Speaking and Listening – Level 6

Group discussion: The difference between a mistake and an accident

Note: Students have been numbered left to right from 1 to 8.

TEACHER What is a mistake?

STUDENT 3 Um, it depends. I think a mistake is something where you haven’t … a mistake is an opportunity to learn, and you can either pass … learn … you can either learn from a mistake or pass up the opportunity and just get all down on yourself and be like, ‘Oh, I made a mistake.’

STUDENT 1 It’s like the tests …

STUDENT 6 Or you can be, ‘Yes! I made a mistake. That means I don’t know this. That means I can learn something new.’

STUDENT 1 Yeah.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 3 Is it a mistake if you on-purposely do it?

TEACHER Oh.

STUDENT 3 Like, if you …

TEACHER Is it a mistake if it’s on purpose?

STUDENT 2 No.

STUDENT 5 Mistakes are accidental.

TEACHER Okay. You were trying to say something there. What do you want to say?

STUDENT 1 I said, I don’t think it is, ’cause if you’re doing it on purpose, it’s … you’re just doing it on purpose.

STUDENT 3 Yeah, it’s kind of your goal to do.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 3 Like, a tiny goal.

TEACHER So, if you’ve done something on purpose, then it’s not a mistake. Does that mean that an accident IS a mistake?

STUDENT 2 Depends on what sort of accident it is.

STUDENT 3 Actually …

STUDENT 2 If it’s a … say …

STUDENT 3 Car crash. That’s an accident.

STUDENT 2 Yeah, but …

STUDENT 3 It’s a mistake, but …

STUDENT 6 Well, most of the time, it’s …

STUDENT 2 … that’s a bad thing. But if it's something like if …

STUDENT 6 A little kid bit themself.

TEACHER Hang on. Let him … let [MUTED] finish his thought.

STUDENT 2 If you’ve accidentally … like, got something … like, you might have accidentally wrote something down, when it was something else, but you actually got it right. So that’s … I wouldn’t … say that’s a mistake. I’d say that’s more a good accident. ’Cause when I think of ‘mistakes’ … I think it’s … generally used in a term like, ‘Oh, that’s a bad mistake.’ It’s, like, generally used in a term for ‘bad’.

TEACHER So, are you saying it depends on the outcome?

STUDENT 2 Yeah.

TEACHER Mm.

STUDENT 6 I think you can learn from, well, just about any mistake you made. Like, say if you dropped a bowl, you’d remember, next time, carry it with two hands and, you know, all those sorts of things. Like, I suppose everything ha– everything happens for a reason, I suppose. Even if stuff does go wrong, you’ll learn from it.

STUDENT 5 I have a book, and it’s called *The Girl Who Never Ever Made a Mistake*. And, so, nobody knew her as her real name, which was Beatrice, and she … Like, every morning, people would flock around her house to see her put on her socks correctly and so on, and then, one day, when they were in a school cooking competition, like the MasterChef that we do, she almost dropped an egg, but she caught it in her mouth, luckily – I don't know how that happened, though. And …

STUDENT 3 That’s not true, is it?

STUDENT 5 No. No. It’s …

TEACHER So, what’s the … what’s the …?

STUDENT 3 I was gonna say.

STUDENT 5 Well … And she sees her friends ice-skating and she's like, ‘Oh, I want to be perfect, but I want to ice-skate. Can I ice-skate perfectly?’ And when she tries it, she cries because she slipped over and then she finds out that she really likes ice-skating.

TEACHER What’s the message in the story, about making mistakes?

STUDENT 5 The … the thing [MUTED] said about never trying anything new.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 5 ’Cause she’d never been ice-skating before.

STUDENT 1 Isn’t that, like, why we do the CAT tests that we do twice a term? Because we do one at the start so then you know what you have to teach us. If we make a mistake, you know what to teach us. Then, at the end of the term, you see how much progress we've actually made.

TEACHER Yeah. So, do you think that when you make a mistake, say, on a test, that that can have a good outcome?

STUDENT 1 Yeah. ’Cause, if you make a mistake, you generally learn from it.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 1 It’s not like, ‘Oh, I’ve made a mistake. Let’s never do that again.’

TEACHER A couple of people have touched on that idea of learning from mistakes. Do you think we can learn from EVERY mistake?

STUDENT 7 Um …

STUDENT 1 I reckon you could learn from …

TEACHER Hang on. I want to hear what [MUTED] thinks first.

STUDENT 7 You could learn from some mistakes. I don’t reckon you can learn from all of them. Because I didn’t learn from making a mistake. Like, I accidentally did something and then I did it again and again, and then I finally learnt from it when I tried it. It’s basically like trying again and ... Yeah.

TEACHER Okay. So, learning from a mistake is trying again. Does it matter how many times you have to try again before you learn?

STUDENT 7 No.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 3 ’Cause, like, sometimes you might, like … you might do a mistake, but then you don’t actually know why you’ve done the mistake.

TEACHER Oh.

STUDENT 3 Does that make sense?

TEACHER So, can you accidentally learn from a mistake? Is that what you’re saying?

STUDENT 3 Sometimes. But, like, it’s … If I done a mistake … like, if I’m trying to ice-skate, and I done a mistake, I don’t exactly learn from that, because if I don’t KNOW why I mistake … done a mistake …

STUDENT 2 Yeah, that’s like, if you were playing footy and you dropped a mark, but you didn’t know why you dropped it, or you stuffed up a kick but you didn’t know how it happened, it’s pretty hard to learn from it, ’cause you know what to practise. Like, you might practise your kicking, but you might still stuff it up ’cause you’re holding the ball wrong or something.

