



365 CONSEJOS PARA MEJORAR TU INGLÉS

**ELIMINA TU SPANGLISH
Y HABLA COMO UN NATIVO**

DANIEL SMITH

CEO Y FUNDADOR DE DANIEL SMITH + PARTNERS

A portrait of Daniel Smith, a man with short hair and a beard, wearing a dark blue button-down shirt. He is smiling slightly and looking towards the camera. His hands are clasped in front of him, and a watch is visible on his left wrist. The background is a solid dark blue color.

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365 CONSEJOS PARA MEJORAR TU INGLÉS

Elimina tu spanglish y habla como un nativo

by Daniel Smith

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ISBN 978-84-09-05904-1

First Edition

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ÍNDICE

[¿TE SUENA?](#)

[AVISO](#)

[CÓMO USAR ESTE LIBRO](#)

[PREFACE – HABÍA UNA VEZ](#)

[Capítulo 1 - Pan y mantequilla](#)

[Capítulo 2 - Un gin tonic en Londres](#)

[Capítulo 3 - Sonidos que salen pero no deberían](#)

[Capítulo 4 - Si no quieres hacer el ridículo](#)

[Capítulo 5 - En la oficina con tu jefe inglés](#)

[Capítulo 6 - El listo de la clase](#)

[Capítulo 7 - Palabras esquivas](#)

[Capítulo 8 - Preparados, listos, ya](#)

[¿QUIERES MÁS?](#)

[DANIEL SMITH - BIOGRAPHY](#)

This book is dedicated to:

*Elena, Nicolas and Olivia
My parents: Peter and Carmen
and
my great friend Manuel*

*This book would have been impossible without all of you.
Many thanks*

¿TE SUENA?

Ana es una gran profesional y aunque lleva toda la vida intentando mejorar su inglés, tiene la sensación de estar cometiendo errores básicos. A veces traduce directamente del español y ve caras raras en sus interlocutores. Sabe que sigue hablando un poco en spanglish.

Necesita el inglés para avanzar en su carrera profesional, pero no tiene nadie que le corrija. Su jefe inglés no lo va a hacer, la gente a la que escribe correos electrónicos no lo va a hacer y su profesor de inglés no hace más que enseñarle verbos irregulares.

Ana se pregunta cómo puede deshacerse de estos errores y de la sensación de vergüenza si nadie le corrige.

Este libro es una colección de 365 consejos que te ayudarán a descubrir los errores que siempre has cometido desde que te enfrentaste por primera vez a “Begin, Began, Begun”. ¡Transformará tu forma de aprender inglés y te demostrará que tu subconsciente es la fuente de tu spanglish y uno de tus principales enemigos a la hora de aprender inglés!

Puedes leer un consejo cada día, aunque estamos seguros de que te van a resultar tan útiles que no vas a poder leer solo uno.

Así que, ¡siéntate y agarrate fuerte! El viaje será intenso pero fascinante.

AVISO

Este libro está dirigido a estudiantes de inglés de nivel intermedio o avanzado que se desenvuelven bien con el idioma, pero a los que les gustaría poder identificar errores habituales que probablemente estén cometiendo. El núcleo principal del libro está en inglés, aunque intercalado con texto en español para hacer su lectura más dinámica e interesante. Y es que uno de los elementos clave que hay que reforzar cuando se quiere dominar una lengua extranjera es la capacidad de cambiar de un idioma a otro con relativa facilidad. Este libro se ha escrito teniendo esto en cuenta y, por ello, cambia continuamente del inglés al español.

En algunas partes de este libro, para aclarar la pronunciación de algunas palabras, se facilitan transcripciones a fonética española. Estas transcripciones son solo orientativas y aproximadas a la pronunciación en inglés, y se proveen de cara a que sea fácil orientar la pronunciación correcta evitando la complejidad que supondría usar el alfabeto fonético. Para conocer la pronunciación real de las palabras, puedes recurrir a recursos y aplicaciones online que te permiten oír las palabras con su pronunciación real.

CÓMO USAR ESTE LIBRO

Como ya sugiere el título, este libro contiene 365 consejos o trucos que debes intentar entender y memorizar. No se trata de un número arbitrario, sino que ha sido elegido específicamente para ayudarte a marcar un ritmo, si es que lo necesitas. El libro te ofrece la posibilidad de aprender un consejo al día durante todo un año, si quieres hacerlo así. Quizás prefieras estudiar 10 puntos al día o leer de golpe todos los consejos de un mismo capítulo. Tú decides. Tan solo recuerda que el objetivo principal es aplicar estos consejos a tu vida diaria y encontrar la manera de asimilar tanta información como sea posible.

PREFACE – HABÍA UNA VEZ

Every story has a beginning. This is mine.

This book started by chance. I had just signed up to various social networks to see if I could add value in some way, but at the beginning, everything I posted got about 1 or 2 likes if I was lucky! It seemed as if making any real waves on social media would be impossible. I had almost given up when I decided that rather than posting links to third-party content I would create my own and see if it made any difference.

The change was immediate and dramatic. One of my first posts was about a common mistake made by Spanish speakers, and suddenly ten or twenty likes were easily attainable. I was on a roll. I decided to adhere to the adage that "if it ain't broken, don't fix it" and continued with this idea for the next few years. The likes kept coming, and it was great to feel that people were getting value from the posts I was writing.

As time went by, I got a few comments here and there from people asking where they could find all the posts in one place and how they could start learning them. There seemed to be a genuine appetite from my readers to get these posts in their heads so that they could remember them in real life situations.

It was at about this point when the idea for this book popped into my mind and why it is in your hands at this very moment. I have put together 365 posts for you to peruse (examinar detenidamente) and enjoy in whichever way you wish. They are organised into categories so that you can focus on a specific category that might be of more interest to you than others. My overall advice here is to do what is comfortable for you and move forward bit by bit.

So, that is the quick introductory story to this book. The rest is history as they say. I hope you enjoy the tips and they help you on your journey to the English of your dreams.

Remember, that the effort you put in will always be directly correlated to the results that you achieve. Nothing, in life, comes easy. If you want to improve you have to be dedicated, invest in yourself and have a genuine interest in the English language and culture. If you can do that, then the sky is the limit!

So, let's get going! Good luck and, above all, enjoy the journey!

Capítulo 1 - Pan y mantequilla

Basic building blocks

"In English, there is an expression that refers to "bread and butter" (pan y mantequilla). It means "the main or common tasks" of a certain activity. Understanding and having a good grasp of the building blocks of English (or "bread and butter" of English) is vital if you want to be proficient in the language." - Daniel Smith

"OR" AND "OR"

Many Spanish speakers like to use the construction:

■ *"or and or"*

so they say something like:

■ *"Or we can take the train or the bus"*

This is confusing for native speakers even though they probably will still understand you.

To correct this mistake you need to use:

■ *"either"*

So the correct way to say the same sentence is:

■ *"Either we can take the train or the bus"*

DO YOU CONFUSE "HE" AND "SHE"?

This is one the great mysteries of the world. Why do Spanish speakers mix up these two all the time? This is an example sentence that I hear very often in class:

"Yesterday I went with my SISTER to the shops and HE told me that there are some amazing offers at the moment"

When you mix "he" and "she" up it becomes extremely difficult for someone to understand WHO you are talking about. Your English might be brilliant but a native speaker will be completely confused.

I have asked many students why Spanish speakers mix "he" and "she" so often and I have never had a convincing answer!

¿PREGUNTAS EN INGLÉS?

Creating questions in English is one of the hardest things to do for Spanish speakers! I sometimes wonder how often I have corrected people when it comes to questions.

It is important to realise just how vital questions are when it comes to having conversations and when your ability to formulate questions is weak then you are likely to fall into traps very often! The main problem that I have encountered is this:

"Why YOU HAVE done that?"

That type of problem is so common. It is quite complex to give you a full explanation here about why this is wrong but the basic rule in English when you create questions is:

FIRST: "QUESTION WORD" (when, why, what, how etc)

and

SECOND: "AUXILIARY VERB" (do, have, be etc)

So the correct version of the sentence is:

"Why (question word) HAVE (auxiliary verb) YOU done that?"

"SINCE" OR "FOR"?

Spanish speakers often get confused between these two when they are talking about a period of time in the past.

"Since" is used in connection with a date (*fecha*) in the past that can either be specific (19th) or general (month or year).

So, for example, you can say:

"I have been working here since 2007"

"For" is used in a different way! In this case, you need to use a "time period".

So, for example:

"I have been working here for 3 months"

Spanish speakers generally prefer to use "for" rather than "since" but the rule above needs to be used otherwise you will be making a mistake.

¿PHRASAL VERBS EN INGLÉS?

What can I say about these that could help you?

I know you hate them and I can understand that! Really, I can! When I first came to Spain in 2007 I didn't even know what a phrasal verb was!

I hope that confession helps you to understand that the best way to learn phrasal verbs is not from a book!

You need to put yourself in a situation where you hear them day in and day out (*todos los días*). Then gradually you will understand them and use them!

A great way to do this is by listening to podcasts, reading books and watching Netflix in original version with English subtitles.

BEGIN, BEGAN, BEGUN

I guess that all of you recognise:

"begin, began, begun"

because most Spanish speakers know the irregular verbs by heart (*de memoria*).

I assume that lots of you have suffered while trying to remember all the different forms of the irregular verbs because I am sure that it is not easy. To be honest, I think I would find it difficult and boring.

The good news is that it was not a waste (*malgastar*) of time. The past tense is important!

When we coach our students, one of the key aims is to make sure that the student knows how to use the past tense in a natural way!

THE ISSUE OF NUMBERS IN ENGLISH

When I first came to Spain I noticed that you write numbers slightly differently to us in the UK.

When I was walking in the metro I would see an advert for an exotic holiday for 1.820 Euros. If you look at that number from an English perspective it would mean 1,82 Euros!

Wow, very cheap!

Clearly, something was wrong.

Later, I learnt that you write numbers in Spanish differently from how we write them in English.

So, in English, we write:

1,820.30 Euros

which in Spanish would be written:

1.820,30 Euros

The comma and the dot are in different places!

"WILL" OR "GOING TO"

Generally, I try to avoid "pure" grammar tips but in this case, I think it is worth it (*vale la pena*).

The future tense in English is quite easy to deal with and most Spanish speakers can use it easily, which is great!

A common question related to the future tense, however, is when "will" and "going to" should be used. Many people think that one of these forms is for the "close future" (*futuro cercano*) and the other for events that are "further in the future".

This is not, however, the case and the real difference between these two is whether the future event has been planned or not.

So:

will = no plan

going to = plan already in place!

"FOR" OR "DURING"?

Spanish speakers LOVE to use the word "during" but in many cases, it is the wrong word to use.

For example, a common mistake that I hear is something like:

"I was at university during 3 years"

In this case, it is much better to use "for". So, it should be:

"I was at university FOR 3 years"

...much better!

The general rule is that when you are talking about a NUMBER (in this case "3 years") you need to use "for".

If you are talking about something else...for example "the summer holiday", you can use "during".

Example:

"I was in England DURING the summer holiday"

"HOW FAR IS IT...?" OR "HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE...?"

These two questions often cause a lot of confusion for Spanish speakers.

The main thing to remember is that "HOW FAR IS IT?" is always connected to distance (KM) and "HOW LONG DOES IT TAKE?" is always connected to time (hours, minutes, seconds).

So, for example:

"How far is it from Madrid to Barcelona?"

Answer:

"It is 600 km" (The "it is" is very important in this case)

How long does it take to drive from Madrid to Barcelona?

Answer:

"It TAKES 6 hours" (the verb "takes" is important here)

"ED" NO ES TU AMIGO, ¿LO SABES?

A day does not go by without one of my students making this mistake.

Of course, we are talking about the ending of the regular verbs in English. Spanish speakers always read these regular past verbs as they would read it in Spanish, so they pronounce the "ed" every time they see it.

You need to be aware that this is not right. I know this is difficult to remember especially because you have heard your English teacher at school pronounce this wrong for years!

Anyway, remember, when you see "ed" there are four sounds: "t", "d", "id" and "ed".

Here are some examples so that it is clear:

"Wanted" is pronounced "wóntid" [pronunciar en español]

"Fixed" is pronounced "fixt" [pronunciar en español]

"Called" is pronounced "cold" and not "cóled" [pronunciar en español]

WHEN YOU ARE WRITING IN ENGLISH YOU NEED TO USE "AM" AND "PM"

In Spain, it is very common to use the 24 hr clock but in the UK this is quite unusual.

So, when you are writing an email in English you need to use the 12-hour clock.

So, for example:

| *"I will see you tomorrow at 9 am"*

or

| *"We will go for a drink in the pub at 5 pm"*

People will understand what you mean if you put "17:00" in your emails but they will notice that you are not a native English speaker!

And remember, "pub" is not pronounced "paff" [pronunciar en español]

"TO", TE ODIO

Before coming to Spain I had an excellent relationship with the word "to" but now I truly hate it!

I know that it is not good to hate anything and I am sure it is affecting my karma.

The problem here, however, is that the word "to" creates a lot of problems for Spanish speakers and it is specifically difficult for Spanish speakers to remember that some very common verbs should not be followed by "to".

Here are the main culprits:

ASK TO, CALL TO, MUST TO, PHONE TO, SHOULD TO... ALL OF THESE ARE WRONG (in most cases, we will not talk about exceptions here)

So, please be careful with "to".

"DEPENDS OF" NO ES CORRECTO

One of the most difficult things in the English language are collocations. In this particular case, we are talking about collocations between a verb and a proposition which can be tricky (*difícil*).

Spanish speakers love to use the construction:

█ ***"depend of"***

which I think comes mainly from the subconscious connection with the phrase "depende de" in Spanish.

