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Common Errors in English Grammar Exercises for Malaysians

by

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reviewed by

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This book is very practical in its approach, and is aimed at students who already have a basic working knowledge of English. It is specially written for Malaysian speakers of English, and focuses its attention on the common errors that such speakers make.

The book is laid out in sections, each dealing with a particular type of error. Each section starts with examples of the error, followed by a simple explanation of the area concerned. The corrected versions of the erroneous sentences are printed upside down at the bottom of the page. Each section ends with practice exercises covering the problem area, and an answer key is provided at the back of the book. Thus the book can even be used as self-access material by learners.

Most problem areas are covered in the book, including, for example, articles, pronouns, verb tenses and adverbs. The errors dealt with are based mainly on written language. It is refreshing to note however, that some attention is given to errors in spoken language as well as acceptable and unacceptable local usage and errors with idioms. Another plus for the book is the authentic examples, many of which will ring a bell with language teachers.

The book is well researched and well laid out. It is a book that can be used by teachers as well as learners. The explanations given are as simple as possible and useful generalizations are made to help the learner. However, as with all generalizations, care must be taken not to overextend the general "rules" since this might lead to yet other errors. For example, on page 68 the authors point out that Malaysian speakers often add - ed to adjectives that do not need it. This is true enough. However among the examples given are the following:

matured	----->	mature
advanced	----->	advance
repeated	----->	repeat
closed	----->	close

In these examples, both forms can be correct, depending on the context.

e.g.	a matured garden	a mature student
	an advanced course	advance notice
	repeated warnings	a repeat performance

A learner following the generalization given could then be led to producing the opposite error.

e.g. *an advance course*

All in all however, the book is a useful aid to both teachers and learners and used in conjunction with a grammar text and a good dictionary, will go far in helping to improve English Language proficiency.

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