

NOTES:

Severino & Prim

- that second language writers need help with word choice
 - 11% of corrections were related to word choice
 - tutors need more knowledge about word choice issues and how to provide instruction and feedback
 - Second language writers have themselves indicated that vocabulary or lack thereof is one of their primary concern 3
 - Problematic and erroneous word choices result in meaning distortion and therefore lack of comprehension and lower evaluations by readers (Engber, 1995). The quality of word choice can make a difference between an ineffective, less-than-comprehensible piece of writing and an effective, articulate one. 3
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- word choice errors are part of the natural process of second language learning
 - Word choice errors can reveal how two languages express the same idea and therefore reveal the complexities of moving from the first to the second language to create meaning
 - writing center associates ARE ESL teachers
 - semantically-based errors: logical and conceptual meanings behind words

ACTIVITY: pairs get a sentence an ESL student wrote. Identify the incorrect word choice and find a replacement, and how to describe it

Nature of Word Choice Errors

- **translations:** Invariably, second language writers use their first languages in their second language writing processes both as a resource and a crutch. Sometimes the results of employing the first language to write in a second are positive because of a "match" between the words and ideas in the two languages. But when there is a first-language to second-language linguistic and possibly cultural mismatch, stemming from how different languages organize the world in different ways, errors and reader confusion can occur

1. **Translation** from Chinese (Jiang, 2004): Errors resulting from expressions that exist in Chinese but not in English

Ex. They started casting bombs to the enemy. → in Mandarin, bomb can only be a noun, so that means that it needs a verb before it. However, in English bomb can be turned into a verb → They started bombing the enemy.

2. **Wrong Context:** Errors resulting from lack of vocabulary or incomplete knowledge of appropriate contexts (Nation, 2013); e.g., they expelled her out (of the home) when expelled is usually used in the context of being banned from an educational institution.

3. **Synform** (Laufer, 1991): Errors resulting from sound-alike or look-alike confusion; e.g., context vs. content.

4. **Idiomaticity:** Errors resulting from not knowing the entire collocation - or how the word fits with other words in a set phrase; e.g., management needs to stand in the customers' feet (vs. shoes).

5. **Precision:** Using a word that is either too general or too specific for the occasion;

Ex. Humans *made* language to exchange ideas. (developed)

6. **Register:** Using words from conversational discourse in academic prose; e.g., stuff for things or phenomena.

Now that we know the common errors ESL students can make, what can we do as tutors?

Types of techniques to address errors:

1. **Correction:** The wrong word, for example, told, is highlighted, and in the margin, the tutor types the correction said.

2. **Question:** The tutor uses a word or expression with a question mark, asking for clarification of meaning. For example, in response to the error, symbolizations of unity , the tutor types " Symbols ?" (Also classified as Correction.)

3. **Options:** The tutor responds to the error by offering alternative words or expressions that make more sense in the context of what the student is writing. For example, in response to the error "It is not a good way to examine the new medical treatment," the tutor types " Test ? Assess ?" (Also classified as Correction.)

4. **Explanation:** The tutor presents an explanation for the error, such as a way to distinguish between the erroneous word and the correct one. For example, in responding to the error, "in order to explicit my points " a tutor types: "Explicit is an adjective; explain is a verb. You can say 4 in order to explain my points' or 4 in order to make my points explicit. 9,9 (Also classified as Option and Correction.)

5. **Error Indication:** The tutor makes a response such as "Word Choice Error" that indicates only that the writer has made a mistake, but the tutor does not attempt to repair it

tutors need more knowledge about word choice issues and how to provide instruction and feedback on word choices. Tutor educators can teach tutors the causes and types of word choice errors and the different types of speech acts and combinations available to address them, stressing Explanation, Options, and Questions. The ultimate goal is for tutors to learn to choose the most appropriate responses for particular word choice errors in the context of other concerns - both rhetorical and linguistic - to promote students' writing and language development

Can we analyze the hiring process to increase diversity, and therefore increase the knowledge of ESL teachers?

How to Be an ESL Tutor: Common Errors and Techniques

Readings by Francis Nan and Carol Severino & Shih-Ni Prim

Elements of Chinese ELL's experience

- English classes focus on rote memorization and grammar tests, usually multiple choice assessments
- Differences in the structure and style of essays and assignments
 - For example, Chinese instructors emphasize the artistic quality of writing and usually stay away from engaging in arguments within a paper
- Perceptions of tutor-tutee roles

Word Choice

Is a broad categorization of the most common errors in ESL students' writing. Word choice errors can distort the meaning of a student's words, and ultimately diminishes their ability to communicate on paper.

The 6 Types of Word Choice Errors

1. Translation:
2. Wrong Context:
3. Synform:
4. Idiomaticity:
5. Precision:
6. Register:

Tips to keep in mind BEFORE starting a tutoring session with an ELL

- Meta-awareness: be aware of any (mis)informed assumptions made about the tutee's abilities
- Do not be distracted by the tutee's goals IF they are focusing on LOCS, like getting a good grade or meeting the essay's requirements
- Engage in small talk! This will not only make the session more comfortable, but it also serves as a practical tool to assess the student's style of communicating

While conducting your tutoring session, remember to...

1. Assess where the writer is now
2. Be direct
3. Be transparent
4. Notice body language
5. Evaluate

Discussion Questions

How can we analyze and reimagine the Writing Associate hiring process?

Can some of these techniques be used for native English speakers as well?

Has anyone experienced an issue related to word choice errors and/or instructing an ELL?

Notes 9/29 class

ESL

ELL: most broad term, can apply to native English speakers too

Non-native: eurocentric term, pre-contact vs contact

L1, L2

Home language

Errors: things you know

Mistakes: unknown

Direct : thesis is valued

vs

Indirect : the process (thesis can be at the end)

High context : context signals all the info

vs

Low context :(american) does not provide context