The correct version in English is:

█ ***"to depend on"***

For example:

█ ***"It depends on how many clients we have"***

Capítulo 2 - Un gin tonic en Londres

Socialising, travelling and night-life

"Your ability to socialise in English is probably the best and most accurate test of your skills. It is in this area specifically where Spanish speakers have the most difficulty" - Daniel Smith

RESTAURANT VOCABULARY: "WINE GLASS" or "GLASS OF WINE"?

This can be a bit confusing because in Spanish you say the same thing for both of the expressions above:

■ *"copa de vino"*

If you go to a restaurant you need to say:

■ *"I would like a GLASS OF WINE"*

You cannot use

■ *"wine glass"*

because then you are just asking for the glass but with nothing in it!

DO YOU WATCH SPORT "IN LIVE"?

This is an interesting one that I hear from time to time. Imagine you are watching "El Clásico" and then your friend tells you:

"It is always great to watch football IN live"

As usual, this mistake is because of a direct translation from Spanish:

"en directo"

In English, we do not use the word "in" for these situations.

So, the correct sentence would be:

"It is always great to watch football live"

It is important to highlight that "live" in this context is pronounced like the word "life" as opposed to the way it is said when you are talking about the fact that you "live in Spain"!

"BOYFRIENDS" OR "GIRLFRIENDS"?

I think the problem with these two words originates from the fact that in English you can say something like this:

"I have a friend who lives in Bristol"

This is a completely correct sentence. Spanish speakers will, however, highlight that from this sentence it is impossible to know whether the friend is male or female.

This is true and, in fact, we will not know until the speaker gives us more information.

To solve this problem Spanish speakers like to use the words

"boyfriend" or "girlfriend"

to describe their friends but these words can ONLY be used if you are in a romantic relationship with the person you are describing!

THAT BAR IS "PACKED"

When I first came to Spain I noticed that people spend a lot of time outside, meeting people and having something to eat.

In many ways, it is much more of an outdoor lifestyle than in the UK. I also noticed that many of the bars are completely "packed" (*hasta arriba*) with people and sometimes it is even difficult to get into the bar!

The word "packed" is used when we see a place that is completely full of people and very difficult to get into.

For example:

"This bar is packed, let's try another one"

Most Spanish speakers don't know this use of the word because when they think of the word "pack" the first thing that comes to their mind is the verb: "to pack" which is used when you are:

"packing your suitcases"

DO YOU SAY: "GIN TONIC"?

This is interesting (not curious, Spanish speakers use curious too much) because when I first came to Spain gin was just starting to become a more popular drink but now it's one of the most fashionable (not fashion, fashion is just for clothes) drinks around.

The reason why I am highlighting this drink is that I noticed very quickly that Spanish speakers say: "Gin Tonic" which to be honest is fine but it might be interesting for you to know that in the UK we say:

█ ***"Gin AND tonic"***

The thing is that we often say it so fast that it sounds like this:

█ ***"Gin n Tonic"***

So, remember if you really want to sound like a native speaker you have to order your drink saying:

█ ***"Can I have a gin n' tonic, please?"***

"SMALL TALK" IS SO IMPORTANT

Do you have any idea what "small talk" is?

Most Spanish speakers try to guess what this means but in general, they find it quite hard. "Small talk" is often used in a business context because it is useful when you meet someone for the first time.

Generally "small talk" focuses around very generic subjects like the weather, the traffic and football. These are chosen by most people as subjects for "small talk" because most of the time people will have some knowledge about them and therefore can respond easily.

"Small talk" is often used when you are in the lift or at the start of meetings when people don't really know what to say to each other.

In the UK, the best subject for "small talk" is the weather because it changes so often during the day that it is never a dull subject.

HOW DO YOU SAY "PUB" EN INGLÉS?

This is an interesting issue because many Spanish speakers that I know don't pronounce "pub" correctly.

Most Spanish speakers say:

"paff" [pronunciar en español]

Can any of you tell me why this is the case?

English is often very difficult to pronounce because it does not relate to the way it is written but in this case, "pub" is pronounced "pab" [pronunciar en español] with an emphasis on the "b" at the end.

An interesting anecdote about the word "pub" is that it is an abbreviated version of "public house" which of course means:

"a house that has public access"

Remember when you go into a pub and you want to have a beer, you need to order a "pint" which is pronounced:

"páint" [pronunciar en español]

"AZAFATA" IN ENGLISH?

I really love travelling and so do most of my students, so often we end up (phrasal verb) talking about a variety of things connected to the process of travelling (be careful with trip/travel because many Spanish speakers get this wrong).

One of the words that most of my students do not know how to say is "azafata" in English.

In fact, they can't even find a spanglish version. In many ways, the translation of "azafata" into English is interesting because it has changed over the years as society has changed.

Originally, the translation was "air hostess" because the majority of these jobs were taken by women (pronounced: wímin [pronunciar en español]).

As times have changed, we now have new names for this type of role and they include: "flight attendant", "steward", "cabin crew".

TO GET ON THE PLANE I USE... "THE FINGER"!?

When I first heard this I wasn't sure what to think. In English, we have the expression "to give someone the finger" (which is rude) so that was the first thing that popped into my head but as I continued to ask questions about "the finger" I started to understand that it was, in fact, a piece of equipment to help passengers get on and off a plane.

Not being very knowledgeable about airport infrastructure, I was not exactly sure how to refer to this correctly in English.

After doing a bit of research (*investigación*) I found out that the correct way to talk about "the finger" in British English is:

| *"air bridge"*

"ZAPPING"? WHAT IS THAT?

This is another Spanish invention.

"Zapping" doesn't really exist in English.

If you use it in Spain everyone will understand you but native English speakers will be confused. The best alternative to use instead of "zapping" is:

█ *"channel hopping" (UK)*

or

█ *"channel surfing" (US)*

For example:

█ *"I am channel hopping because I can't find anything that is interesting to watch"*

"BINGE DRINKING" QUÉ ES?

This word gives me the opportunity to introduce you to the "great" British tradition of drinking alcohol in large quantities in a short period of time!

Those of you who have travelled to the UK and gone out at night will have experienced this, I am sure.

The word "binge" is mostly used in connection with drinking but can also be used with regard to TV series. With services like Netflix, it is now possible to "binge" on a TV series.

In other words, this means that you watch a whole series in a very short period of time.

Interestingly, I have never really noticed any "binge" drinking here in Spain which definitely is a good thing!

Of course, I am aware of the famous "botellón" but that is slightly different because it has an economic objective!

THIS BAR HAS A VERY GOOD "AMBIENCE"

Although the word "ambience" does exist in English, I always consider it a little bit spanglish because it is so close to the Spanish word "ambiente".

Despite the fact that it is possible to use it in English, it is not commonly used and therefore I would recommend using "atmosphere" instead. So, for example:

"There is a nice atmosphere in this restaurant"

There are other options as well such as "vibe":

"This place has got a good vibe"

I AM GOING TO SEE A "SPECTACLE" TONIGHT AT THE THEATRE

In their enthusiasm to tell you about their exciting plans many Spanish speakers fall into the trap of using the word "spectacle" which, although it does exist in English, is rarely used in this context.

Native speakers are much more likely to use words such as "show" or "performance".

So, for example:

| *"The performance was wonderful, it was very entertaining"*

or

| *"The show tonight will be amazing"*

Another important point to mention here is that if you insist on using the word "spectacle", a native speaker can easily confuse it with the word "spectacles" which means "gafas"!

¿QUÉ ES "LIQUID ENGLISH"?

Have you ever noticed that your English gets a lot better when you drink a few glasses of wine? In English teacher circles (*en el entorno profesional de los profesores de inglés*) we call this "Liquid English".

Interestingly, this is entirely normal. Although you might think that this is a false perception because you are a little bit tipsy (*un poco borracho*) the truth is, that people probably DO perform better in a foreign language when they've had a little to drink because they feel less inhibited and are not so worried about making mistakes.

So, the next time you go out for a few drinks check it out and see how good your liquid English is!

¿UN "PLATO UNÍCO" EN INGLÉS?

There is a big temptation for Spanish speakers to use

| *"unique plate"*

to translate this expression. I have heard it hundreds of times.

In fact, the whole area around dining can be a bit difficult because the translations are quite different to the words used in Spanish.

In this case, the best option is to use:

| *"main course" or "main dish"*

For example:

| *"What are you going to have for main course?"*

or

| *"The main course was very nice"*

IN AN ENGLISH PUB: "¡HOLA, QUIERO UN OSO!"

There is no getting away from the fact that the words "beer", "bear" and "beard" are pronounced very similarly.

It seems obvious for a native speaker, but they are hard for Spanish speakers. "Beer" and "bear" are often confused, and therefore you get the strange situation where the bartender is wondering whether you really want a "bear"!?

Try to practice these words with your English teacher.

You need to get to the point where it feels very natural.

¿POR QUÉ TIENEN LOS INGLESES MOQUETA EN EL BAÑO?

This is one of the mysteries of the world and even I don't understand it. I always try to use a conversational style in my classes and at one point the inevitable question arises:

"Why do English people have carpet in the bathroom?... It's not hygienic!"

Lots of my students have been to the UK to improve their English and one of the things that shocks them is the "carpet situation".

Some have even told me that they stayed in houses where there was carpet in the kitchen!

So, how can I explain this phenomenon? Well, like many things, it is cultural and I think that the fact that the UK is a cold country has a lot to do with it. As I am sure you know the UK is a country of tea drinkers and the reason we drink so much tea is that it warms us up!

The same theory can be applied to the carpet in the bathroom! After a shower you don't want to get out onto a cold floor, so, carpet is required.

Capítulo 3 - Sonidos que salen pero no deberían

How to pronounce words that you think you can say...but can't

"I wish English was like Spanish...I really do. The logical nature of the Spanish language and how to pronounce the words is a joy. English is... different." - Daniel Smith

DO YOU LIKE "DESSERTS"?

Spanish speakers often get confused between the words:

"dessert" and "desert"

This is especially the case in terms of pronunciation.

First of all we will focus on meaning.

"Dessert" = "postre" and a good way to remember the spelling is that generally people always want more "dessert" and that is why it has TWO S'. The meaning of "desert" is "desierto".

In terms of the pronunciation "dessert" is pronounced:

"diséet" [pronunciar en español]

while "desert" is pronounced:

"déseet" [pronunciar en español]

Quite complex, I guess, but still worth knowing, especially when you often go to business lunches and dinners.

"STEAK" OR "STICK"?

Many Spanish speakers find English words difficult to pronounce and this is an example.

Imagine you go into a very posh (*pijo*) restaurant and you think to yourself that you would like to have a very nice

"filete de ternera"

So, the waiter comes and asks you what you want and you say

"I would like your very best STICK"!

This mistake is VERY common.

"Stick" means "palo" so you are asking for a "PALO" in a posh restaurant! You need to get this right, the correct way to say "steak" is like this:

"Stéik" [pronunciar en español]

HOW CAN A PIECE OF "WOOD" HELP YOU SPEAK ENGLISH?

The answer is that it can't help you much but if you can pronounce the word

█ *"wood"*

then that is VERY useful because LOTS of Spanish speakers find this sound very difficult.

In my first year here in Spain I tried to teach one of my students how to say "wood" but it became very obvious that it was going to be impossible for him.

The reason it's so difficult is because you do not have the "w" sound in Spanish and it's very difficult to learn at a later stage.

In fact, it is very famous that you can only get the pronunciation of a language correct if you start learning the language at an early age.

ARE YOU A "PRIVATE" PERSON?

The British are generally more "private" than the Spanish. Spanish speakers are generally very open and talkative which is wonderful.

The word "private" often causes Spanish speakers a few problems, however. The problem in this case is pronunciation.

Most Spanish speakers say:

"private" [pronunciar en español]

The correct way to say this is:

"práivet" [pronunciar en español]

You might think that this type of small pronunciation issue is not that important which, in a way, I would agree with, but many Spanish speakers are misunderstood, or not even understood at all, just because of small pronunciation mistakes!

DO YOU HAVE A "MORTGAGE"?

Spanish speakers often struggle when they need to find the translation for "hipoteca".

If they do remember the word then they normally have problems pronouncing it because they say the word exactly how it is written:

"morTgage"

The problem with this is that the "t" in this word is completely silent so we pronounce it like this:

"móóguech" [pronunciar en español]

Interestingly, the word "mort" is death in French which probably means that we will all have our mortgages until death!

IN THE FUTURE "MACHINES" WILL RULE THE WORLD!

The word "machines" always seems to be difficult for Spanish speakers to pronounce. Most of the time they like to say it like this:

| *"machíns" [pronunciar en español]*

This would be logical if English was a language where every word was pronounced like it is spelt, but unfortunately English isn't like that.

The correct pronunciation for this word is:

| *"mashíns" [pronunciar en español aspirando la 'h']*

and uses the same sound as "mashed potatoes" (*puré de patatas*).

"ISLAND" OR "ICELAND"?

Many Spanish speakers get the pronunciation of "island" wrong.

Instead of saying "island" they say:

█ ***"ICEland"***

which of course is a country!

When you want to say "island" you need to pronounce it like an apple product:

█ ***"i-Land"***

So, it sounds like:

█ ***"Ailand" [pronunciar en español]***

DO YOU SAY: "saLmon"?

Most Spanish speakers like to pronounce English words exactly how they see them on the page. This would be wonderful if it worked but English is not a very nice language in terms of pronunciation.

Unlike in Spanish, when you see a word written in English and you try to say it, there is no guarantee that you will say it correctly. This is the case for people who are learning English and native speakers as well.

For this reason it is always important to approach a new English word with some level of care! The word we are looking at here is "salmon" which is a good example to show where most Spanish speakers make a mistake. Spanish speakers see this word and think:

"OK I am going to say that word exactly as it is written, just like in Spanish!" "saLmon"

The problem, in this case, is that the "L" is COMPLETELY silent. The way native speakers say this word is:

"sá-men" [pronunciar en español]

HOW DO YOU SAY "WIFI"?

Clearly, these days, WiFi is one of those things that we can't live without. We need it! As many posts on social media show, it is at the base of our modern day Maslow hierarchy of needs!

