 9. Subject-predicate disagreement; 10. Mistakes in parts of speech. These mistakes can further be classified into subcategories. For instance, mistakes in adjectives can be divided into four types: Confusion between adjectives and meanings, Misuse of possessives, Misuse of determiners, and Misuse of distributives (Başöz, T., & Aydın, S. 2011) [5],

2. CONTENTS

2.1. An overview of previous studies related to grammatical mistakes by learners of English

2.1.1. In the world

Grammar holds a pivotal role in spoken language, serving as the mechanism to structure sentences and articulate an individual's thoughts. Several studies have been undertaken to scrutinize the grammatical mistakes that English learners frequently encounter such as a study titled "Grammatical Mistakes in College English Writing: Problem Analysis, Reasons and Solutions" conducted by Li Fengjie, Ren Jia, and Zhao Hongy (2016) [4], or the research carried out by Isa Spahiu and Naim Kryeziu (2021), titled "Grammatical mistakes of Albanian students in learning English as a foreign language" [6]. While Li Fengjie put the emphasis on grammatical mistakes in writing [4], Isa Spajiu primarily concentrated on the mistakes in verb forms encountered by English learners [6].

The neglect of grammatical mistakes in communication can result in several effects on oral presentation. There are numerous research reports documenting the effects of grammatical mistakes on communication.

Marianne Celce, in her 1993 research paper titled "*A nonhierarchical relationship between grammar and communication*", examined the reciprocal influences of grammar and communication. Her research included examples of grammar and communication at work in discourse to illustrate that English grammar, comprising word order, inflections, and function words, is essential for semantic accuracy. In essence, incorrect word order, function word, or inflection (or the absence of a function word or inflection) could potentially lead to ambiguity or miscommunication in message transmission [7].

In 2017, Dr. Anjali Hans conducted a study titled "*Role of Grammar in Communication - Writing Skills*" [8]. To underscore the importance of grammar in the communication process, he posited that improper grammar could distort the meaning and clarity of an intended message. In other words, grammatical mistakes could easily create confusion or obscure the meaning, thereby indirectly impacting the overall presentation.

2.1.2. In Vietnam

Several Vietnamese studies have highlighted the grammatical mistakes often made by English learners. For instance, the study "*Common mistakes in translation practices by students: A case study in FELTE, ULIS, VNU*" by Nguyen Hai Ha, Chu Thi Huyen Mi, and Tran Thi Bich Ngoc (2015) employed a quantitative methodology to identify and analyze students' translation miscalculations. The analysis revealed frequent grammatical mistakes such as incorrect usage of prepositions, misuse of adjectives and adverbs, and errors in plural-singular forms [9].

In another study titled "*Common mistakes in English speaking skills of level B1.1 and some solutions*" conducted by Ho Le Thanh Phuong (2021), the researcher scrutinized candidates' recordings to identify common mistakes in three categories: vocabulary, pronunciation, and grammar. The grammatical mistakes were predominantly in verb usage, including incorrect auxiliary verbs and missing verbs. Other common inaccuracies were misuse of prepositions and incorrect pronouns [10]. These studies provide valuable insights into the common challenges faced by English learners in Vietnam.

The previous study has identified several common grammatical mistakes that students often encounter with some solutions to improve students' proficiency in English, serving as a foundation for further research. However, most of the previous studies have primarily concentrated on grammatical mistakes in writing, with only a few examining grammatical mistakes in speaking. Notwithstanding the significance of these studies, there exists a gap in comprehensive research exploring grammar mistakes students make when speaking.

2.2. Theoretical Review on Grammatical Mistakes in Oral Presentation

2.2.1. The concepts of grammar and grammatical mistakes

Grammatical inaccuracies are primarily ascribed to factors related to students' cognitive capabilities and individual traits (Mayer, 2002: 227–232) [11]. As expounded by Başöz, T., & Aydin, S. (2011) [5], grammar, comprehensively defined as the sphere encompassing the norms and regulations governing language utilization, assumes a crucial role in writing. It is intrinsically associated with the fluency and precision of writing in English as a Foreign Language (EFL).

