Biology

Common English grammar mistakes: use of "did" and "didn't"

A deep knowledge and understanding of English grammar may not be essential for basic communication. You can successfully get your messages across in "broken English"; however, if you are serious about improving the quality of communication and being acknowledged for your English proficiency, you should have a strong grasp of grammar and avoid basic grammatical errors.

In a recent blog, we covered the common grammar mistakes in the use of 'been' and 'being' . Here, let us address another common and serious issue in the use of "did" and "didn't". To do so, let us consider the following conversation between a manager and his colleague regarding a job interview that had been scheduled.

Manager: How did the interviews scheduled yesterday go?

Colleague: "No, that guy **didn't came**. Of the three other candidates in the list, we **didn't called** the guy from Kalyan; of the remaining two, one guy **didn't picked** the call and the other guy was not reachable

As you read the above sentence, do you get the feeling that something isn't correct? If you get the slightest sense that it doesn't sound right, you are actually on the way to improving your English grammar.

That's because there is indeed something fundamentally wrong with the response by the colleague. Look at the words in bold italics:

- didn't came
- didn't called
- didn't picked

The mistake lies there. It is **not correct** to use two past tense words together. When using the word 'didn't', the colleague should have used the present tense of the verbs i.e. come, call, and pick, respectively.

So, the grammatically correct response from the colleague to the manager should have been:

"No, that guy **didn't come**. Of the three other candidates in the list, we **didn't call** the guy from Kalyan; of the remaining two, one guy **didn't pick** the call and the other guy was not reachable."

While we have given this example with three verbs, this is such a common mistake that you often see it with numerous other verbs. For example, here are some oft-heard examples of wrong usage of past tense of verbs with 'didn't'.

- I **didn't heard** the phone.
- I **didn't knew** about the meeting.
- I **didn't received** the e-mail.
- I **didn't got** the cab.

The next time you hear of a sentence like that, we hope you will recognise the grammar mistake and avoid it.

Keep visiting this blog for more English communication tips that will help in your daily life. You can also enrol into one of online spoken English programmes that will help you speak fluent English quickly!

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