While this is a joke, we now want to be connected at home, in the hotel, in a bar and in the airport. So, if we need it so much, can we say it properly?

How do you pronounce "WiFi"?

Most Spanish speakers pronounce it just like it is written which is fine if you are living in Spain but if you go on a business trip to the UK, you need to pronounce "WiFi" as:

"uáifái" [pronunciar en español]

If you say "WIFFY" in the UK, people will just be confused.

Capítulo 4 - Si no quieres hacer el ridículo

Mistakes that make me laugh

"Making mistakes is something you should encourage yourself to do as a way of improving your language skills exponentially. The alternative routes are far less intuitive and significantly more tedious. Mistakes should be welcomed even if they are funny for others sometimes." - Daniel Smith

THIS IS A CLASSIC: "COOK" or "COOKER"

Many Spanish speakers go into a restaurant and they start talking about how good the "cooker" is.

This is very confusing for native speakers because a "cooker" in English is the appliance that heats the food (gas cooker, electric cooker etc.).

If you want to talk about the person who is cooking the food then you need to say:

█ *"the cook"*

or

█ *"the chef"*

**DO YOU NEED TO THINK WHEN
YOU TALK ABOUT A "CHICKEN"
OR A "KITCHEN"?**

This is a classic and can be very funny when a Spanish person is speaking at FULL SPEED and then suddenly they want to talk about their "chicken" and how modern it is and the fact that it is the best room in the house.

Any reason why this is confusing for Spanish speakers? Is it just because they are quite similar words?

HOW DO YOU SAY "CARPETA" IN ENGLISH?

So, imagine you are in a business meeting speaking in English and it is going very well and you are happy with your performance because you are understanding everything and everyone seems to be understanding you.

Wonderful.

Then someone asks you if you have a very important PDF file and you search in your computer and say:

"Ahhhh yes I have it, I think it is in this CARPET"!

Of course, this is spanglish and you might think that no one has said this before but believe me, they have!

The meaning of "carpet" in English is, of course, "moqueta"!

So, how do you say "carpeta" in English?

Answer: "folder".

ARE YOU "STRESSING"?

This is a common mistake and often is used like this:

"My work is very stressing"

The correct way to say this is:

"My work is very stressful"

If you remember this then most of your mistakes with this word will be resolved. If you are talking about your feelings then you can use another option which is:

"I feel very stressed this week because my boss is in the office all the time"

ARE YOU "HUNGRY" OR "ANGRY"?

This can be very confusing and I have heard this many many times so it is worth taking some time to think about it.

For some reason, Spanish speakers get "hungry" and "angry" mixed up. Most of the time it is easy to tell from the context what the speaker wants to say.

For example:

| *"It is 2 o'clock I am very angry!"*

Clearly the person here wanted to say "hungry". When you want to say "hungry" you need to focus on the first letter of the word when you pronounce it.

ARE YOU "BUSY" OR DO YOU NEED A "BUS"?

This is a pronunciation issue because when most Spanish speakers want to say that they are "busy" they say it like this: "bus-y".

This is not correct and will confuse a native speaker.

As usual with English you cannot trust the spelling of the word to tell you how to pronounce the word. In this case the correct pronunciation of the word is:

"bíssi" [pronunciar en español]

"SOUP" OR "SOAP"?

This is something the Spanish speakers often confuse and it is important that you remember the correct meaning.

So, the classic mistake is this:

- *"What would you like for first course?"*
- *"I would like some SOAP"! Jabón?*

So, just to make it very clear:

SOUP=SOPA and SOAP=JABÓN.

Notice in the question the person uses "first course". This is a better version than lots of Spanish speakers use which is "first plate" (a direct translation from Spanish).

To be honest, you cannot really use the expression "first plate" because "plate" is almost always used to refer to the physical object that you eat your food on.

NEVER SAY "PAN BIMBO" or "BIMBO BREAD" IN THE UK

This is an interesting fact that many Spanish speakers don't know. I was very surprised when I arrived in Spain for the first time and noticed that one of the most famous brands of bread is called:

"Bimbo"

When you are speaking English it is best to avoid using the word "bimbo" because in English it means:

"A young woman who is considered to be attractive but not intelligent" (!)

"GUY" OR "GAY"?

Sometimes in English you need to be very careful about the way that you pronounce words and this is a good example (there are many others as well).

I have sometimes gone into a class and a student will tell me:

"I met some great gays at the weekend"

This might be true and absolutely fine but in most cases I know that in the student's mind they have the word "guys" but they pronounce it as "gay".

So, you need to be careful with your pronunciation!

Just to be very clear:

Guy = tío/chico, Gay = homosexual

"YALE" OR "JAIL"?

One day, I was speaking with one of the managers and she told me, out of the blue (*de repente*), that her daughter was in jail! I was shocked about this and, to be honest, did not know what to ask next.

The obvious thing to ask was why her daughter had ended up in jail but I thought that probably would not be appropriate. So instead, I tried to change the subject, hoping that she would be happy to speak about something else.

I had no luck, however, and she continued to provide more details about the situation up until the point that she said:

"Jail is one of the best universities in the US"

Suddenly, the penny dropped (I understood) and I realised that she was speaking about "Yale" not "jail".

What is the lesson from this story? Be careful when you are pronouncing the "y" and the "j" in English because there is a difference even though it's sometimes difficult to hear.

WHAT IS "FROM LOST TO THE RIVER"?

When I first came to Spain I did quite a lot of intensive courses and they were very enjoyable because you get to know many Spanish speakers and they tell you all about Spanish culture and traditions which is very interesting.

There were, however, a few moments when the Spaniards were laughing about something and, to be honest, I had no idea why they found a specific sentence so funny (*gracioso*).

Gradually I started to notice that this sentence was repeated again and again as something funny so in the end I thought it would be worth (*vale la pena*) investigating it.

The sentence, of course, was: "From lost to the river" which as a native speaker makes no sense at all. Only much later did I know that it was a direct translation of "de perdidos, al río".

If you try to find the correct translation of "de perdidos, al río" google-translate will tell you that it is: "lost to the river"!

So, generally I would suggest avoiding google-translate! The closest thing that we have to this expression is:

"in for a penny, in for a pound"

ARE YOU A "CRACK" AT ENGLISH?

Although the word "crack" might seem like an English word, native speakers do not use it in the same way as the Spanish do.

In Spain, you might hear:

"That football player is a crack"

but this form is not used like this in English. Instead, you would hear something like: "He is an amazing/incredible football player".

We use "crack" as a verb:

"To crack a mirror"

or

"To crack a mathematical problem".

Another way to use it is:

"It was a cracking party!"

which means something is amazing.

"THE MILK"

Interestingly, the Spanish use "la leche" in a whole variety of ways and I am not going to try to translate all the different forms of "la leche" in this post because I will run out of space.

Here, I will just focus on the "leche" that means "amazing/the best". Although you could translate "la leche" as simply "the best", a better translation is an English expression:

"THE BEE'S KNEES"

which is used from time to time and although sounds somewhat strange is a great way to talk about something that is outstandingly good!

"ESTOY FLIPANDO" IS NOT "I AM FLIPPING"

It is a little difficult to translate the exact idea of "estoy flipando" into English. One of the main problems is that there are probably two versions (an American version and a British version).

The British version is:

| *"flipping out"*

Remember, it is very important to include the preposition "out" because if you just say "I am flipping" that would be a little strange and people would find it difficult to understand, especially because the verb "to flip" means to turn something over. The American version is:

| *"I am freaking out"*

¿"DÍA DE LOS INOCENTES" EN INGLÉS?

"El día de los inocentes" in Spain is on the 28th December but what is this day called in English? Do you know? Well, in fact we have a very similar day in England but it is not in December.

It is called:

| *"April Fools' Day"*

and it's on 1st April.

The tradition on that day is that most newspapers publish a false story that is quite unbelievable.

A "fool" in this case is someone who believes anything they hear but more historically it was a clown that acted and entertained a royal or noble household!

SORRY TO "MOLEST" YOU... NO, DON'T SAY THAT!

Here, in Spain, I hear the expression "disculpe por las molestias" almost daily but I also worry that some Spanish speakers will take that phrase and make a spanglish version of it.

If you use "Sorry to molest you" in the UK it could get you into serious hot water (*problemas*).

The reason why it might cause you problems is that, in English, the word "molest" means "to abuse someone sexually".

Yes, definitely something you want to avoid saying! So, what are the alternatives?

Well, the most common way to express this is:

"Sorry to bother you" or "Sorry to disturb you"

ARE YOU A "POLLO DE PRIMAVERA"?

I used this expression once with my in-laws (*familia politica*) and they all seemed to find it quite amusing so I thought I would share it with all of you.

Although a "pollo de primavera" makes no sense in Spanish, in English "spring chicken" is something you say to someone when you think they are very young.

So, for example:

"You are only 20 years old!... you are a spring chicken in comparison to me!"

I used this expression in a small speech that I gave and the only thing that people remembered after I had spoken was the reference to the "pollo de primavera" = "spring chicken" = alguien joven.

"BITCH" OR "BEACH"?

For some reason it is quite difficult for Spanish speakers to differentiate between "bitch" and "beach".

I think it is partly because Spanish speakers find the long "e" sound unnatural. In many ways, it is the same reason why Spanish speakers find the words "employee" or "colleague" difficult to say.

So, what is my advice in this case? Well, make sure that you use the long "e" sound when you say "beach" and then you will be fine. So, it needs to be:

"biiich" [pronunciar en español]

The word "bitch" (*que, por cierto, NO significa prostituta*) is pronounced with a short and quick "i" sound, like "kitchen".

¿UN PUEBLO EN INGLATERRA QUE SE LLAMA "BRUJA VERDE"?

There is a very famous town in the UK called "Greenwich". It is a great place to visit because you can get there easily from central London and you can go by boat along the Thames which makes it even more memorable.

Anyway, I am not a tourist guide so let's get back to the main issue: spanglish mistakes!

When Spanish speakers see the name of this town they always say: "Green Witch" which is logical but incorrect because if a native speaker heard you they would think about a "bruja verde".

So, to improve your pronunciation you need to say:

| *"Grínich" [pronunciar en español]*

DO YOU KNOW WHO "JOE BLOGGS" IS?

If you know what "Joe Bloggs" means then I assume that you have a high level of English. It is not something that many English teachers teach but nonetheless is useful because you will hear native speakers use it from time to time (*de vez en cuando*). "Joe Bloggs" is used to describe an "average or typical man". The American version of this is: John Doe!

So, for example:

"We need to make this advertising easy to understand so that Joe Bloggs can understand it"

or

"This equipment is very exclusive, it is not something that Joe Bloggs would buy"

Do you have a "Joe Bloggs" in Spanish?

"¿ME ESTÁS TOMANDO EL PELO?" EN INGLÉS

This is such a common expression that I guess many of you know how to say this in English? The expression that we use has no connection to "hair" but does use another body part!

Have you guessed it?

Google translate opts for "Are you kidding me?" which is probably used slightly more in the US.

In the UK, we use the classic:

"Are you pulling my leg?"

¿"ME IMPORTA UN PEPINO" EN INGLÉS?

This is an expression that I only learnt recently, and in fact, I think I heard it on the radio. I found it quite interesting because it gives rise to the question about why Spanish speakers don't think "pepinos" are important!

In the UK, cucumbers (*pepinos*) are very important and always have been so because we make cucumber sandwiches which are a vital part of the English diet (*jaja*).

Anyway, getting back to the expression: the obvious translation would be "I don't care", but a more interesting version would be "I don't give two hoots".

For example:

"I don't give two hoots about what you think"

There are other slightly more aggressive alternatives to this, but I will leave those up to you!

¿CUÁL ES LA DIFERENCIA ENTRE "PANTS" (UK) Y "PANTS" (US)?

If you have been watching any US TV shows in original version, I am sure that you have heard the word "pants" several times. In the US "pants" means "pantalones" which is fine.

The only problem here is that if you go to the UK and ask a shop assistant for "pants", they will take you to the underwear section because "pants" in the UK means "calzoncillos".

So be careful!

¿CÓMO SE DICE "DIVERTIDO" Y "GRACIOSO" EN INGLÉS?

Spanish speakers get confused with funny and fun all the time. In an overall sense, I am sure that they know the difference, but it is one of those things that you can get wrong because you are speaking in full flow and are not thinking that much.

(By the way, I don't think these types of mistakes are very serious, and in fact, I would prefer you to speak in full flow rather than be worried about making mistakes.)

The usual mistake that is made is the use of "funny" rather than fun. So, Spanish speakers say something like:

█ *"The meeting was funny".*

Normally, at this point, I know that something has gone wrong because it is very rare for a meeting to be "funny". It might have been "fun" but is quite unlikely that the meeting was "funny".

So, just remember, "fun"="divertido" and "funny"="gracioso".

¿CÓMO SE DICE "CONSTIPADO" EN INGLÉS?

This is a classic and something that I learnt very early when I came to Spain. Of all the false friends this is the most famous one because of its comic nature!

So, I am sure you can guess what is coming! There is, as usual, always a temptation for Spanish speakers to use the spanglish version of certain words and "constipado" is a good example of this.

The spanglish version is:

"Oh, I feel terrible today, I am constipated!"

Well...that is fine, but it is too much information for your English teacher! Especially, when you consider the fact, that "constipated" means "estreñido" in English. The word that you need to use rather than "constipated" is: "I feel ill" or "I'm not feeling well" among others.

So, please, be careful!

Capítulo 5 - En la oficina con tu jefe inglés

Business and professional life

"In an increasingly globalised world, your ability to speak English well will open doors and give you more opportunities. There is no magic involved with business English, all it represents is a new set of vocabulary." - Daniel Smith

"WIN" OR "EARN"?

Many Spanish speakers use the verb "win" in the wrong context because they translate from Spanish where most of the time the verb "ganar" is used.