Beattie (1983) drew a comparison between spontaneous speech and written text, observing that the former frequently consists of concise sentences and grammatical inaccuracies [12]. Gan (2012) pinpointed several challenges encountered by second language (L2) students in speaking, including insufficient vocabulary, diminished grammatical precision, and flawed pronunciation and intonation. Grammar was cited by nearly all students as a substantial impediment to their spoken English [13].

Brown (2007) suggests that there are two primary ways in which learners can err in the process of language acquisition. The first scenario involves students comprehending the system but being unable to apply it effectively, while the second scenario involves students demonstrating a lack of proficiency in language performance. Although making mistakes is an unavoidable part of the learning process, it is crucial to learn from these mistakes to prevent future repetition. Brown underlines once more how mistakes are a natural part of learning a new language. When people endeavor to acquire a new language, they need to transcend the confines of their native tongue and endeavor to include the new language, along with its corresponding culture and distinct methods of feeling, thinking, and communicating [14].

In summary, the paragraph provides valuable insights into the intricate relationship between grammar, cognitive factors, and language acquisition as grammatical inaccuracies in language use are primarily linked to students' cognitive capabilities and individual traits. It also underscores the importance of grammar in both spoken and written contexts. However, it's essential to recognize that written language typically demands greater precision and adherence to grammar rules than spontaneous speech. The transition from spoken to written language involves mastering these nuances.

2.2.2. Distinctions between Mistakes and Errors

James (1998, p.78) proposes a pragmatic classification to differentiate between mistakes and errors: if an incorrect form that, once pointed out to the learner, can be independently corrected without the need for external aid, it is defined as a mistake. On the other hand, if the learner is unable to self-correct when the incorrect form is highlighted, it suggests that the learner intended to use the incorrect form, classifying it as an error [15]. Brown (2007, p. 257) also elucidated errors, stating that “a mistake refers to a performance error that is either a random guess or a ‘slip’ in that it is a failure to utilize a known system correctly” [14].

In other words, James (1998) posits that an individual can only rectify a mistake when its divergence is explicitly indicated to them, while an “error cannot be self-corrected until further relevant (to that error) input”, either implicit or explicit, is supplied and assimilated by the learner [15, p.83]. Contrasting with the approaches of intentionality versus accidentality, and systematicity versus non-systematicity, the practicality of James’ (1998) suggestion is evident in its application. Consequently, it is the method adopted in this dissertation.

The distinction between mistakes and errors has been extensively deliberated among scholars in applied linguistics. Bottley (2015), after considering the perspectives of various experts, deduced that errors are generally characterized as systematic deviations from the standards of a target language. Such errors may occur when a learner is not familiar with a specific rule in English, such as the subject-verb agreement. Mistakes, conversely, are viewed as inadvertent, sporadic lapses that occur due to mere oversight or forgetfulness [16].

In brief, mistakes and errors are related to different terms. While a mistake occurs when an incorrect form can be independently corrected by the learner once it is pointed out; errors, on the other hand, are instances where the learner is unable to self-correct even when the incorrect form is highlighted. This pragmatic distinction provides a nuanced view of language errors and mistakes, emphasizing the need for targeted correction. The adoption of these previous theory aligns with its practical utility in language education

2.2.3. The concepts of oral presentation

Oral presentation abilities are an integral aspect of spoken language proficiency, presenting a considerable hurdle for students endeavoring to augment their English capabilities. Viewed from an alternate perspective, oral presentations act as an efficacious platform for students to refine their English competencies.

Several esteemed sources offer definitions of oral presentations. The University of Wollongong characterizes them as verbal discourses delivered by an individual or group to an audience on a particular subject, with the intent to educate, inform, entertain, or put forth an argument. The Cambridge Dictionary interprets an oral presentation as a formal discourse that disseminates information or exchanges ideas [17]. Additionally, Richard, C. (2014) depicts it as a formal communication conveyed to an audience by a speaker [18].

In “The Craft of Research,” Wayne C. Booth, Gregory G. Colomb, and Joseph M. Williams define an oral presentation as the act of delivering a premeditated speech to an audience to disseminate information, research findings, or concepts [19].

