Speaking and Listening – Level 6

Group discussion: The difference between a mistake and an accident

Part A

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 OK.

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 OK. 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 OK.

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 OK.

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 OK.

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 OK. 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 OK.

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 OK.

STUDENT 3 Or someone else, who can tell you.

TEACHER OK.

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.’