In English, you need to use "win" when you are talking about a competition or the lottery for example.

One of the most common mistakes is when people say:

"He has changed jobs and now he wins a lot of money".

This is incorrect because anything connected with your salary you need to use "earn".

So, the correct sentence is:

"He has changed jobs and now he earns a lot of money".

"BOSS" OR "BOX"?

When Spanish speakers talk about their "boss" they say it in such a way that it often sounds like "box" (*caja*).

It is important to try to correct this because when you are talking to native speaker they may misunderstand you.

So, when you are talking about your "boss" you need to pronounce it just as you would if you read it in Spanish:

"Bósss" [pronunciar en español]

WHAT IS THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "CAREER" AND "DEGREE"?

There is often a lot of confusion for Spanish speakers about these two words.

In general Spanish speakers like to use "career" a lot because it is like "carrera" in Spanish but it is a false friend because "career" in English means everything that you have done professionally after you finished your education.

If you want to talk about the subject that you studied at university then you need to use the word:

| *"degree"*

"RELIABLE"

This is a word that even high level students don't understand immediately.

An example sentence is:

| *"My car is very reliable because I never have any problems with it"*

The translation of "reliable" is "fiable".

DO YOU KNOW WHAT "ABROAD" MEANS?

This is a word that can be used in business contexts because people often travel to other countries. The word "abroad" means any country other than the one that you are living in.

So, for example:

| *"Paco is abroad at the moment"*

This means that Paco is not in Spain (assuming that we are located in Spain) and that he is in a different country but we are not being told which country.

The translation into Spanish is:

| *"fuera de España"*

DO YOU HATE CONFERENCE CALLS IN ENGLISH?

If you hate conference calls in English you are not alone.

The majority of Spanish speakers don't like them and there are some good reasons for this: A telephone conversation in a foreign language is much more difficult than a face to face conversation because there is a lot of "information" that is missing such as gestures and expressions.

The key to successful conference calls is checking your understanding with the other caller and not being afraid to ask them to repeat information if necessary.

ARE YOU "HEALTHY" OR "WEALTHY"?

Most Spanish speakers know the word "healthy" but they get confused with the word "wealthy" because they think they are the same or similar.

They have very different meanings though. "Healthy" means "saludable" and "wealthy" means "rico".

So, for example:

"He is a very wealthy man who has built a business empire"

I hope all of you are both "healthy" and "wealthy"!

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "LA COMPETENCIA" IN ENGLISH?

This is used in business contexts all the time yet many Spanish speakers get it wrong. Spanish speakers say "competence" which means something completely different.

So, when you want to say "la competencia" you need to use the expression: "the competition".

Example:

"The competition in this sector is very high!"

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SPELL YOUR EMAIL ADDRESS IN ENGLISH?

This is a great test for Spanish speakers because most of the time they find it very difficult.

If the address contains an "A", "E" or "I" then I can almost guarantee that most Spanish speakers will make a mistake at one stage.

One of the other key traps with this test is whether you know how to say "@" in English?

It is NOT EVEN CLOSE to "arroba".

Answer:

█ @ = "at"

"GROW UP"

This is an interesting one because many Spanish speakers get confused with it. To "grow up" can only be used in connection with a person.

So for example:

"I grew up in London"

or

"Where did you grow up?"

Spanish speakers sometimes use it in connection with businesses, objects, plants, etc. but all these are wrong because you can **ONLY** use "grow up" when you are asking someone specifically about where they spent their childhood/adolescence or telling them about where you grew up.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "ACCIONISTA" IN ENGLISH?

Most Spanish speakers don't know how to say "accionista" in English. It is not an easy one to remember and most people will not use it very much but it is worth looking at quickly.

The translation of "acciones" is "shares".

Most of you will know this word in the verb form "to share" which means "compartir" but in this case it obviously has a different (although connected) meaning. So do you know how to translate "accionista" into English?

Answer:

"Shareholder"

HE IS "THE RESPONSIBLE" FOR SALES AND MARKETING"

This is spanglish and I am sure most of you have said this at one stage because it is SO common. The key mistake here is the use of the article "the".

In Spanish you say: "El responsable" so when Spanish speakers speak in English they like to say "THE RESPONSIBLE".

The correct version of this is:

"He is responsible for sales and marketing"

or even better:

"He is the manager of sales and marketing"

HOW DO YOU SAY "BENEFICIOS" IN ENGLISH?

This is a word that invites Spanish speakers to make a mistake. Lots of people would say "benefits" but that is wrong.

In English we use "benefits" to talk about the potential positive elements connected with a particular person, project or acquisition. If you want to talk about "beneficios" in English you need to say "profit".

For example:

Our "profit" this year is great

Notice that we use it in the singular form rather than plural.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "BAJA POR MATERNIDAD" IN ENGLISH?

When you are absent from work we often use the word: "leave".

So, the direct translation for "baja por maternidad" is:

| *"maternity leave" (!)*

Maternity leave varies considerably from country to country. Do you think women are given enough maternity leave in Spain?

HOW TO USE THE WORD "PRESUPUESTO" IN ENGLISH

In Spanish the word "presupuesto" can be used in two different situations:

1. When you have some money to spend

or

2. When you are asking how much a service might cost (*clases de inglés, por ejemplo*).

In English, this is different. For the first one you need to use: "budget".

For example:

"The budget for training this year is 100,000 Euros"

The second one is "quote".

For example:

"Can you give me a quote for an intensive English course?"

"RESEARCH AND DEVELOPMENT" IS VITAL FOR A GROWING BUSINESS!

When I ask Spanish speakers how to say "I+D" in English often they are not sure. High level students might know the answer but most of the time there is silence.

The word "development" is probably a bit easier to know but the translation of "investigación" is often difficult to translate for Spanish speakers.

So, remember:

"Investigación y desarrollo" (I+D) = "Research and Development" (R+D).

HOW OFTEN ARE YOU PAID?

For some reason, when Spanish speakers speak about things that happen every month they like to use the word: "mensual" which does not exist in English. So for example they say: "You should send us a "mensual invoice".

When Spanish speakers say this it always reminds me of the phrase "menstrual cycle" or "menstrual pains". So, if you want to get this right then you need to use:

"You should send us a MONTHLY invoice"

or

"You should send us an invoice every month"

In the end, it is quite easy because you just need to remember the word: "month".

WHAT ARE THE "HEADQUARTERS"?

"Headquarters" is a word that quite a few Spanish speakers don't know. Higher level students probably know it but it is less likely that beginners or intermediate students know what it means.

Just to explain it quickly: The headquarters of a company is the place where the main directors and the CEO (chief executive officer) are located.

It is also where all the main decisions and strategy for the company take place.

WHO IS THE "COMMERCIAL"?

Sales (*ventas*) remain a vital element for all companies and the international element to this aspect is becoming increasingly important.

When I hear Spanish speakers speak about an individual who works in a sales department they often say:

"Who is the commercial?" or "Can I speak to the commercial?"

This is not correct and is an obvious translation from Spanish. The way you need to ask for someone in the sales department is: "Can I speak to a sales representative?" or "sales rep".

The general meaning of "commercial" in English is related to commerce and can be used to mean "advert" especially in the US. It can also be used as an adjective such as: "commercial area" or "commercial district" which describes a zone where commerce takes place.

UN "HUG"

Running a business in Spain is an interesting adventure and it means that you can get to meet many people who REALLY REALLY want to improve their English. It is great to teach people who are motivated and want to learn. By teaching so many people, after a while, you get to know the common mistakes that people make both spoken and written.

One interesting mistake that I have noticed is that Spanish speakers sometimes put the word "hug" at the end of their emails. I always thought that this was quite nice and they were just being affectionate but now I know that this is an exact translation of "abrazo" in Spanish.

Using the word "hug" or "hugs" at the end of an email is not completely wrong but it is certainly not a good idea to use this word in a business context. If the person you are writing to is a very good friend or family member then it is fine but otherwise I would avoid using this sign off in your emails.

TOP TEN WORDS FOR RR.HH. EN INGLÉS!

Last week we interviewed a CANDIDATE for a new POST in our company. During the INTERVIEW process we discussed a variety of issues such as SALARY, SOCIAL BENEFITS and various other PERKS.

After the interview we were happy with the skills that the candidate was able to demonstrate and we offered him/her a CONTRACT on the spot (*en el momento*)!

We don't normally HIRE people so quickly but we were a little worried because we knew that this person would be very attractive to a number of our competitors.

The contract that we signed is very flexible so, in the case that we need to FIRE or sack him/her, the COMPENSATION will be very minimal.

"CUSTOMER" OR "CLIENT"?

Many of my students ask me about what the difference is between "customer" and "client". In many ways, the terms can be used interchangeably but there are slight differences.

A "customer" normally refers to someone who walks into a shop and is looking to buy something (a product). This would be a B2C (business to customer) context.

The term "client" is more closely associated to the world of B2B (business to business) or a more formal business relationship that is likely to be more long term (*largo plazo*). "Client" is more commonly used when you are selling a service. An architectural company might have lots of "clients" for example. This could also be the case for a legal practice.

¿QUÉ ES UN "SALES PITCH"?

Many of you work in the area of sales (*ventas*) and therefore it is important that you know what a "sales pitch" is.

Many Spanish speakers are unsure about the word "pitch" and it is most commonly used in connection with sport. For example, "football pitch" or "rugby pitch". A pitch in this case is the grass area where you play a sport. In Spanish this would be something like: "terreno".

A "pitch" with regard to sales is different though. In this context it means a presentation. So a "sales pitch" is a sales presentation where your key aim is to convince the people in front of you that they should buy your products.

WHAT DO YOU SAY WHEN YOUR COMPUTER STOPS WORKING? (EXCLUDING SWEAR WORDS)

I have noticed that when Spanish speakers try to describe the fact that their computer is not working and that they are having problems they never really use the correct phrase. The most obvious solution, and probably the most sensible (*sensato*) is to say:

| *"My computer is not working"*

which is fine.

Everybody will understand you and you will get the message across to them which is always the most important element with foreign languages.

But, in case you are interested in using a different type of phrase, one option which you could use is:

| *"My computer has crashed!" (present perfect)*

HOW DO YOU SAY "HABILIDADES" IN ENGLISH?

Most Spanish speakers fall into the trap of translating "habilidades" as "abilities".

Although this word is not completely wrong and there are some occasions when it might be the right word to use, I would generally prefer you to use the word "skills".

So, you could say something like:

"My English skills are great because I have just done an intensive course"

How are your English skills? Getting better I hope!

¿"DESPEDIR" ALGUIEN EN INGLÉS?

Interestingly, there are many ways to talk about this in English.

The three most common words are:

"to sack someone", "to fire someone" or "to make someone redundant"

Another alternative is

"to dismiss someone"

So, there are four options.

My recommendation is to use "make redundant" or "dismiss" most of the time. The other two are used when the person has done something seriously wrong.

TRY TO AVOID THE WORD "FORMATION"

Although the word "formation" does exist in English, it is best to avoid using it when you are talking about issues related to human resources.

Many Spanish speakers use it by mistake because it is close to the Spanish word "formación". A much better alternative is "training" which most of you will already know.

So, for example:

"Professional training is a key element of keeping your employees happy."

The word "formation" in English is used when you want to talk about something that has been formed: a rock (*roca*) formation.

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "PULL SOME STRINGS"?

This expression is used when you feel you can help someone with your contacts.

For example:

"I think it is going to be difficult to get tickets for that football match but I will see if I can pull a few strings"

It is very closely connected to the idea of the "mover hilos" here in Spain. In question form, it would be:

"Can you pull a few strings for me?"

DO YOU "WORK HARD" OR DO YOU "HARDLY WORK"?

This is something that creates a lot of confusion for Spanish speakers because although these phrases seem very similar they are, in fact, exactly opposite.

If you "work hard" that means that you put in a lot of hours and make a lot of effort to improve your performance at work (this is the logical one).

If, on the other hand, you "hardly work" this means that you almost do nothing at all! If you are rich, for example, there may be no reason for you to work, so in that case you probably hardly need to work.

"COLLEAGUE" OR "COLLEGE"?

I'm not exactly sure why Spanish speakers make this mistake but it is clearly an issue of pronunciation.

The most common context in which I hear this mistake is when students want to talk about their "colleagues" but in the end they say "colleges" which means "colegios".

The right way to pronounce "colleague" is very much how you would say "Champions LEAGUE". In other words, the "e" sound is long!

So:

| *"Cóliik" [pronunciar en español]*

"CV" OR "RÉSUMÉ"?

Clearly one of the most common words used in the world of human resources is "CV" or "résumé". Interestingly, the use of these words depends on where you are located.

The British always use "CV" while the Americans generally use "résumé". Spanish speakers like to use the word "curriculum".

They often say:

"Please send me your curriculum"

and while most native speakers will understand this, it is better to use "CV" or "résumé".

"OUT" OR "AWAY"?

Spanish speakers like to use the phrase:

"He is out"

when they are talking about someone who is on holiday.

When you use "out" in English this gives an indication that the person is not in the office at the moment but will be returning shortly.

If you want to talk about someone who will not be in the office for a few days or weeks it is better to use "away".

So, for example:

"He is away at the moment"

gives the impression that the person will be back in a few days or potentially weeks.

So, in summary:

out=short period of time, away=long period of time

HOW DO YOU SAY "PARO" IN ENGLISH?

The easiest way to talk about "paro" in English is the word: "unemployment".

So, if you are talking about a statistic you need to say: "Unemployment is going down in Spain" (for example).

If you are talking about yourself then you need to use the word: "unemployed":

"I am unemployed at the moment"

If you want to talk about the money that you are receiving from the government because you don't have a job then you need to use "unemployment benefit":

"I get unemployment benefit every week"

DO YOU WORK IN "SELECTION"?

Many Spanish speakers who work in HR (*RR.HH.*) often use the word "selection". In many ways this is understandable because "to select" and "selection" do exist in English but we do not use them very much in this context. The correct word to use here is "recruitment".