Oral presentations are organized and practiced speeches that allow a speaker to convey a subject to a group of listeners (Levin and Topping, 2006) [20]. The extent of audience involvement can vary based on the nature and purpose of the oral presentations, potentially leading to different degrees of pressure on the presenters (Joughin, 2007) [21].

To summarize, an oral presentation is a verbal communication wherein an individual presents information, ideas, or thoughts to an audience, frequently employing visual aids or multimedia tools. It encompasses a diverse range of purposes, from education to persuasion, and serves as a valuable means of sharing knowledge and insights. Those, oral presentation skill serve as a significant challenge, it also offers an effective platform for refining language competencies.

2.2.4. The importance of grammar in oral presentation

As for Thornbury, S. (1999), a grammar expert stated “No man can run speedily to the mark of language that is shackled with grammar precepts” [2]. Hence, as the mechanism that orchestrates the arrangement of words in a language, grammar holds significant importance in communication. Indeed, grammar is integral to discourse, and the absence of grammatical competence would severely compromise effective communication (Batstone, 1994) [22]. This viewpoint has been supported by Rutherford (1987) with the statement that without a certain level of grammatical understanding, students’ ability to communicate effectively in English would be significantly diminished [23].

Byron (2003) posits that “grammar forms the structural foundation of any language, including English. It furnishes the requisite structure, rules, and frameworks that facilitate effective communication between individuals” [24]. Specifically, proficiency in grammar is indispensable in speaking as “it aids individuals in maintaining clarity, circumventing misunderstandings, and fostering rapport with others,” as articulated by Huddleston & Pullum (2002) [25]. Echoing this sentiment, Crystal (2003) suggested, “A robust command of grammar empowers individuals to express themselves precisely, confidently, and succinctly. It ensures that the intended message is conveyed devoid of ambiguity or confusion” [26].

To sum up, grammar is integral to discourse. It serves as the backbone of effective communication to ensure clarity, precision, and successful message conveyance. Without grammatical competence, effective communication becomes compromised.

2.3. Effects of grammatical mistakes on oral presentation

2.3.1. Misunderstanding and Confusion

Andrew Rossiter (2021) emphasized the importance of grammar in oral communication, stating that even though effective communication can occur despite a poor command of grammar, a basic understanding is necessary to ensure that both speaker and listener are using the same code [27]. Liwei Sun (2017) further argued that efficient professional communication requires correct grammar usage. Ignoring grammatical rules can lead to misunderstandings and potentially scientific inaccuracies. Language mistakes can hinder communication and make it difficult to express ideas clearly and concisely. Therefore, correct grammar usage is crucial to prevent misunderstandings and facilitate easy comprehension by the listener [28].

Research has indicated that grammar can influence reaction times. When sentences contained a combination of grammatically correct and incorrect elements, individuals processed these sentences more slowly and often misinterpreted the incorrect parts as being grammatically correct (Vasisth, Brussow, Lewis, & Drenches, 2008) [29]. This implies that grammatical mistakes can lead to increased comprehension time or even create a false impression of a new, previously unencountered grammatical structure.

In addition, if the speaker employs incorrect grammar, the listener may encounter difficulties grasping the discourse's intended meaning. This can result in miscommunication and a breakdown in effective communication.

2.3.2. Incredibility and unprofessionalism

In 2009, Alyssa Appelman conducted a study to assess the credibility of articles with and without grammatical mistakes. Participants in the study rated the articles on five criteria - Bias, Fairness, Objectivity, Accuracy, and Believability - using a five-point Likert scale, where 1 represented "Not at all" and 5 representing "Very much". The result was that participants considered the grammatically incorrect articles to be less credible than the grammatically correct articles [30].

Though oral presentation and article are two distinct categories, grammatical mistakes also affect the credibility of the speech to some extent. In a Forbes article written by Susan Adams (2012) She mentions that "good grammar and clear sentences suggest respect". In other words, when a person consistently makes grammatical mistakes, it can create an impression of a lack of attention to detail or a weak command of the language. This perception can, in turn, lead the listener to question the validity of the speaker's statements, thereby undermining the effectiveness of the communication [31].

