

Common Mistakes at FCE

What are they and how do we deal with them?

by

Sean Arnett

Today's Objectives

- to talk about common mistakes that students make at FCE (European B2 level).
- to propose practical solutions that we can employ in the classroom as teachers.

Do you recognise any of these?
Which mistake am I referring to in each case?

on/ in/ at

funny

his/ her

travel/ trip

people

S

agree

/'maʊntɪn/

enjoy

used
to

Classroom Techniques

on/ in/ at

Problems

lack of direct translation into L1;
do not really impede meaning;
fossilisation of error;
abstract concepts that Ss are unable to grasp.

Solutions

students build own lists of prepositional phrases;
rework old reading texts into Use of English activities;
build on existing knowledge;
relentless correction (they will be thankful – trust me!).

Classroom Techniques

/'maʊntɪn/

Problems

fossilisation of error;
disinterest;
inability to separate spoken/ written English.

Solutions

drilling – choral & individual;
exposure to native pronunciation i.e. songs,
youtube clips, etc;
use phonetics on the board.

Classroom Techniques

I agree

used to

travel/ trip

his/ her

enjoy doing
something

people

S

funny/
fun

Writing – A Tale of Two Letters

Look at the two examples of writing for the FCE exam.
Work with your partner.

- 1) Which common errors can you identify?
- 2) How would you provide feedback to each student?

Writing – A Tale of Two Letters

the –gh words

although
even though
enough

verb patterns

verb + ing
verb + inf.

losing the target reader

double consonants

(vowels in this case)

prepositions

on, in & at

opening & closing

Hi/ Dear
Yours/ Speak soon

punctuation

overuse of commas
lack of correct punctuation

articles

when speaking generally

ellipses

= I can't be bothered

Writing Feedback

Group errors

group feedback after writing
specifically designed lessons

Individual errors

error log
peer correction
(disguised) class correction

References

Harmer, J. 1998 **How To Teach English** Longman - Chapters 8 & 9

Lightbown, P. & Spada, N. 2006 **How Languages Are Learned** OUP - pages 125-132

Pinnard, L. 2013 “Delta Notes 1: Error Correction”

<http://reflectiveteachingreflectivelearning.com/2013/08/10/delta-notes-1-error-correction/>