



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Dutch

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **successful** (for example, spelled **succesful**)
- **success** (for example, spelled **succes**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **until** (for example, spelled **untill**)
- **pollution** (for example, spelled **polution**)
- **interested** (for example, spelled **intrested**)
- **embarrassing** (for example, spelled **embarrasing**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **very** (for example, spelled **verry**)
- **children** (for example, spelled **childeren**)

It is very common to confuse *to* and *too*, e.g. “**to too** much”. A distinctively Dutch error is to confuse *live* and *life*, e.g. “my whole **live life**”.

Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common grammatical error for Dutch learners is using the wrong preposition collocation. The most frequent prepositions learners miss out are *in*, *to*, *on* and *for*.

- He wanted his team to be the best **of in** the world.
- When I came back **in to** England, my host family told me a parcel had arrived for me.
- Last Friday we had a party **of for** one of my colleagues.
- I am not only writing **for on** my family's behalf, but also on behalf of the whole neighbourhood.

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



Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

This is the third most common grammar/vocabulary error for Dutch learners. A verb is often added where no verb is needed, and the verbs that are most often missed out are *have* and *take*.

- I want to **learn teach** them to listen to other people and take care of everybody.
- I think that it is easier to **make do** exercises in a group than to **make do** them alone.
- This country has decided to make sure that all households **get have** drinkable water.

Conditionals and the present perfect are problematic

Some common problem areas with tenses are conditionals and the present perfect. The most commonly confused verbs are *was*, *could* and *would*.

- My friend told me that you **can could** train me.
- It **will would** be fantastic if there **are were** more trees in the High Street.
- It **has been was** set up by a team of Swiss journalists.
- We **are have been** in business for around 10 years now.

Learners often confuse nouns in set phrases

Dutch learners tend to have more difficulty in this area than speakers of many other languages. Some of the most frequent errors are as follows:

- This problem is solved already because of the two hundred extra parking **places spaces**.
- I am sure that they feel better in the **nature wild** than in a zoo.
- If the reliability decreases, the **amount number** of complaints will increase.

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



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is French

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **company** (for example, spelled **compagny**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **future** (for example, spelled **futur**)
- **tomorrow** (for example, spelled **tomorow**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **interresting**)
- **beginning** (for example, spelled **begining**)
- **very** (for example, spelled **verry**)
- **address** (for example, spelled **adress**)

French learners are comparatively very good at English spelling, perhaps because of the large number of borrowed French words in English.

Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

The biggest error for French learners of English is using the wrong verb. *Make* and *do* are used when other verbs are more suitable, while *have*, *get*, *go* and *do* are most often missed out. *Come* and *go* are commonly confused.

- Finally, could you **make do** me a favour?
- I managed to **do go** scuba diving and windsurfing for only £30.
- It took three hours to **go get** to Woolsey Castle.

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



Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

Preposition errors may depend on verbs, nouns or adjectives either before or after the preposition (shown in bold), so there are a lot of patterns to learn.

- We decided to go to the south of **France** **in to** a small village called Le Grau-du-Roi.
- At first, they were **in on** good **terms** with each other.
- To be **successful** **in at** something is to have a passion.

Modal verbs and the present tense are problematic

There are often problems with modal verbs like *can* and *would*, and also overuse of present tense.

- It **will would** be better to ask for their prices before accepting the proposal.
- You **could can** buy bus tickets at the airport.
- I liked this competition because it **is was** exciting.

Commonly confused nouns

- | | | | |
|------------------------|--------------------|--------------------|-------------------|
| • travel | trip | • job | work |
| • advertisement | advertising | • travel | journey |
| • home | house | • education | upbringing |
| • possibility | opportunity | • amount | number |
| • parking | car park | • work | job |

- If we compare the cost of **advertisement advertising** it is nearly the same.
- You can come to my **home house** at 5pm.
- My father added his own personal ideas to my **education upbringing**.

Finally, a prominent French error is use of **be interesting in** for **be interested in** and **last** for **latest**.

Key: errors in red, corrections in blue.