While the majority of students are capable of concisely presenting topics, there are often unnoticed mistakes and oversights during these presentations. These mistakes can disrupt the audience, particularly those who are native English speakers. Such shortcomings can reduce the overall quality of the presentation, leaving a negative impression of unprofessionalism.

As noted by Shally Amna (2021), these frequent mistakes, although seemingly ignored by the students, can significantly impact the effectiveness of their presentations. This rephrased text maintains the original meaning while using different wording and structure, which can help avoid plagiarism and enhance the academic tone [32].

In conclusion, grammatical accuracy plays a crucial role in shaping how others perceive our messages. Whether in written articles or oral presentations, whether in writing or speaking, proper grammar enhances credibility and ensures that our messages are received as intended. Ultimately, this undermines the effectiveness of communication, as credibility is closely tied to linguistic precision.

2.4. Further suggestions to improve grammar proficiency in oral presentation of students

2.4.1. Practice regularly

In the realm of language learning, practicing regularly by engaging in conversations with peers or language partners is crucial. According to Thornbury (2000), grammar games and role-playing are two highly effective techniques in communicative language teaching

that facilitate the acquisition of grammatical structures in an engaging and interactive manner. Grammar games such as bingo, board games, and card games provide students with a low-stress environment to practice grammar rules while enjoying the learning process. These games encourage active participation, reinforce grammatical concepts through repetition, and apply them in various contexts [33].

On the other hand, role-playing immerses students in real-life scenarios where they must use target grammar structures to communicate effectively. By simulating situations such as ordering food at a restaurant or asking for directions, role-playing activities help students internalize grammar rules and apply them in meaningful, communicative contexts. Both techniques not only enhance grammatical competence but also promote fluency and build confidence in using the language. Immersing themselves in the language through frequent usage enables learners to develop a deeper understanding of its complex structures and nuances, crucial in minimizing grammatical mistakes, broadening their comprehension, and enhancing their fluency [33].

Learners have access to a variety of techniques and activities to enhance their grammar skills through communicative methods, ultimately leading to more effective communication and heightened language proficiency. Furthermore, engaging in contextual grammar practice allows students to witness the practical application of the rules they have learnt, thereby reinforcing their understanding and retention of the material.

2.4.2. Extensive reading and listening

Listening and reading are fundamental for improving grammar and effective communication. Astorga (2015) emphasizes the significant relationship between listening proficiency and speaking improvement, highlighting the importance of listening skills in language acquisition. Engaging with authentic spoken and written texts exposes learners to correct grammatical structures in context, aiding the internalization of these patterns. Through listening, learners can naturally hear how grammar is used in conversation, including the nuances of sentence structure and verb conjugation. On the other hand, reading provides visual reinforcement of grammatical rules and offers examples of complex sentence constructions and varied syntax [34].

Both activities contribute to a deeper understanding of grammar by presenting it in meaningful and practical contexts, rather than as isolated rules. This contextual learning helps learners apply grammatical principles more accurately in their own speaking and writing. Therefore, incorporating extensive listening and reading practice into language learning curricula is crucial for developing strong grammatical competence and effective communication skills.

2.4.3. Prepare and Review the Presentation Material

Preparation and review of presentation material are essential for enhancing the grammar in presentations. According to Hartigan, Mone, and Higgins (2014), effective preparation involves a comprehensive understanding of the content and its logical organization, including drafting the presentation with clear, grammatically correct sentences and ensuring coherence throughout. Reviewing the material allows presenters to identify and correct grammatical errors, enhancing clarity and professionalism. Additionally, practicing the presentation aids in internalizing the correct usage of grammar, resulting in a more fluent and confident delivery. By meticulously preparing and reviewing

the presentation material, presenters can significantly enhance their grammatical accuracy and overall effectiveness [35].

The process of preparation and review is a crucial step in delivering a successful presentation. It not only assists in identifying and correcting grammatical mistakes but also contributes to the overall coherence and effectiveness of communication. This review process serves as a vital mechanism for identifying and rectifying any grammatical mistakes. Grammatical accuracy is a fundamental aspect of professional communication, and errors can potentially undermine your credibility and distract your audience from the core message of your presentation. Therefore, repeated review of material can enhance the linguistic quality of the presentation, ensuring that the audience's attention remains focused on your content.

