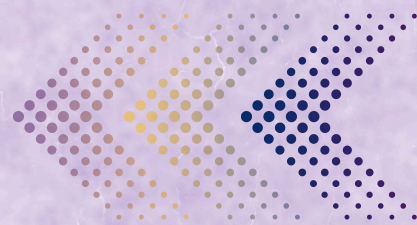




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NEWS AND ARTICLES

"Why Do They Keep Making the Same Mistake?" The Answer Is Not What You Think

Authors: Fakhira Jafri and Adeena Mazwa Rabytah

Have you ever explained something clearly, yet students continue making the same mistake? Or why do they confidently say, "I understand," but still use the wrong form in practice? This situation can be frustrating. The issue, however, may not be intelligence or effort. It may be a lack of noticing.

In 1990, Richard Schmidt introduced the Noticing Hypothesis in second-language learning. His central idea was simple but powerful. Learners cannot truly acquire a language feature unless they consciously notice it. Hearing correct grammar is not enough. Reading a rule is not enough. Even repeated practice may not lead to improvement if learners do not recognise the gap between their performance and the correct model. This concept is especially important for adult learners. Unlike children, adults usually require focused attention and deliberate effort to improve. Teachers may apply different methods, such as explaining grammar rules, encouraging communication in the target language, or emphasising listening and speaking practice. These approaches are useful; however, they become far more effective when students clearly see their own recurring errors.

One practical way to encourage noticing is through video playback. Smartphones and simple recording devices make this method easy to use in the classroom. Presentations or speaking activities can be recorded and reviewed later. Watching themselves can be surprising: repeated words, unclear pronunciation, limited vocabulary, or nervous body language suddenly become obvious. A common reaction is, "I did not realise I was doing that." This moment of realisation is crucial because it shows that noticing has taken place. Video playback allows students to pause, reflect, and replay their performance multiple times, making self-evaluation meaningful. Instead of waiting for the teacher to point out every mistake, learners can begin to identify their own weaknesses and take responsibility for improvement.

It is worth noting that the idea of noticing is not limited to language education. It can be applied to many subjects. In mathematics, students can review their problem-solving steps and identify where their reasoning went wrong. In science, they can reflect on experiment procedures to detect errors. In public speaking, individuals can analyse their clarity and delivery. Athletes often use recorded performances to improve technique. In each case, progress begins when mistakes become visible. Of course, noticing is not automatic. Some students continue making the same mistakes, not because they cannot understand, but because they do not take the time to notice. The errors may remain invisible, either because students are not paying attention or because they do not want to confront the gap between their performance and the correct form. Noticing requires effort and honesty, and video playback or self-evaluation works only if learners are willing to look honestly at their own work. Overall, learning does not fail because students lack knowledge. Sometimes it fails because errors remain unseen. The moment a student finally realises, "Oh, that's what I was doing wrong," real progress becomes possible. Noticing is the first step, and without it, nothing else can follow.

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