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is German

Common language errors can vary a lot according to the first language of the learner. When teaching English as a second language to German 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 **accomodation**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **department** (for example, spelled **departement**)
- **interested** (for example, spelled **intrested**)
- **colleagues** (for example, spelled **collegues**)
- **interesting** (for example, spelled **interresting**)
- **programme** (for example, spelled **programm**)
- **decision** (for example, spelled **decission**)
- **sincerely** (for example, spelled **sencereley**)

There is confusion between the verbs **loose** and **lose** and between nouns **costumers** and **customers**.

Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common errors are **in** for **on**, **of** for **for** and **in** for **at**.

- We would like a seminar **in on** the subject of achieving customer service.
- It could be a centre **of for** recreation and tourism.
- The figures are not available **in at** the moment.

Word order

A prominent error that learners make is putting words in the wrong order.

- Yes, I **have also also have** a favourite restaurant.
- We have **a quite quite a** big training room.

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



Conditional and past simple tenses can be easily confused

These tend to involve either conditional patterns (e.g. the second conditional shown below), or tense errors mainly when learners use present simple instead of past simple.

Conditionals:

- It would be perfect if there **are** **were** sockets for our phone chargers.

Non-conditionals:

- There **is** **was** a slight increase during the first week, but it decreased immediately in the next few days.

Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

Make is most often used when other verbs are more suitable, while *have*, *had* and *do* are most often missed out. Contextual words which form phrases are shown in bold.

- What you **make** **do with** your talent is up to you.
- We would like to **make** **have** a training **course** in our building.
- You don't know where to go or you've already **made** **had** bad **experiences**.

Use of the wrong noun in a particular context

The most common nouns learners don't use when they should are *opportunity*, *number* and *advertising*.

- Volunteering gives students a great **possibility** **opportunity** to socialise.
- It depends on the length of the **way** **journey** from home to work or school.
- It was agreed that **advertisement** **advertising** had a direct impact on profits.

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



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Japanese

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **convenient** (for example, spelled **convinient**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recomend**)
- **advertisement** (for example, spelled **advertisment**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **environment** (for example, spelled **enviroment**)
- **disappointed** (for example, spelled **dissappointed**)
- **definitely** (for example, spelled **definatly**)
- **course** (for example, spelled **couse**)
- **atmosphere** (for example, spelled **atomosphere**)
- **opportunity** (for example, spelled **oppotunity**)

Not remembering to include all the determiners

Determiners are words like *the*, *a/an*, and also *my*, *your*, *their*, etc. Determiners are a major problem for languages in the Eastern Hemisphere which tend not to use a word like *the*. They are hard to remember, as there may be more than one in a sentence (shown in bold).

- I called him to ask about fixing **the** TV.
- **The** National Art Gallery and **the** river trip to Greenwich would please them.
- I think it's **a** good idea for us to find a job together.

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



Learners tend to confuse verbs and collocations

The most frequent verbs that learners tend to miss out are *have*, *get* and *go* and the most common errors are using **wish** for **hope** and **can** for **will**.

- Well, I **wish hope** you will enjoy your stay.
- I was disappointed with it so I **would must** ask you for my money back.
- It could **be have** either good or bad effects for them.

Learners tend to make mistakes with prepositions

The most common error is **in** for **on**, while *in* and *for* are the most common prepositions that learners tend to miss out.

- The reasons **of for** the increasing weight (of people) in some countries can be impacted by fast food.
- More than one in five students were enrolled **to for** further study.
- I often used to go out and play with my friend **at in** the countryside.
- The technologies are based **in on** the old history or culture.

A prominent error for Japanese learners is forgetting prepositions. For example “I looked **at** it very carefully”.

Confusion between verb tenses

The most common errors are made when Japanese learners use **would** for **will**, **is** for **was** and **can** for **could**.

- She **is was** not kind to us.
- The sun **is shining shone** very much.
- Please ensure next year’s programme **would will** be great for students.

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



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Korean

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

Learners tend to omit the *n* in words like *government* and *environment*.