So, for example:

"I work in recruitment" or "I work as a recruiter for an employment agency"

The word "selection" in English is more commonly used to describe some sort of variety.

For example:

"I have found a selection of hotels that might be of interest to you"

100

A QUESTION THAT EVERYONE SHOULD KNOW!

This question is so important in business that I need to make sure that YOU know how to use it properly.

When I ask people to translate "a qué te dedicas" 95% of the time they struggle (find it difficult). Most of the time people say "What is your profession?" which is fine because it is understandable but the much better option is to say:

| *"What do you do?"*

So, when you go to your next international conference or English speaking dinner party, you know what to ask:

| *"What do you do?"*

DO YOU "PRAISE" YOUR EMPLOYEES?

Spanish speakers often get confused between the words "praise" and "pray" which is understandable because they do sound quite similar. They are, in fact, very different though.

To "praise" someone is to give them good feedback about something they have done or achieved. "Praising" your employees is, therefore, very important if you want to keep them motivated!

The word "pray", on the other hand, means "rezar", so try not to get them confused!

**IF YOU ARE APPLYING FOR A JOB
IN THE UK...NEVER INCLUDE A
PHOTO!**

Now that I have been living in Spain for such a long time it seems absolutely natural that I would include a photo on my CV but I can remember that when I first came to Spain I was quite surprised to see that people put a picture of themselves on their CV.

In the UK, it is generally seen as good practice not to include a photo because companies are supposed to evaluate you on your skills and knowledge rather than the way you look!

Of course, when you go to the interview they will see what you look like, so in many ways it doesn't make sense. I guess it's just a cultural thing.

I WORK IN AN INDUSTRIAL "POLÍGONO"

Sometimes words are just difficult to translate. "Polígono" is a good example of this.

Many times I am speaking to a student and they start to describe where they work and as soon as they get to the word "polígono" they struggle because in English there is no real equivalent.

It is very much like "urbanisation" which is also a problematic word. So, if you want to talk about a "polígono industrial" what do you say?

Well, the best word to use is "area" or "estate".

So, you need to say:

"I work in an industrial estate outside Madrid"

"PREVENCIÓN DE RIESGOS LABORALES" IN ENGLISH?

I recently got a request from one of my followers about how to translate "prevención de riesgos laborales". The best way to translate this issue is to use:

| *"health and safety"*

In the UK, we are obsessed with the idea of "health and safety" and when you get a new job you almost always need to go to a "health and safety" presentation to make sure that you are aware (*consciente*) of all the potential risks and how to avoid them.

I NEED TO SPEAK WITH THE "HIGH DIRECTION"

Company structures and positions are always a bit difficult to describe in a foreign language. The use of "high direction" is an obvious translation of "alta dirección" and is potentially confusing for a native English speaker. A much better way to describe this would be "senior management".

So, for example:

"The senior management has decided to freeze pay increases this year"

The word "direction", in English, is only really used in terms of describing the way to get somewhere, do something or complete a task.

For example:

"Am I going in the right direction?"

or

"Which direction is the train station?"

ECONOMIC ENGLISH

The classic economic phrase that we all learn when we go to economics class is "oferta y demanda".

So, how can we translate this properly? The big temptation is to use "offer and demand" but this is the spanglish approach which should be avoided if possible.

A much better option would be "supply and demand".

So, for example:

"It is a classic case of supply and demand"

or

"When supply is low then demand is high"

I WORK "LIKE" A TEACHER

Spanish speakers often make this mistake because they are thinking in Spanish and translating into English.

The word "like" in this case is incorrect. When you are talking about your profession or the profession of another person you need to use the word "as".

So, for example:

"He works as a teacher during the day and as a waiter at night"

SHOULD I ACCEPT A JOB WHERE I NEED TO SPEAK ENGLISH EVERY DAY? CLARO QUE SÍ

Working in English every day is an amazing way to ensure that you are improving.

In general, my best students are those that are actively using their English with their clients and colleagues. If you really want to improve your English without leaving Spain there is nothing better than getting a new job where you are forced to speak English.

It might be painful at the beginning but slowly the benefits will become apparent. With language learning there are often many barriers that get in the way of your progress but when you force yourself to leave your comfort zone you really can improve very fast.

¿CONOCES: "KEEP ME IN THE LOOP"?

In English, we have many business expressions that can potentially be difficult for non-natives to understand. "Keep me in the loop" is a good example of this because it is something that a native speaker might easily use in a business environment.

So, what does it mean? Well...when you tell someone that you will "keep them in the loop" you are saying that you will keep them updated about any new developments associated with a specific project.

So, for example:

"I will keep you in the loop about the new employees we are going to hire"

or

"Can you keep me in the loop about the new European projects?"

"WORK" OR "JOB" ¿CUÁL ES LA DIFERENCIA?

Many Spanish speakers get confused with these two words and I have come to the conclusion that the main reason is because in Spanish you have just one word: "trabajo".

The problem with this is that in English you cannot use these two words interchangeably!

So, when someone Spanish says:

"Every day I go to the job"

this is unfortunately incorrect.

The correct version is:

"I go to work every day"

The main distinction between the two words is that the word "job" is mostly used to talk about your position or role in a company or organisation whereas "work" is more general.

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "THE BOTTOM LINE"

This expression is mostly used in business contexts. The most important element that you need to be aware of with regard to this expression is that it can be used in two different ways.

The first is purely financial. So, you can use it when you are talking about the accounts of a company.

For example:

"Our (the company) bottom line has increased substantially during the first quarter"

The meaning of "bottom line" here is essentially: all profit (*beneficios*). The second way we can use this expression is when we basically want to draw attention to some sort of "conclusion".

For example:

"The bottom line is that we can't go on holiday"

**"IN THE LAST YEARS" HIS
PERFORMANCE (*RENDIMIENTO*)
HAS BEEN AMAZING**

How would you translate "en los últimos años" into English? Would you say: "In the last years"? This has come up (*surgido*) in a few of my classes recently so I thought it would be worth sharing. Even high level students can make this mistake so don't worry if you think you have used it incorrectly.

The correct way to translate this would be closer to:

"Over the past few years"

So, for example:

"Over the past few years I have seen a significant improvement in his/her English!"

"PRÁCTICAS" IS NOT "PRACTICE"

This is all about the moment that you are about to finish your degree (*recuerda que no se dice "career"*) and you want to get some experience that will help you decide about the type of job you want in the future and will hopefully help you to build contacts so that you can get a full time paid job.

The temptation for Spanish speakers is to use "practice" because it is similar to the word "prácticas".

The correct word for this context is:

█ ***"work experience" (UK)***

or

█ ***"internship" (US)***

A "REUNIÓN" IS NOT A "REUNION"

Most of my students know that the translation of "reunion" (Spanish) is a "meeting" but the word "reunion" can also be used in a different and more specific context which many Spanish speakers are not aware of.

The word "reunion" is mostly used when you are planning to meet up with a group of people that you have not seen in a long time. A good example of this is when you meet with old friends from your school 10 years after having graduated.

It is normally a special celebration that is well organised and everyone is invited.

INGLÉS LEGAL

Some of my students in the legal sector recently told me about the fact that in Spanish you say:

"resquicio legal"

when you want to talk about the fact that the law is not entirely watertight. I found that quite interesting and started wondering (*pensando*) what the equivalent would be in English.

I concluded that the expression "a legal loophole" would probably be the best way to describe that situation.

For example:

"Many large-scale companies have found legal loopholes in the tax system"

¿CÓMO SE DICE "TRATO HECHO" EN INGLÉS?

In a business environment, there will be moments when you need to reach an agreement with another company or individual but how do you say "trato hecho"? In the end, it's not that difficult because you can just say: "It's a deal."

The word "deal" can be a little confusing because it can be used in a variety of contexts but in this case "It's a deal" is a good way to translate this expression.

While we are talking about translation, it is important to highlight that while it is essential to get good at translating from Spanish to English...this is not your primary objective!

Your broader aim (although difficult) is to avoid translation altogether because a lot of mistakes that Spanish speakers make when they speak English can be traced back to a Spanish construction or expression.

ENTREVISTA EN INGLÉS: "WHAT ARE YOUR WEAKNESSES?"

I do a lot of work with people who want to prepare for interviews in English, and one of the words that Spanish speakers find difficult to get into their heads (*interiorizar*) is the word "weaknesses".

This happens in two situations: firstly when they want to translate the phrase "puntos débiles" or "debilidades" and secondly when they hear the word "weaknesses" and have no idea what it means.

So, remember: "weaknesses" = "puntos débiles" or "debilidades".

¿CÓMO SE DICE "ENCHUFE" EN INGLÉS?

The direct translation of "enchufe" is "plug" or "socket" depending on the context. This word is commonly used by Spanish speakers when they want to talk about someone who can help them in some way.

I heard and understood this word fairly quickly when I came to Spain but often thought about what the correct translation into English would be. Both the word "plug" or "socket" are not options in this case and therefore the more simple solution of "connection" is better.

For example:

"I have a connection in that company that can help us with this problem"

ENTREVISTAS EN INGLÉS: ¿QUÉ ESTAN BUSCANDO?

The very fact that most interviews are conducted verbally implies that your English will, most likely, only be tested orally.

This creates a dilemma for Spanish speakers because the speaking element of the English language is the one that they often find the most difficult.

When interviewers speak with you in English, they are looking for fluency and confidence. This is extremely difficult to prepare for in the short term.

So remember, your English needs to be a continuous project that is built up gradually rather than a one-off.

120

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "THE NITTY-GRITTY"

When I hear a native speaker use an expression like this with a non-native English learner, I always groan because it is one of those phrases that, while it is very intuitive for native speakers, is difficult for a foreigner to understand.

The "nitty-gritty" is often used in a business context to talk about "the finer details".

You might hear:

"Let's get down to the nitty-gritty"

which means that that person wants to talk about the details rather than a general overview.

¿QUIERES "FIRMAR" O "CANTAR" EL CONTRATO?

Sometimes I am in a situation where I need a student to "firmar" something, and suddenly without any hesitation, they offer to "sing".

| *"Shall I sing?"*

they say.

I am sure my students can sing wonderfully but singing a contract would probably be challenging for even the best of musical talents.

I am not sure why this happens so often, but it does!

So, just remember, even if you have a great voice, I need you to SIGN!

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "THE WORLD IS YOUR OYSTER"

This is an expression that you hear a lot when you are young and are about to set out on your professional career.

If you have gone to a good university and have come out with good marks (*no se dice "notes"*) then people will say something like: "Wow, now that you have finished university, the world is your oyster (*ostra*)". The basic idea behind the expression is that because of your good qualifications you will be able to do anything you want and live anywhere in the world.

There is no direct translation into Spanish but if there was it would be something like:

"el mundo es tuyo"

123

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: ¿ESTÁS "SNOWED UNDER"?

This expression has nothing to do with snow. In fact, it is often heard in business contexts. If you used this expression when you are speaking in English, I would be impressed.

I would expect you to have a CAE level of English at the very least.

The meaning of the expression is that you have got a lot of work to do, or more specifically, that you have too much work to do!

¿"ANTIGÜEDAD" EN INGLÉS?

In human resources circles in Spain, there is often talk about the issue of "antigüedad". Especially because, in general, the more you work in a company, the more expensive it is for the company to dismiss/fire/sack/make you redundant (*hay muchas palabrabras para decir "despedir" en inglés!*).

So, how can you say "antigüedad" in English?

Well, the answer is: it is a bit difficult. It is a little like the verb "estrenar" there is no good translation for it.

Instead, you need to use the present perfect tense and say something like:

"He has been at the company a long time"

¿"EL ACTA DE UNA REUNIÓN" EN INGLÉS?

When I got my first job in the UK, I can remember that one of my main duties was to write the "acta" for some of the meetings that I attended (*recuerda que no se dice "assisted"*). I loved my job but writing the "acta" for meetings was not my favourite activity, I have to admit.

More recently I came across the word "acta" and thought that it would be useful to let you know that "acta" is translated as "the minutes".

Mmm, strange I know, but that is how we describe this type of document.

So, for example:

"Who is going to write the minutes of the meeting?"

¿"LLAMADA PERDIDA" EN INGLÉS?

The temptation here for Spanish speakers is to say "a lost call" but in the same way that it is difficult to "lose a train" (*tampoco se puede decir*) it is also not possible to "lose a call".

Once again, we need to use the verb "miss" instead of "lose".

So, for example:

| *"I was so busy that I missed all of your calls"*

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "THE BALL IS IN YOUR COURT"

This idiom is a reference to tennis and means that you need to make a decision.

For example:

| *"We have given you our best price, so now the ball is in your court"*

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "CHERRY PICKING"

This is an idiom (*modismo/expresión*) that has been used repeatedly during the Brexit negotiations and describes a situation where one side (or both) want to take the best elements available to them but do not want any of the negative elements.

I have no idea why we use the idea of a cherry (*cereza*) but perhaps it is because they are very expensive in the UK!

**FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS:
"HAVE YOUR CAKE AND EAT IT"**

This idiom is very similar to "cherry picking" but slightly different. In this case, the main focus is that you don't want to compromise at all. It is important to understand the word "compromise" in this case because it does not mean "compromiso".

A compromise in English is a middle point between two extremes.

So, if you want "to have your cake and eat it", you don't want to compromise!

FRASE HECHA DE NEGOCIOS: "TO START THE BALL ROLLING"

This is a type of idiom that you might use at the beginning of a negotiation or even a meeting. To be honest, it does not really mean anything other than "I am going to start with..." but it sounds a little more elegant.

For example:

"I am going to start the ball rolling by talking about the problems that we are having with the air-conditioning in the office"

Once again, it is important to remember that understanding from the context is the most important skill.

INGLÉS PARA NEGOCIAR: "DRAGGING YOUR HEELS"

This idiom is almost self-explanatory the only problem being that the words "dragging" and "heels" might be a bit complex to understand!

