

7.12 Typical mistakes

Outline	Students revise grammar points.
Level	All levels
Time	Variable
Preparation	This activity is intended to revise grammar which the students have previously studied. Prepare a list of common mistakes, spoken or written, that your students continue to make. Select those which are probably caused by interference from their own language. The example below (Figure 7.10) gives typical mistakes made by German students. There are different variations for presenting this list (see <i>Variations</i> below), but the simplest is to use a handout or projection where each sentence contains one mistake.

Procedure

- 1 Tell the students to look at the sentences and to identify the errors, if they can. Give them about three minutes to work on this individually.
- 2 Allow students to compare their ideas with a partner before conducting feedback with the whole class, and correcting the mistakes.
- 3 Nominate individual students to translate the correct sentences into their own language. This should be done orally. After each sentence, ask the students to compare the incorrect sentence with the version in their own language. Draw their attention to the parallels between the two.
- 4 Round off the activity by asking the class if they can think of any other mistakes they sometimes make because their own language ‘gets in the way’.

- 1 Had you a good time last night?
- 2 He speaks very well English.
- 3 I want that you help me.
- 4 I will do all what I can.
- 5 I'd help you, if I would have the time.
- 6 Let's meet us tomorrow afternoon.
- 7 One my colleagues lost his job yesterday.
- 8 The most people go away at the weekend.

Figure 7.10: Typical mistakes made by German students (English level B1-B2)

Variations

To make the work more challenging, you could include a few sentences in the list which are correct. If you do not tell the students how many sentences are correct/incorrect, you will make the exercise a little more challenging still. If you want to make the work less challenging, you could give both the correct and incorrect options and the students' task is to select the appropriate one.

Multilingual contexts: see page 10

This activity cannot be used if the teacher does not share a language, other than English, with the students.