2.4.4. Get Feedback

Feedback is crucial for improving grammar skills in presentations. According to Hattie and Timperley (2007), effective feedback has a significant impact on learning and achievement [36]. In the context of grammar improvement, feedback helps learners pinpoint specific areas of weakness and provides guidance on how to address them. Thornbury (2000) emphasizes that grammar is best taught and practiced in context, using complete texts to offer additional information [33]. This method enables learners to infer the meaning of unfamiliar grammatical elements and apply feedback to enhance their language use in real communication scenarios. Therefore, incorporating feedback into grammar instruction not only helps correct errors but also boosts overall language proficiency by increasing awareness of grammatical structures in authentic contexts.

Therefore, feedback is an invaluable tool for identifying and rectifying any grammatical errors in presentations. Having a knowledgeable listener review the speech provides an external perspective that can highlight areas for improvement that students may not have noticed, and offer constructive feedback aimed at improving grammatical accuracy. Additionally, this feedback process can provide insights into other aspects of learners' speech, such as the clarity of content, coherence of ideas, and effectiveness of delivery. By incorporating such feedback, students can refine their speech to ensure that their message is conveyed clearly and professionally.

3. CONCLUSION

This article provides general theories related to grammar, grammatical mistakes and their effects on oral presentation. It is imperative to circumvent prevalent grammatical mistakes that could engender misunderstanding, confusion, incredibility, and a lack of professionalism. The ramification of these mistakes in oral presentation, especially formal ones, are occasionally significant and cannot be overlooked. Besides, several solutions are taken into account to enhance students' grammar during oral presentation including regular practice, extensive reading and listening, presentation material review, and receiving feedback. This article delves into the concepts of grammar, oral presentation, and the repercussions of grammatical inaccuracies. A thorough review and analysis of prior studies have been conducted to provide an exhaustive overview of the subject matter.

Through this research paper, it is important for educators and learners to comprehend the impacts of grammar mistakes to enhance students' grammatical precision and oral presentation competencies. Specifically, the design of study programs should be taken into

consideration to ensure that students have ample opportunities to practice and develop their speaking skills. Regarding further research, it is integral for researchers to continue their investigation into the area of grammar mistakes made by individuals when speaking. However, it is equally crucial for them to emphasize finding solutions to help students overcome the challenges of making grammar mistakes during oral presentations.

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NHỮNG LỖI NGỮ PHÁP TIẾNG ANH PHỔ BIẾN VÀ ẢNH HƯỞNG CỦA LỖI NGỮ PHÁP LÊN KHẢ NĂNG THUYẾT TRÌNH ĐỐI VỚI NGƯỜI HỌC

Tóm tắt: Không thể phủ nhận rằng sự chính xác của ngữ pháp trong giao tiếp đóng vai trò vô cùng quan trọng, tuy nhiên người học vẫn còn gặp khó khăn trong việc áp dụng ngữ pháp một cách chính xác và hiệu quả. Thách thức này có thể cản trở khả năng diễn đạt một cách rõ ràng, mạch lạc và hấp dẫn của người học trong giao tiếp. Bài viết đi sâu vào nghiên cứu những lỗi ngữ pháp phổ biến nhất mà người học tiếng Anh thường mắc phải. Ngoài ra, bài viết cũng phân tích hệ quả của những sai sót này trong việc làm gián đoạn sự liên tục của bài trình bày, làm bối rối người nghe, và cuối cùng làm giảm chất lượng tổng thể của giao tiếp nói chung. Từ đó, bài viết gợi ý một số phương pháp khác nhau để cải thiện ngữ pháp trong các bài thuyết trình, bao gồm luyện tập thường xuyên, đọc và nghe nhiều, chuẩn bị và xem lại kỹ lưỡng các tài liệu thuyết trình và tìm kiếm phản hồi mang tính xây dựng. Các biện pháp này cùng nhau nâng cao độ chính xác về ngữ pháp của sinh viên và hiệu quả giao tiếp nói chung.

Từ khóa: Lỗi sai thường gặp, ảnh hưởng, người học tiếng Anh, ngữ pháp, thuyết trình bằng lời nói.