TEACHER So, you two are saying that in order to learn from a mistake …

STUDENT 3 You have to keep your marks.

TEACHER … you need to know what you did wrong in the first place?

STUDENT 2 You have to recognise the mistake, and know what you did wrong.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 3 Or someone else, who can tell you.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 3 ’Cause that helps …

TEACHER So, you could get feedback from someone about your mistake.

STUDENT 2 Yeah. Like your coach.

TEACHER Yeah.

STUDENT 2 ’Cause, if you do something in footy, the coach is gonna say, ‘Oh, next time, try this.’ or, ‘Next time, don’t do that. Do this.’

TEACHER Can we learn from every mistake?

STUDENT 3 Don’t think so.

STUDENT 6 Yes.

TEACHER Don't think so?

STUDENT 2 No.

TEACHER Think it’s yes?

STUDENT 2 No.

TEACHER What do you think?

STUDENT 7 Uh … Not every mistake.

TEACHER No? What do you think?

STUDENT 8 Not really every one.

TEACHER Can’t learn from every mistake? What do you reckon?

STUDENT 5 I think you can. There’s some way. Like, you might not notice it but it’ll implant in your brain.

[TEACHER LAUGHS]

I have an example of this. May I share?

TEACHER Yes.

STUDENT 5 [MUTED] well, no, she won't mind if I tell it.

TEACHER Let’s hope not ’cause you’ve said her name now. [LAUGHS]

STUDENT 5 Yes. So … So [MUTED] was going somewhere on a boat and they were waiting for their uncle to come out of the rest rooms, but he hadn’t arrived yet, and the boat left. And, so, there were 30 minutes in between each boat trip, when it arrived at the dock, and it turned out, when they got on the boat, they found out that the other one had sunk …

TEACHER That’s right.

STUDENT 5 Yeah.

TEACHER I remember this story.

STUDENT 5 Yep.

TEACHER So …

STUDENT 3 Oh, yeah, I heard that.

TEACHER Was that a mistake or an accident?

STUDENT 4 Accident.

STUDENT 6 Accident that …

STUDENT 4 Slash, mistake.

TEACHER [LAUGHS]

STUDENT 5 It’s a mistake because their uncle made the mistake of using the toilet at that exact time.

STUDENT 4 No, but it’s a good thing. But it’s a good thing because the boat sunk.

STUDENT 6 Mistakes are good things, though. Who ever said mistakes are bad things?

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 2 But, like, how do you learn from that? How do you work out that …? Say I’m about to go on a ferry, like, say I’m gonna go on *Spirit of Tasmania* and go to Tasmania, how do I know that if I go to the toilet, how do I know that the boat’s gonna sink? How do you learn from that?

STUDENT 5 Well …

STUDENT 3 What’s the difference between a mistake and an accident?

STUDENT 6 Accidents …

STUDENT 3 Is there a difference?

STUDENT 4 Oh, uh …

STUDENT 6 An accident is something that might have a bad outcome but a mistake’s something that often has a good outcome.

STUDENT 2 I reckon … I reckon it’s the opposite.

TEACHER I was gonna say, does that really depend on your own outlook? Because I think there’d be plenty of people who think mistakes are a bad thing.

STUDENT 2 Yeah, I think …

STUDENT 4 My …

STUDENT 6 Some people also might get, you know, hung up on certain mistakes and be just, like, ‘Ohh, I made that mistake! I didn’t shoot that goal in basketball!’

TEACHER So, in the end …

STUDENT 6 And then, at training, they’re just, like, ‘Oh, whatever. I quit. I failed you guys.’

STUDENT 4 My …

STUDENT 6 Like, I think it really does depend on, I suppose, your outlook. But I do think you can learn every … um, things from any … of all mistakes.

STUDENT 5 Tissue.

TEACHER What would you define an accident as?

STUENT 4 Oh, an accident as something that you acc–

STUDENT 2 Uh …

STUDENT 3 You can’t really say ‘accident’ …

STUDENT 4 Something that you … something that you did but you, um, like … you didn’t do it on purpose.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 4 But it wasn’t a mistake.

STUDENT 3 That’s still the same as a mistake because you don’t do it on purpose.

STUDENT 2 You’ve got to put it in dictionary talk: ‘It was an action that you didn’t mean to do.’

TEACHER Think about when we’ve done this in a whole class, thirty kids. What’s the difference here?

STUDENT 2 The cameras.

TEACHER Apart from the cameras.

STUDENT 3 Definitely being with a smaller group, because with a bigger group, like, mostly kids just get off track and, like …

STUDENT 4 And there’s a bunch of sounds coming from that end, that end.

TEACHER Yeah, so, there are distractions.

STUDENT 4 Blah, blah, blah.

TEACHER Okay.

STUDENT 5 People who …

STUDENT 6 And also, I think it’s good. I really like doing it in the smaller groups. I, um … I think that it kind of gives everyone a bit more chance to voice their opinion and almost properly develop their ideas and not be distracted, also.

TEACHER Mm-hm.

STUDENT 6 And I also think that it’s good ’cause we don’t have to go …

TEACHER Yeah, we use hand signals when it’s a bigger group.

STUDENT 2 Yeah, that’s really annoying.

STUDENT 6 And we all can … We can all, like, talk after each other.

STUDENT 2 And you sit there for ages.

STUDENT 3 With a bigger group, it’s just kind of annoying because when you’re here, you kind of forget it and, like, they kind of go off topic when you already have that topic from ages ago.

STUDENT 2 Yeah, it’s like you just sit there and then you forget.