"Heels" are "tacones" (shoes) or "talones" (body) and "dragging" is "arrastrar".

So, when you are "dragging your heels" it means that you are moving forward reluctantly or at a very slow pace!

¿"FECHA LIMITE" EN INGLÉS?

We work in an increasingly hectic and busy world where there are constant..."hmmm, ¿cómo se dice "fecha limite?"

This situation has happened to my students several times so I thought it would be useful to cover it here.

In the end, it is not that difficult, but you need to avoid using the spanglish version: "limit date" which although it could be understood is not ideal. The best option is the word "deadline".

For example:

"The deadline is tomorrow...We had better get our skates on!"

DO YOU HAVE A GOOD "RELATION" WITH YOUR COLLEAGUES?

I am sure you are all tempted to use this construction! In Spanish, the word "relación" is used commonly, but you cannot bring it over to English quite as directly as you would like.

The problem here is that you need to use the word "relationship" in English. For example:

"I have a great relationship with my boss"

When you use the word "relation" in English, you use it in a context where you are talking about something that has a connection to something else:

"In relation to what you were talking about earlier, I would just like to say that...".

As you can see, it is quite different. So, watch out for that trap! Another context where the word "relation" is used, is when you are talking about your "relations" which means your wider family such as your aunts, uncles or cousins!

For example:

"Most of my relations live abroad."

NO PUEDES "ASSUMIR" MÁS RESPONSABILIDAD EN INGLÉS

This problem surfaces for Spanish speakers when they are talking about getting promoted at work, and they say something like:

"I will get paid more, but I will have to "assume" more responsibility"

This is wrong because the word "assume" is used in a different context in English which is connected to the idea that you have come to a logical conclusion but you are not 100% sure:

"I assume he will arrive soon"

If you want to translate "assumir responsabilidad" then you need to use the phrasal verb "take on":

"I will need to "take on" more work" etc.

NO SE PUEDE DECIR: "I WILL CONFIRM YOU"!

How many times have you said this? A few at least? Interestingly, it is not that far from the correct version because you can actually say:

| *"I will confirm"*

Try to avoid putting the "you" at the end because that converts it into spanglish and comes from: "te lo confirmaré" or "te confirmo".

Another alternative, which I prefer, is:

| *"I will let you know"*

because it sounds a little more friendly and less formal!

ALL OF US WILL GO TO THE PARTY, "LESS" MY BOSS

The only real way that you are going to be able to stop making mistakes like this is if you expose yourself more to English!

When a Spanish speaker says a sentence like this, they are thinking in Spanish either consciously or subconsciously about the word "menos". That is why I hear this mistake quite often.

"Less" is not possible and the correct word is "except".

So you need to say:

"All of us will go to the party except my boss"

Capítulo 6 - El listo de la clase

Expressions that will impress your friends

"I am always very impressed when I see people that have learnt expressions in a foreign language. It isn't easy, and it is not essential, but it is impressive. I always think that the overall objective with expressions is that there is a need to understand them but not necessarily use them." - Daniel Smith

ENGLISH EXPRESSION: "DO YOU WANT A LIFT?"

This expression is confusing and most Spanish speakers don't know what it means. Most of the time they think it has something to do with an "ascensor" which would be logical but English IS NOT LOGICAL (sometimes).

The real meaning of this expression is that someone is "asking you if they can take you somewhere in their car".

In other words, they want to help you to get to your destination because you don't have any private transportation.

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "DE BOCA A BOCA" IN ENGLISH?

This is a classic because most Spanish speakers think that the translation is "mouth to mouth".

We do use the expression "mouth to mouth" but only when you are trying to save someone from drowning! Example: She had to give him "mouth to mouth" resuscitation at the side of the pool to make him breathe again. The way to say "de boca a boca" (marketing) is "word of mouth".

Example:

"His company was successful because everybody was talking about his innovative methods, it spread by word of mouth"

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "APRENDER DE MEMORIA" IN ENGLISH?

During all the years that I have been teaching Spanish speakers very few know how to say this correctly.

The logical translation is "to memorise" something but there is a much better expression than that. Does anyone know what it is?

Answer:

| *"To learn by heart"*

I AM CURIOUS ABOUT HOW YOU USE "CURIOUS"!

Many Spanish speakers use the word "curious" incorrectly. For example, they say:

"It is very curious".

They are, of course, translating directly from Spanish and the word "curioso". Instead of using the word "curious" it is better to use the word "interesting".

So, the right phrase would be:

"Ahhh, that is very interesting".

The word "curious" does exist in English but it is used in a different context. For example, if you are interviewing someone and you want to know more information about them you might say:

"I am curious about your professional experience, can you tell me more?"

THIS IS A CLASSIC SPANGLISH MISTAKE: "ACTUALLY"

I probably hear this mistake every single day so it is worth taking a few minutes to think about it.

Most Spanish speakers use the word "actually" in this way: "Last year I had English classes but actually I am not having any". This is wrong because the word that is needed in this case is "currently".

So, the correct version would be:

***"Last year I had English classes but currently (or "at the moment")
I am not having any"***

The meaning of "actually" in Spanish is "realmente".

DO YOU SAY THIS: "YOU HAVE ALL THE REASON"?

This is a phrase that I hear at least once a week. Probably more. It is spanglish and translated directly from "Tienes toda la razón".

I would try to avoid this if you can.

To be honest most native speakers will probably understand you but it is much better to say:

█ *"You are absolutely right"*

or just

█ *"You are right"*

THIS IS A CLASSIC: "FOR ME IT'S THE SAME"

I have lost count of how many times I have heard this one. It comes, of course, from Spanish:

| *"me da igual"*

The dictionary translation of this phrase is "I don't care" but you can only use this in situations which are a little negative.

If you want to put a positive spin on the this then I would prefer to use:

| *"I don't mind"*

IS IT "BORING" OR "ANNOYING"?

Spanish speakers get these confused all the time.

For example:

"I can never remember the irregular verbs, it is very boring!"

This is not correct.

In this context it is much better to use "annoying". We use "boring" when something is not interesting.

For example:

"This film is really boring, I am going to leave"

"Annoying" is used more in the context of when something is irritating you.

For example:

"When everyone speaks at the same time it is very annoying"

I WOULD LIKE "PARTICULAR" CLASSES!

Most days of the week I pick up the phone and someone says to me:

| *"I would like particular classes"*

Most of the time when I hear this I am happy because someone is trying hard to use their English which is great!

The only problem is that "particular classes" does not exist in English and comes from a direct translation from "clases particulares".

The correct version is:

| *"private classes"*

¿"RELACIÓN CALIDAD-PRECIO" EN INGLÉS?

When Spanish speakers buy products they are always looking for something special and that special thing is:

"relación calidad-precio"

This is a great phrase in Spanish because in many ways it defines the Spanish shopper.

Most Spanish speakers want something that is good quality but they want to make sure that they don't pay too much for it (which is sensible (*sensato*) of course).

The best translation for this is:

"value for money"

So, for example:

"That shop is really good because their products are good value for money"

DO YOU KNOW WHAT "TO GET RID OF" MEANS?

I would say 90% of Spanish speakers don't know the meaning of this phrase but I think it is quite important because you will hear many native speakers using it.

For example:

"This sofa is old, we need to get rid of it"

It is mostly used in connection with objects that you no longer need or are no longer useful.

It can also be used when talking about people.

For example:

"Our team is too big, we need to get rid of a few people"

I think the closest Spanish translation is:

"deshacerse de algo/alguien"

DO YOU "FALL OVER" OFTEN?

This one is a bit difficult to explain but it generally revolves around the fact that Spanish speakers get very confused between these:

Fall over

Fall down

Fall off

So, let me explain them quickly:

"Fall over" is when you are walking in the street and you slip and fall.

When you are in a house and "fall down" the stairs (for example). In other words, a downward movement.

"Fall off" is used when you are positioned on something high (like a horse) and you "fall off" the horse.

"IT DOESN'T HAVE ANY SENSE!"

Do you say this? If you do, then you shouldn't worry too much because 80% of Spanish speakers say this sentence when they speak English.

It is a direct translation from the Spanish sentence:

"No tiene sentido"

The main construction of the sentence is correct because it is a negative sentence and therefore needs an auxiliary verb.

The real problem, in this case, is the "have" and the correct way to say this sentence is:

"It doesn't MAKE any sense!"

ARE YOU "LOOKING FORWARD" TO YOUR HOLIDAY?

The expression "looking forward to" is something that Spanish speakers don't use very often when they speak because there is no real Spanish equivalent.

The general definition is:

█ ***"esperar con ganas"***

We use it a lot at the end of more formal letters or emails: "I am looking forward to hearing from you soon" but you can also use it when you are speaking:

█ ***"I am looking forward to the football match tonight"***

So, overall it is a very useful expression that is well worth remembering.

Notice that when you have a verb that follows the expression we use the gerund (-ing form):

█ ***"I am looking forward to speakING to him"***

DID YOU KNOW THAT "THE 50%" is WRONG?

Many Spanish speakers like to say percentages with an article in front.

For example:

"The 20% of people have never been to a dentist"

This is a direct translation from Spanish because in Spanish you say:

"El 20%"

When you speak and write in English you need to make sure that you remove the article and start directly with the %.

For example:

"50% of British people cannot speak a foreign language"

I AM "INCUBATING"

Many Spanish speakers say something like this:

"I don't feel very well, I think I am incubating"

As I am sure you have guessed, this is complete spanglish. We do use the word "incubator". A native person might use the word "incubator" to describe the machine that is used when a baby is premature or in a different context it can be used to describe a building where there are a variety of new businesses are given extra help to grow and create employment:

"a business incubator"

If you are ill and you think that you have a cold or at least you have the early signs of a cold then you can say:

"I think I have a cold"

or

"I feel under the weather!"

or

"I think I am going to be ill"



I AM THE "GUILTY"

I hear this sentence almost every week one way or another! Of course, it is a direct translation from the Spanish sentence:

"Soy el culpable"

Although the translation of "culpable" is "guilty", the phrase "Soy el culpable" or "fue culpa mía" should be translated slightly differently. In the end, a better version would be:

"It is/was my fault"

This is important because "guilty" is generally used in a more formal setting such as a court of law or statement.

If you are speaking to your friends or colleagues a native person is much more likely to use the phrase:

"my fault"

HE IS BADLY "EDUCATED"

Imagine you are walking in London and someone suddenly shouts at you for no apparent reason! You might say to your native English friend:

"He is badly educated"

Your native friend would probably understand you but at the same time probably think that your comment was slightly strange. The reason that it is strange is that native English speakers don't really use the phrase "badly educated".

Instead, the most common way to say what you are trying to say (*maleducado*) is: "rude".

So you could say:

"He is a very rude man!"

In English, you can use "bad education" but it would mostly be connected with something like the "education system" and therefore would be, for example:

"In England, we have a bad education system"

I AM "DESTROYED"

So, you get to the end of the day and it has been a hard one. You needed to attend (not "assist" as many Spanish speakers like to use) a lot of meetings and you had to speak to lots of people and write a lot of complex reports. You feel "destrozada/o" but you need to say this in English so this is what most Spanish speakers say:

"I am destroyed"

This would be fantastic if it was correct but it is another example of spanglish.

The correct way to say "estoy destrozada/o" is:

"I am exhausted" or "I am shattered" (muy inglés)

If you want to use the word "destroyed" in English then you need to use it in a context where

"something is physically broken into pieces and cannot be rebuilt"

For example:

"The boat was destroyed by the torpedo"

"NOTHING"

This is more for lower level students but it is also a useful reminder for all of you who are a little more advanced. When Spanish speakers want to say "De nada" in English there is always a strong temptation to say: "nothing". Now, you might be thinking: "We know that, that is easy!" and you would be right but I still hear this mistake day in, day out (*todos los días*).

So what is the correct way to say "de nada" in English? Well, there are several options:

■ *You're welcome*

■ *My pleasure*

■ *Not at all*

Generally, I prefer option 1 and 2.

I hardly (*prácticamente nunca*) use option 3 at all. It is a little too formal for general use but is sometimes used by waiters and receptionists working in posh (*pijo*) hotels.

WHO IS BOB AND WHY IS HE MY UNCLE?

In English, there are many expressions and one of them is:

"...and Bob's your uncle"

For Spanish speakers, this is a very hard expression to work out logically!

Essentially, it is used to emphasise that a process is easy to complete. So, for example:

"To make tortilla all you need to do is mix eggs with potatoes and Bob's your uncle!"

Now, before all of you complain, I know that it is very difficult to make a good tortilla! IT WAS JUST AN EXAMPLE!

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "TO RIP OFF"?

This is not a spanglish issue but it is interesting for Spanish speakers to know.

I have not met many Spanish speakers who have used this expression so if you are able to remember it and use it regularly it would be a good addition to your English vocabulary.

First of all, it is important to highlight that this expression is a colloquial term but, saying that, it is still often used in more formal settings. So it depends. The meaning of the expression is that you have been "engañado" o "ha sido un timo".

So, for example, you can say:

| *"That restaurant was a rip off"*

Which would mean that the food was expensive and not good value for money!

"MOTHER MINE"?

I have noticed that some Spanish speakers actually use spanglish on purpose, mostly as a joke. One of these types of expressions is: "mother mine" which is the direct translation of "Madre mía".

I have even heard famous people on Spanish television saying "mother mine!" So then, I started thinking:

"How do you say "Madre mía" in English?"

The answer is:

"Oh my God!"

"NEVER IN MY LIFE"?

Spanish speakers sometimes say: "never in my life" which is a direct translation from Spanish: "nunca en mi vida". I probably don't need to tell you that "never in my life" is spanglish. You were expecting that. The best way to translate "nunca en mi vida" is "I have never" (this is the way your English teacher will say it) or "I've never" (this is the way most native speakers say it).

The "I have never" construction is generally easy to use but you need to have knowledge of the present perfect tense to be able to say it properly. So, yes, you need to know those three horrible columns of irregular verbs that you hated so much when you were studying English at school: put, put, put!

