



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Spanish

Common language errors can vary a lot according to the first language of the learner. When teaching English as a second language to Spanish students, it is common to spot the following mistakes in a learner's grammar and vocabulary.

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **acomodation**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **received** (for example, spelled **recived**)
- **beautiful** (for example, spelled **beatiful**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recomend**)
- **together** (for example, spelled **toghether**)
- **believe** (for example, spelled **belive**)
- **excellent** (for example, spelled **excelent**)

Accommodation and *comfortable* are two words that typically cause problems for Spanish learners, as these cognates are spelled slightly differently in Spanish.

Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

This is the most common grammatical error made by Spanish learners. The words most often missed out are *in*, *at* and *on*. The most common errors arise with wrong preposition + noun.

- I have to wake up five hours beforehand to arrive **in at** my job on time.
- They like going abroad **in on** package holidays.
- The traffic is impossible **on at** peak hours.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.



Use of present tenses instead of past tenses (and vice versa)

This is the second most common grammatical error for Spanish learners, and it is high for Spanish learners in comparison to other first languages. The most commonly confused words are *had*, *was* and *would*. *Had* is also overused. There are many different tenses involved.

- I **remember** **I've just remembered** that I have to go to the dentist at 4pm.
- I **buy** **bought** a new bed because the other bed was very old.
- London became my home because I **have** **had** already left mine in Spain.

Using the wrong verb for a particular context

Use of the right verb often depends on a phrase, e.g. “make a decision”. The most commonly confused verbs are *have*, *come* and *go*. The most common mistakes are **go** for **come**, **use** for **wear** and **make** for **do**.

- Trust me, you won't **do** **make** the wrong choice.
- It is her birthday so I want to **do** **have** a party.
- He has to **travel** **commute** five days a week.

Another error which stands out for Spanish learners as opposed to other first languages is use of the wrong verb form, e.g. “I tried **go to go** out into the garden.”

Using the wrong noun for a particular context

The most commonly confused nouns are *time*, *clothes* and *house*, and the most common mistakes are **home** for **house** and **cloth** for **clothes**.

- Suddenly we saw a figure in the **shades** **shadows**.
- I have just moved into another **home** **house**.
- We used to take the bus every day at the same **hour** **time**.

Key: errors in **red**, corrections in **blue**.