- **government** (for example, spelled **goverment**)
- **environment** (for example, spelled **enviroment**)
- **convenient** (for example, spelled **convinient**)
- **modern** (for example, spelled **mordern**)
- **attendance** (for example, spelled **attendence**)
- **recommend** (for example, spelled **recommand**)
- **restaurant** (for example, spelled **resturant**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **accomodation**)
- **nowadays** (for example, spelled **nowdays**)
- **different** (for example, spelled **diffrent**)

Not remembering all the determiners

Determiners include words like *the*, *a/an*, and also *my*, *your*, *their*, etc. Determiners are a major problem for languages in the Eastern Hemisphere which tend not to use a word like *the*.

- There is **a** new coach service to get to Lampton you can use instead of taking **the** train from London.
- I have a TV with **a** video recorder which I bought last year.

Korean speakers are the most likely to add unnecessary determiners to a sentence.

- We walked to **the** Durham Castle and went shopping.

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



Use of the wrong preposition in a particular context or phrase

Preposition errors may depend on the verbs, nouns or adjectives (shown in bold) used either before or after the preposition, so there are a lot of patterns to learn. The most frequently underused prepositions are *in*, *for* and *on*.

- The **reasons** **of** **for** unemployment may be different from country to country.
- The graph shows the **change** **of** **in** TV advertising income.
- 10% of students reside in the boarding house **in** **on** the **campus**.

Use of the wrong verb in a particular context or phrase

The most frequent verbs that Korean speakers tend to miss out are forms of *have*: *has*, *have* and *had*.

- During this century, scientific technology **is** **has** developed.
- All age groups **attending** **going to** the cinema have increased.
- I **wish** **hope** I can help you with your project.

Confusion between verb tenses

The most common errors are made with modals and present/past confusions.

- You must be excited about coming to Korea. I know it **would** **will** be quite different from other countries you've visited.
- The hotel where we stayed **is** **was** very clean.
- We decided to go down as quickly as we **can** **could**.

Key: errors in red, corrections in blue.



COMMON ENGLISH ERRORS

when a learner's first language is Portuguese

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

Words learners most typically spell incorrectly

- **which** (for example, spelled **wich**)
- **comfortable** (for example, spelled **confortable**)
- **beautiful** (for example, spelled **beatiful**)
- **beginning** (for example, spelled **begining**)
- **because** (for example, spelled **becouse**)
- **believe** (for example, spelled **belive**)
- **different** (for example, spelled **diferent**)
- **accommodation** (for example, spelled **acomodation**)
- **together** (for example, spelled **togheter**)
- **always** (for example, spelled **allways**)

Confusion of prepositions in a context or phrase

The most frequently confused prepositions are *in*, *at* and *on*. The top errors are **in** for **at**, **in** for **on** and **on** for **in**.

- She sat **in** the living room with the letter **on in** her hands.
- I would like to apply **to for** the job.
- A person could expect to have a job **in at** that time.

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



Use of the wrong verb in a context or phrase

The most commonly confused verbs are **use** for **wear**, **go** for **come** and **forgot** for **left**. The most frequent verbs that Portuguese learners miss out are verbs are *have*, *wear* and *is*.

- It's going to be hot so try to **use wear** comfortable clothes.
- Can you **go come** to my house?
- I **forgot left** my passport at your house yesterday evening.

A distinctive error that Portuguese learners make is the use of the wrong form of a non-finite verb, e.g. "You can get a bus or taxi **for going to go** to the park". This may also include an incorrect preposition.

Confusion between verb tenses

Portuguese speakers often use the present instead of the past, often in conditionals...

- It would be reasonable if I **have had** at least part of the money refunded.

...or just normal past and present confusion.

- Everybody **like liked** to talk about their problems with him.

Learners often confuse nouns

Some of the most commonly confused nouns include **work** for **job**, **cloth** for **clothes**, or **travel** for **trip**.

- A good person is one who has achieved a good professional level in a **work job** which he or she enjoys.
- The **travel trip** was already paid for.
- I moved to a new **home house** last week.

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



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**.



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**.