Once you have learnt those you can create a sentence like this:

"I've never been to Japan, but I would like to go"

ENGLISH EXPRESSION: "OFF THE TOP OF MY HEAD"

There are hundreds of English expressions and considering that there are so many it is quite reasonable to assume that it is impossible to remember all of them and even more difficult to use them in everyday situations.

The fact that most of you live in Spain makes this task even more difficult because you do not have the English language surrounding you so that you can learn these types of expressions almost organically. It is important to note that in most contexts, especially when you are speaking to other people who are not native speakers, you never hear these expressions because they don't know them either!

So, off the top of my head, I can't really think about any reasons why you would want to learn them, other than if you are speaking to native speakers all the time and even then the most important element is that you are able to understand them rather than really use them yourself.

By the way (*por cierto*), do you know what "off the top of my head" means?

Answer: The first thought that comes into your mind

PHRASAL VERB PRACTICE: TO "GET ON" WITH SOMEONE

When you "get on" with people, it means that you have a friendly relationship with them.

So, for example:

"I get on well with my boss because he helps me to improve and teaches me new skills!"

Phrasal verbs are very difficult to learn and I would generally avoid doing so, but if you want to take any advanced exams some knowledge of phrasal verbs is required.

WE NEED TO DO THAT "YES OR YES"

Although most Spanish speakers know that "yes or yes" (*sí o sí*) should not be used in English, for many no other expression comes to mind so they are left wondering what to say.

To be honest, there is no real expression in English that is quite as nice as "sí o sí" but the most obvious translation is "no matter what" or "come what may" (less commonly used).

So, an example:

| *"We need to do the homework, no matter what"*

ENGLISH EXPRESSIONS: "JUMP IN AT THE DEEP END"

When you are learning a language it is often a good idea just to "jump in at the deep end". This expression is connected to the idea of a swimming pool where there is a shallow end and a deep end! If you jump in at the deep end and you can't swim then you need to learn very quickly!

The meaning of "jumping in at the deep end" is that you start something that is new or difficult and you have little previous experience of that activity. So, when you are learning English it is often good to jump in at the deep end because this can really help you overcome your fear and push you quickly forward!

"TIENES MUCHA CARA" IN ENGLISH?

This is an expression that many Spanish speakers don't know how to say in English and, to be honest, it is not surprising because it is not that easy. I generally translate it as "being cheeky".

So, for example:

"He is a very cheeky boy"

or

"He has got a lot of cheek"

Interestingly, another option is to use the expression "some nerve".

So:

"She has some nerve to use my car without asking me!"

Google translates "tienes mucha cara" as "you have a lot of expensive"!

That just shows that you should never use google translate other than for very simple translations!

"STRAIGHT AWAY" OR "STRAIGHT ON"?

This is often confused by Spanish speakers so it is worth taking a few minutes to think about it and get it right. The main problem is that Spanish speakers sometimes say "straight away" when they are trying to translate "todo recto"!

The correct translation for "todo recto" is "straight on".

Example:

"Turn right at the roundabout and then go straight on"

The meaning of "straight away" is different! "Straight away" is when you are going to do something immediately:

"I will phone him straight away"

The Spanish translation of this would be: "ahora mismo".

ARE YOU TRYING TO ESCAPE FROM THE "RAT RACE"?

When you translate this expression directly into Spanish it would be something like: "carrera de ratas" which probably does not make much sense. This expression is interesting because the meaning of a "rat race" is the "struggle for money and power".

As we become adults it is very easy to get trapped in the "rat race" always focusing on gaining more power and money in comparison to those around us.

Over recent years in the UK, there have been a lot of TV programmes focusing on people who have tried to escape the "rat race" by moving to the countryside and changing their lives dramatically.

I MET HIM BY "CASUALTY"

Many Spanish speakers fall into this trap (*trampa*) when they think of the phrase "por casualidad".

As usual, the main problem is the direct translation from Spanish which causes the mistake to happen. The problem, in this case, is that "casualty" in English means: a person who is killed or injured in an accident or war!

So, as you can see, the direct spanglish version is a problem.

In fact, in the UK we have a very long-running soap (*telenovela*) that is called: "CASUALTY" where the main idea is that every week someone gets hurt and needs to be taken to a hospital.

We even have a specific hospital department that is called a "casualty department".

If you want to say "por casualidad" you need to use:

| *"by chance"*

**I LIKE LIVING IN EUROPE. "IN
CONCRETE" I LIKE LIVING IN
SPAIN**

If you look up (phrasal verb = buscar) the word "concrete" in an English dictionary you will see that it is a material that is used to construct roads and buildings. It was a particularly fashionable (notice that you need to use "fashionable" NOT "fashion") material during the 1960s and early 1970s but then soon became seen as ugly.

Spanish speakers like to use the words "in concrete" because they are thinking about "en concreto".

Unfortunately, as can be seen from the definition above "en concreto" cannot be translated using "in concrete"!

A much better translation is "specifically" or "in particular".

MY BOSS GAVE ME A "BROWN"

Ok, with this one the main message is that, generally, it is quite difficult to translate. I assume that most of you know that when you say "a brown" in English, a native speaker will have NO idea what you are talking about.

To be honest, I love the expression "un marrón" because it explains a specific situation perfectly and, of course, it is very useful because, in life, we all get "marrones" on a daily basis!

The dictionary version is: "a drag" or "a mess" but, personally, I really don't think those words reflect the true meaning!

"THROW UP" = VOMITAR(!)

I think phrasal verbs were invented to make sure that English teachers have a job for life! So, we should all be very grateful to phrasal verbs because they make sure that English teachers have the same job security as "funcionarios"! Jaja!

"Throw up" is one of those interesting ones where you need to be a little bit careful because it is very easy to say without really knowing what it means. Thrown in, Throw out, Throw off, Throw over are other examples of phrasal verbs with "throw".

If you are able to make a sentence with each of those, you are ready for the Advanced Cambridge exam!

I "RECKON" THAT YOUR ENGLISH IS GOING TO GET BETTER!

The verb "reckon" is used very commonly by native English speakers but much less by people who are learning English as a foreign language.

The standard verb to use in this context is "think" but it is important that you are aware (*consciente*) of this alternative. It can be used in both formal and informal contexts and generally implies a certain amount of estimation about the future.

If you use "reckon" then essentially you are often making an educated guess about what you think will happen in the future. I "reckon" your English will improve if you read my posts every day!

HE IS A "BRIGHT" KID

Normally, we associate the word "bright" with some sort of light: "The sun is very bright today" or light bulb (*bombilla*):

"The light bulb is too bright, we will need to change it"

It can, however, be used in a different context to talk about: intelligence.

So, a teacher in the UK might say:

"Your child (NOT CHILDS OR CHILDRENS) is very "bright", I think it would be a good idea to put him/her into a higher level class"

"WITH THE TIME" I AM GETTING BETTER AT ENGLISH!

This phrase: "with the time" is a direct translation from "con el tiempo" in Spanish, so, in general, my advice (NOT ADVICES) would be that you try to avoid it.

A much better way of describing "con el tiempo" in English is to use: "As time goes by".

For example:

"As time goes by, I think I am getting better and better at English"

or

"As time goes by, my job is getting more interesting"

If you find that too difficult to remember, another alternative would be to just remove the article "the":

"With time, everything will seem easier"

ARE YOU A "SHOW-OFF"?

This is a word that very few Spanish speakers use in their daily English vocabulary. Even when I bring it up (phrasal verb...I know you LOVE them) in class, many people don't really know what it means.

The closest translation is probably: "presumir".

It can be used as a noun (*sustantivo*) or as a verb.

So, for example:

"That man is a show-off, he is always talking about his big house and expensive car"

or

"She is always showing off about her exotic holidays"

It is important to remember that "show-off" whether in the verb or noun form has a negative connotation.

"ANTES DE AYER" IN ENGLISH?

When Spanish speakers try to translate this they usually say something like:

"Not yesterday... but the day before"

To be honest, this is actually quite close to the correct answer which is:

"The day before yesterday"

"¿CÓMO PASA EL TIEMPO...!" IN ENGLISH?

Specific expressions in one language can be difficult to translate into another without losing some of the meaning.

The temptation with "cómo pasa el tiempo..." is to create a spanglish version that would be something like:

"how the time passes".

To be honest, a native person might be able to understand what you are trying to say but there is a better version:

"time flies"

or more specifically:

"time flies when you are having fun".

So, for example:

"Time flies when you are learning English, especially when you have a good teacher!"

"MAKE YOURSELF AT HOME!"

Have you ever heard this before? Do you use it on a regular basis? Most of my students are completely confused by this expression. It is very useful in a business context and it is something that you are likely to hear if you are going for an interview in the UK.

The meaning in Spanish is:

| *"ponte cómodo"*

So, when you go for your interview the receptionist might show you the meeting room and say: "Make yourself at home!".

A very common expression!

I WANT TO "APROVECHAR" THIS OPPORTUNITY!

This is an expression that stops most Spanish speakers in their tracks! A student might be speaking very fluently when suddenly they feel they need to use the word "aprovechar" and they cannot find the translation! I guess the reason that it is hard to translate is that in English we do not have ONE word that covers this expression.

Instead, we use:

█ *"to take advantage of"*

So, for example:

█ *"I want to take advantage of this opportunity"*

There is a strong temptation for Spanish speakers to drop the "of" at the end but it is very important that you don't forget it.

180

¿QUÉ ES: "GETTING COLD FEET"?

This expression is most commonly used in business transactions or negotiations.

When someone is "getting cold feet" it means that, despite the fact that that person may have agreed to work with you, they look as if they are going to change their mind... they are "getting cold feet" about working with you.

¿CÓMO SE DICE "10 PAVOS" EN INGLÉS?

Over the years that I have lived in Spain my vocabulary has become more extensive and it is always interesting to pick up (phrasal verb = aprender) new words and expressions.

It is clearly one of the big advantages of living in a country where the language you are trying to learn surrounds you. The word "pavos" is a good example of this. I can't really remember the day that I learnt the meaning of "pavos" but once I had heard it, I did not forget it.

So, how do you say "pavos" in English? Well, there are two options. The British version is "quid" and in the US they use "bucks".

So, for example:

"He gave me 10 quid" (UK)

or

"Can you give me 10 bucks?" (US)

SHE IS VERY "MANIATIC"

There is always a temptation to take Spanish words and try to convert them into English. I would not discourage this because sometimes it works but, on the other hand, sometimes it doesn't!

The word "maniatic" is a good example of this and comes from the Spanish word "maniático". Unfortunately, it does not work in English and you will confuse a native speaker if you use it. My preferred translation of this word is "obsessive" or "fanatic".

So, for example:

"He is completely obsessive about how clean his house should be"

or

"She is a fanatic about learning every phrasal verb in English"

DID YOU HAVE A "STRONG" BREAKFAST?

I think most native English speakers would understand if you said "strong" breakfast but there is definitely a spanglish element to this sentence.

The idea of a "strong" breakfast/lunch is quite common and usually expressed in Spanish by saying:

"Un desayuno fuerte"

The problem here is that "strong" is not the ideal word to use in this context. A more appropriate word would be "heavy" or "big" or even "filling".

So, for example:

"This morning I had a very big breakfast"

If you really want to use the word "strong" it is much more commonly used to describe a tea/coffee:

"I had a strong coffee this morning to wake myself up"

ENGLISH IS NOT DIFFICULT TO LEARN... "IT'S THE NEXT" (*LO SIGUIENTE*)

I can't remember whether I have ever heard a Spanish speaker use this phrase but I hear it quite often when Spanish speakers are speaking Spanish so I am sure there are lots of people who (in their minds) are trying to find a quick translation for it.

Clearly, the version above is the spanglish version and should be avoided if possible! One way to avoid the problem altogether is by not using the negative form and just saying: "English is very very difficult to learn". Another option might be:

"English is not difficult to learn...It's extremely difficult to learn"

I HOPE YOU KNOW THAT YOU DON'T "COMMIT" A MISTAKE!

This is an interesting one because, once again, the source (*fuentes*) of the problem comes from a translation from Spanish.

In Spanish, it is possible to "cometer errores" but in English, this approach does not really work. In general, the best way to express this is by saying:

| *"I have MADE a mistake"*

In English, we always "make" mistakes! Very important to learn that one. We use the verb "to commit" in association with a crime.

So, for example:

| *"He committed burglary".*

You can also use "to commit" or "commitment" as a way of translating "comprometerse" or "compromiso".

AT THE "FINAL" OF THE MEETING

This is somewhat simple but I do hear it from time to time. It clearly comes from the Spanish:

"al final de la reunión"

A better way to say this in English would be:

"At the end of the meeting"

The word "final" can be used in English in many different contexts but here it does not quite work. If you use it as an adjective, for example, it works a little better (albeit with a different meaning):

"The final meeting will take place next week"

"DON'T COUNT YOUR CHICKENS BEFORE THEY HATCH"

A very common idiom in English but might not be so well known here in Spain.

Essentially this means that you should not make any plans until you have verified the positive outcome that you are looking for. That might be a little confusing to understand so here is an example:

- "When I get promoted I am going to use the extra money to pay for an expensive holiday!"

- "Don't count your chickens before they hatch!"

The promotion this person is hoping for is not guaranteed so they should not book the holiday yet.

"BARKING UP THE WRONG TREE", ¿LO CONOCES?

This is a very common idiom in the UK and can be used in a variety of different contexts. Probably you are familiar with all the word except "barking" which is "ladrar" in Spanish?

So, what does this idiom mean?

As is common with most idiomatic expressions it has got nothing to do with the words it contains. It is not about "trees" or "dogs". In fact, it is a way to express the idea that someone has misunderstood or is mistaken about something.

For example:

"You are barking up the wrong tree if you think that my aim is to be an engineer"

"YOU NEED TO PUT YOURSELF BATTERIES"

I have never heard any of my students say this but I am sure it will happen one day...maybe just as a joke.

