



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Arabic

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **before** (for example, spelled **befor**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **intersting**)
- **with** (for example, spelled **withe**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **different** (for example, spelled **diffrent**)
- **restaurant** (for example, spelled **resturant**)
- **friend** (for example, spelled **frind**)
- **beautiful** (for example, spelled **beatiful**)
- **together** (for example, spelled **togather**)

It is very common for learners to confuse *to* and *too*, e.g. "**to** **too** much". Arabic learners also tend to confuse *now* and *know*, e.g. "let me **now** **know**", *thing* and *think* e.g. "I **thing** **think** it's good", and *quite* and *quiet* e.g. "he's very **quite** **quiet**".

Not remembering to include determiners

Determiners are words like *the* and *a/an*, and also *my*, *your*, *their*, etc. They are hard to remember, as there may be more than one in a sentence.

Missing *a/an* and *the* is one of the most common errors made by Arabic learners of English. Although Arabic has a word similar to *the* ("al-"), underuse of *the* is still very common.

- He is **a** very nice friend.
- We had **a** wonderful time during those hours.
- After **the** cinema, we went to the restaurant.
- I can work most of the time in **the** computer centre.

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



Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

Prepositions are very common and can follow nouns, verbs or adjectives, and are followed by noun-like words. They depend on at least one of these surrounding words, so they have to be learned as part of a phrase.

- Ashley and Helen were **in** **at** the party.
- I felt very happy **in** **on** the first day.
- She introduced me **for** **to** the other students.

Confusion between verb forms and tenses

Verb form errors are grammatical errors where the “-ing” form, the “to” form (e.g. “to go”), the base form (e.g. “go”) and the tensed forms (e.g. “came”), are confused and mixed up.

- Can you **came** **come** to dinner tomorrow?
- When the children start **go** **to go** to school at 4 or 5 years old, they do not know how important it will be.
- I’m really looking forward to **hear** **hearing** from you soon.
- Then we will **going** **go** to the sports centre.

Use of the wrong verb in a context or phrase

Arabic learners tend to use *wish* when they should use another verb, and tend to use other verbs when they should use *have*.

- I was thinking you could **make** **have** the party on Saturday night.
- I know that I will **spend** **have** a good time here.
- I **wish** **hope** you enjoy the wedding.
- Some people **do** **have** a wedding party for three days.

Learners often confuse nouns

Some of the most commonly confused nouns for Arabic learners are **home** for **house**, **job** for **work**, and **cloths** for **clothes**. Sometimes a spelling mistake can look like a wrong noun, for example, **litter** instead of **letter**.

- Can you come to my **home** **house** for dinner?
- When I go to **job** **work**, I wear a suit.
- I am working as a manager for a popular **cloths** **clothes** company.

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