Spanish-Speaker Mistakes
Especially for Spanish Speakers

Introduction: Do you know any of the most common mistakes that Spanish speakers make when learning English?

Correcting Mistakes: Take a look at the following ten mistakes and answer the questions.

Yes, I am agree!

The word ‘agree’ is a verb in English, so you can conjugate it like any other (regular) verb!

ex 1. Person A: Carrot cake is much nicer than banana bread. → Person B: Yes, I agree!

ex 2. Tara: I think that we should go to France for our holiday. Do you agree?
   Sam: Yes, I agree that France would be great! Have you spoken to Rachel?
   Tara: Yes, I have. Rachel agrees with the idea, but Hattie disagrees.
   Sam: Hattie disagrees?! I'm surprised. She agreed when we spoke about it originally!

Do you agree with the following sentences?
1. Traffic in my city is a real problem.
2. It's okay to lie if your intentions are good.
3. Chocolate is the tastiest food on the planet.
4. Beach holidays are the best holidays.

I left my smoking in the car!

What did you leave in the car? If it’s on fire, that could be dangerous! Ahh, I know what you mean! In British English, it’s a dinner jacket; in American English, it’s a tuxedo. As a matter of fact, a ‘smoking jacket’ does exist, but it’s a totally different thing: it’s a jacket from the 1850s designed to absorb the smell of tobacco smoke, keeping it off your nice clothes.

There are many words that come from English to Spanish as anglicisms. They can be really useful, and often they’re quite universal. Some examples are ‘bestseller’, ‘OK’, and ‘software’. However, there are a few which will betray you: we don’t really say these words in English, or at least not like they’re used in Spanish! These are pseudoanglicisms. Are you able to put the following sentences right?

1. We parked our car in the parking.
2. We spent our holidays at a camping!
3. You should wear a smoking to the event.
4. I do surf every weekend!
5. Let’s go footing this weekend.
6. Wow, you’re a crack at computer games!
7. Don’t forget to turn on the warnings.
8. Do you think she’s had a lifting?
9. I heard that she was doing playback!
10. The car broke down so we did autostop.
I am from Balenthia.

Sure, “Balenthia” is how it is pronounced in Castilian Spanish, but you really must make an effort to pronounce city names in English, even if those cities are in Spain! Try pronouncing the /v/ much more like an /f/, with your top teeth touching your lower lip. Then, remember our ‘c’ never sounds like our ‘th’ but more like the phoneme /s/ (when it is soft). So, give it a shot: “Valencia”. Now try some more:

1. Madrid
2. Barcelona
3. Seville
4. Zaragoza / Saragossa
5. Murcia
6. Alicante
7. The Canary Islands
8. Andalusia
9. Galicia

The people is crazy!

In fact, people are crazy! The word ‘people’ is the common plural of ‘person’. In some formal and written situations, you can say ‘persons’, but it is not usual. Yes, you can count people! Therefore, people is a plural word, and must be used with ‘are’ and ‘were’ and words such as ‘few’, ‘many’, ‘these’, and ‘those’.

ex 1. How many people are coming to the party? → About 20 people.
ex 2. There were so many people in the city centre this morning; I couldn’t believe it!
ex 3. Who are those people over there by the fountain?

Ask and answer the following questions as a group:
1. How many people live in your city? What about in your country?
2. Do you think people in Spain work too much?
3. Do people in Spain usually go to university?

It’s the birthday of the friend of my daughter.

It might be, and that’s not technically wrong... but it’s really awkward. It’s my daughter’s friend’s birthday. That sounds much better and native speakers will understand you more easily. This is called the Saxon genitive; you’ve heard of it in the past, so let’s put it to use!

Make these phrases less awkward:
1. the dog of the brother of my girlfriend
2. the school of my son
3. the car of the workmate of my cousin
4. the computer of my brother-in-law
5. the newspaper of Thursday
6. the cat of the teacher of Penelope
7. the computer of the girls
8. the husband of the lady next door
Top Mistakes for Spanish Speakers: Part 1
Especially for...

I have forty years.

You might have forty years’ experience in the marketing sector, but you won’t just ‘have forty years’. You have two options: “I am forty years old”, or just “I am forty”.

1. Do you know any celebrities’ ages? How old are they?
2. How old were you when you started studying English?
3. How old do you have to be to receive a state pension in Spain?
4. Do you know how old the oldest person in the world is right now?

I lost the bus.

How did you lose that? It’s enormous! It’s more likely that you missed the bus.

Here’s a trick: if you can have it, you can lose it. So, you can lose your keys, lose your jacket, lose your friends, or lose your job (but we hope not!). If it’s passing, or if you try to catch it, you can miss it. Therefore, you can miss a bus, miss a train, miss your favourite TV programme, or miss someone’s throw.

1. Have you ever lost/missed a flight?
2. Have you ever lost/missed your wallet, only to find it somewhere ridiculous?
3. Have you ever totally lost/missed the point of a conversation?
4. How often do you lose/miss your English class?
5. What do you do to make sure you don’t lose/miss your phone when you go out?
6. What makes you lose/miss trust in someone?

If it helps, you can make a table of the things you can lose and the things you can miss.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>you can lose...</th>
<th>you can miss...</th>
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Top Mistakes for Spanish Speakers: Part 1
Especially for...

It depends on the weather.

Yes, going to the beach does depend on the weather (not ‘of’). The preposition we usually use with ‘depend’ in English is ‘on’. For example, your plants depend on you to water them. However, there are other words you can use with depend: if, whether, who, when, where, how, how much, how many, how often, etc.

Try completing these minidialogues using ‘depend’ and continuing the sentence correctly.

1. Will we go to the beach tomorrow? → Well, it depends...
2. How much food should we buy for the party? → It depends...
3. What time should we go for dinner? → Well, it depends...
4. Is it better to study at home or in a library? → I’d say it depends...
5. How often should I wash my jacket? → It really depends...

I live in eSpain!

You already know that there is no ‘e’ in Spain! If you have trouble with this, try elongating the /s/ sound at the beginning of the word, like ‘ssssssspain’, and then getting quicker and quicker.

Now try repeating the following sentences with your teacher:

1. Stan, stick to the script! 4. Stone Street is close to Spooner Square.
2. Stop snoring and start sleeping! 5. The sky in Spain is spectacular in spring.
3. Don’t slip on the snow! 6. The smelly skunk has stolen my slippers.

Ávila is a walled thity.

It looks silly, doesn’t it: “thity”. It should feel just as silly to say! Even so, we all too often say that “th” sound (phonetically, /θ/) when we see a soft ‘c’ in English. We know it should be /s/. Let’s give it a go:

1. I accept! 5. It’s a simple procedure. 9. He had an accident.
2. It’s in the cellar. 6. Be more specific, please. 10. Follow the circuit.
3. I’m sorry; I need to cancel. 7. I love my bicycle. 11. We study science.
4. I’m working on my biceps! 8. It’s a good policy. 12. What a great success!