So, how do you say "ponerse las pilas" in English? Well, there are a few options but the most common solution would be:

"hurry up...we haven't got all day!" (If you are talking about time).

If you want a more elaborate expression you might want to use:

"put your skates on" (again if you are talking about time)

Another alternative is:

"pull your socks up"

(if you are talking about effort).

SUNDAY IS THE "UNIQUE" DAY THAT I CAN RELAX

The word "unique" does exist in English but it cannot be used in this context. Spanish speakers like to use it because they think of the word "único" in Spanish and then bring it across to English.

A better word for this sentence would be "only". So, it should be: "Sunday is the only day that I can relax". If you want to use the word "unique" in English then you need to use it in a context where you are trying to say that something is very original!

For example:

"This building is very unique because it uses a lot of glass and metal"

GETTING A JOB WHEN YOU HAVE NO EXPERIENCE IS A "CATCH 22"

I have noticed that most of my students in Spain don't know this expression, even the high-level ones. It was first coined (used) in a novel that is called "Catch 22".

This expression is all about a paradoxical situation. It is quite difficult to explain so it is best to describe it through an example:

To get a job you need experience but how are you going to get experience if you can't get a job in the first place? - This is a "Catch 22" situation.

ENGLISH EXPRESSION: "ICING ON THE CAKE"

If you don't know, many birthday cakes in the UK are traditionally covered with "icing" which is basically solidified sugar. It is not very common in Spain, or at least I have not seen many Spanish cakes covered with "icing". "Icing" is especially popular with children because it can be very colourful.

So, essentially, icing is very popular in the UK but we also have an expression with "icing" which is "icing on the cake". This is used when you consider that something is great but something else has made it even better.

For example:

"Spain is amazing but the food is the icing on the cake"

ARE YOU "NUTS"?

Probably the first thing you think about when you see the word "nuts" is "nueces" but in English, it can also be used in a different context. If you think that someone is a little bit "loco" you can say:

"I think you are "nuts"

or

"You are nuts if you think you can pass that exam without studying"

ENGLISH IDIOMS: "TO HEAR SOMETHING ON THE GRAPEVINE"

Do you know this expression? The translation of "grape" is "uva" and a "grapevine" is the plant that the grapes grow on. You can use this when you hear something from an unofficial source.

So, for example:

"I heard on the grapevine that he is going to leave the company"

or

"I heard on the grapevine that they have bought a big house in the countryside"

You might have heard this expression before because it is the title of a song by Marvin Gaye!

HE CAME IN HERE LIKE "A BULL IN A CHINA SHOP"

This expression is very interesting for Spanish speakers considering the fact that it contains one of the symbols of Spain = "the bull". This expression can be used when describing someone who is not very careful about the way they move or behave.

Example:

"He came in here like a bull in a china shop and told us all to leave immediately"

or

"He was like a bull in a china shop, he didn't care about whether he knocked anything over"

FUTBOL INGLÉS: "WHO ATE ALL THE PIES?"

This phrase might be a little difficult to understand at the beginning but by the end of this post, I am sure it will be pretty self-explanatory.

This is a chant (*cántico*) that is used in England when the crowd (*multitud*) notice that one of the players has put on some weight (*ha ganado peso*). When this happens, they sing:

"Who ate all the pies?"

In this case, it is important to know what "pies" are! A "pie" is a little like an "empanada" because it has pastry on the outside and meat in the middle. They are not exactly the same but it is the closest thing that we have in the UK to an "empanada".

When I first came to Spain, "empanadas" were a revelation for me. I loved them!

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "LET SOMEONE OFF THE HOOK"?

This is an expression or "frase hecha" as you would say in Spanish. It is quite commonly used in the UK but maybe somewhat less in the US. To "let someone off the hook" means that they have done something wrong and they should be told off (*regañar*) about it, but instead, you decide that you will not punish them.

A good example of this would be if a police officer stops you for speeding but decides to "let you off the hook" because your wife is about to give birth in the back of the car... for example!

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "MY NECK OF THE WOODS"?

This is one of those expressions that might completely confuse a Spanish speaker when they hear a native Anglo using it. There is always the temptation to translate this into Spanish, but it does not help that much because it doesn't have much to do with either your "cuello" or "bosque".

The real meaning of this phrase is when you want to talk about your local area where you live.

So you might say:

"In my neck of the woods there are loads (gran cantidad de algo) of great shops!"

¿"ESTÁ COLAPSADO" EN INGLÉS?

I have heard this a lot in Spain, and most of the time it is related to traffic conditions. I was talking about this word with a student the other day, and we were finding it difficult to think of an English alternative.

The obvious spanglish version is to use the word "collapse" but this is usually used in the verb form.

For example:

"The bridge collapsed because there was so much rain"

My preference for "colapsado" would be something like "there is a massive traffic jam" or "the road is blocked" or "nobody is moving...the traffic is at a standstill".

200

FRASE HECHA: "PIE IN THE SKY"

Do you know what "pie in the sky" means? It has nothing to do with "pies" or the "sky" but you will hear expressions like these from native speakers.

Remember that, in general, understanding native speakers is much more difficult than others who use English as a foreign language, so don't worry if you don't understand some of these strange expressions.

My advice is to try to work out the meaning as much as you can from the context! Anyway, "pie in the sky" is used when something is not realistic!

So, a good example of that is:

"It is pie in the sky to think that you are going to learn English in a week!"

201

¿"NO TE CUELES" EN INGLÉS?

As I am sure you know, the UK is a nation of people who LOVE to queue! Even at a bus stop, they will form an orderly line so that everybody knows who is first and who is last! Very organised but a bit boring!

Here in Spain, the situation can be a little more "creative" especially when people are driving! In Belgium, where I lived for seven years, the rule was closer to the Darwinian idea of "survival of the fittest".

Anyway, just in case you find yourself in a situation where you need to say "no te cueles" in English, the best option is to say:

"Don't jump the queue"

¿"UN DÍA SÍ, UN DÍA NO" EN INGLÉS?

I like this one because it is an example of perfect spanglish! So, imagine that you have been to the doctor and he has told you that you need to take some medicine! The thing is, you don't need to take the medicine every day, in fact, you just need to take it: "un día sí, un día no". Ok great. So, how do you say that in English?

The obvious choice would be:

"one day yes, one day no"

English would be lovely if it were that easy...but unfortunately, that is wrong. To translate this expression, you need to use the cumbersome and difficult phrase:

"Every other day"

So, the correct version would be:

"I need to take this medicine every other day"

¿"LAS AFUERAS" EN INGLÉS?

This is an expression that trips up many Spanish speakers and invites mistakes. If I ask you where you live and you want to say "las afueras de Madrid" what would you reply?

Do you have a solution?

Maybe you might say:

"I live on the outside of Madrid"

Does that sound familiar? Have you used that option?

In general, I prefer to use "the outskirts" because it sounds better:

"I live on the outskirts of Madrid"

You could also use the word: "suburbs" which does not have the negative connotation that it has in Spanish. If you want to keep on using the word "outside", then you need to change the sentence structure and say:

"I live just outside Madrid"

¿"SOMOS TRES" EN INGLÉS?

This is such a nice easy phrase in Spanish yet so difficult in English. The spanglish translation is: "We are three", but I am afraid to tell you that that is not correct! Yes, I know, you can't believe it. You have been saying that for years...right? If you know the correct version, well done because it is not very easy to remember.

The right way to say "Somos tres" is:

"There are three of us"

Horrible, I know.

So, the next time you go to a restaurant and they ask: "How many of you are there?" You need to say: "There are three of us". You love English right? ¿Jajaja! (I laugh in Spanish).

¿"CON LOS AÑOS" EN INGLÉS?

This came up (a phrasal verb which means: "surgió") in one of my classes recently. Someone wanted to say "con los años" and they used: "with the years".

A logical but spanglish translation.

This was not the first time I had heard this, so I wrote it down to share it with all of you. A better option is to say:

"Over the years"

or

"As the years go by"

For example:

"The amount of these subsidies has changed over the years"

"NOTHING DE NOTHING"

I can't remember when I heard this. I guess it was a joke...probably! The expression "nada de nada" is interesting to translate because although the word "nothing" would be the obvious choice we don't use it in this context. In fact, the best option here is "at all" or "anything at all".

So, for example:

"I don't know anything at all about the meeting next week"

or

"I haven't heard anything at all about that issue"

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "IT'S NOT MY CUP OF TEA"?

Some stereotypes are false, and some are closer to the truth. There is, however, no denying that the British do drink a lot of tea. Maybe it is because of the cold weather or just an old habit, who knows!

Clearly, it is so intrinsic to our cultural makeup that it has even filtered into our language with expressions like "it's not my cup of tea". Do you know what it means? The basic translation is something like: "no es para mí" or "no es lo mío".

So, there you are. A new tea expression for you!

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "A BUN IN THE OVEN"?

A student of mine was recently trying to remember this expression but although they could remember the "oven" part they were not at all sure about the beginning.

The reason for this was probably due to the fact that the word "bun" is not commonly known in Spain. A "bun" is a round type of bread that is soft and can be used to make sandwiches (*por cierto, hay un pueblo en Inglaterra que se llama "Sandwich"*).

Anyway, the meaning of "a bun in the oven" is that someone is pregnant!

Crazy, I know, but there you go...

¿"NO ME VACILES" EN INGLÉS?

This was a question that I got from one of my readers! I thought it was an interesting expression so I thought I would share it with all of you! If you put this expression into an online translator it comes out with: "do not hesitate me". Mmm, interesting...but wrong! Another translator I checked does not do a very good job because it also opts for the word "hesitate", which although might be ok in some contexts when you are using "vaciles" is not the right option when you are talking about "no me vaciles".

A much better option could be:

"You're kidding me"

or

"You're pulling my leg"

or

"You're messing with me"

¿"HACER EL RIDÍCULO" EN INGLÉS?

This is an interesting one for many reasons. I heard this quite a lot when I first came to Spain because many of my students said to me that they were worried about "hacer el ridículo" when they were speaking English.

Since then, this issue has consistently come up in the sessions that I do with students and is one of the reasons why many of our lessons focus on confidence-building rather than just the pure mechanics of the English language!

The paradox about this whole situation is that for you to be good at English, you need to get to the point where you are actually not worried about "making a fool of yourself" (that is the translation).

¿"LA GOTA QUE COLMA EL VASO" EN INGLÉS?

Expressions are very hard to remember in foreign languages. Of course, it depends on what type of learning profile you have. You might LOVE learning these types of "frases hechas". I find them difficult.

This is one that I have heard again and again so I thought it would be worth telling you how to say it in English. Although, as I always say, understanding them is always more important than incorporating them into your vocabulary.

The translation in English is:

"The straw that broke the camel's back"

Completely different, I know!

¿"HAY QUE RECONOCER" EN INGLÉS?

This is one of those Spanish expressions that causes lots of problems. I think it is about the subconscious mind choosing the "logical" option. Once again, however, the "logical option" is not the correct option. You might be tempted to use: "You have to recognise", but I would steer you away from that.

My preferred choice would be:

"You have to admit/accept that your actions were questionable"

The word "recognise" is used when we see something or someone that we have seen previously.

¿"SOY UNA MAQUINA" EN INGLÉS?

One of my students used this expression just after she had completed a Cambridge Advanced "Use of English" exercise.

As soon as she said it, I thought..."How would you say that in English?". To be honest, I don't think there is an easy translation. Off the top of my head, I think I would choose something like:

"I am on fire today!"

or

"I am the best"

or

"I am the bee's knees"

Just to make it very clear..."I am a machine" is not correct.

¿"ECHAR UNA BRONCA" EN INGLÉS?

I always tell my students that it is more important to understand phrasal verbs than actually use them but there are some moments when they are just inescapable.

"Echar una bronca" is a good example of this because it is difficult to find a good translation of this phrase without using a phrasal verb. The best solution here is: "to tell off".

This phrasal verb is mostly used in "separated" form.

For example:

"As I left the shop, he told me off"

or

"The teacher told her off for talking in class"

¿"LLEVARSE BIEN" EN INGLÉS?

This is another phrasal verb that is worth knowing. It is very commonly used in business contexts but can also be used elsewhere. Do you know what it is?

The best option here is:

"to get on with someone"

I am sure that if you heard this in context, you would understand it intuitively but it is more difficult to think of when you suddenly need the translation from Spanish.

Maybe you would go for the other alternative which is:

"I have a good relationship with my boss"

That is fine.

Try to avoid:

"I have a good "relation" with my boss"

...that is more spanglish.

EL FAMOSO: "MORE OR LESS"

I think I have heard Spanish speakers use this expression every day since I arrived in Spain. The frequency of its use is hardly surprising considering the fact that "más o menos" is pre-programmed into your minds and the obvious and direct translation is "more or less".

The first thing to make clear here is that "more or less" can be used in English without a problem but you need to be careful about HOW you use it. If used in conjunction with a number, it will generally be correct:

"There are more or less 50 chairs in the conference room"

or

"It took me more or less 3 hours to drive to Valencia"

Generally, we use this expression more orally rather than in the written form. The classic mistake for Spanish speakers is:

-"Can you speak English?"...

-"Mmm, yes, more or less"

This is not ideal because there is no number involved. A better answer would be:

"A little"



NO SE DICE: "COUNT WITH YOU"

This is an interesting one, but it is also challenging to rewire your brain so that you stop making this mistake! This expression is useful in a business context but also when you are socialising with friends, so it is well worth remembering.

The source of the problem comes from the Spanish phrase:

"Cuento contigo!"

Considering the Spanish form, it is absolutely natural for Spanish speakers to say "I am going to count with you".

The problem here is that if I, as a native speaker, here that phrase the first thing that comes to my mind is that someone is going to count numbers with me: "one...one" "two...two". Do you understand what I am saying?

The correct version here is to use:

"I am counting ON you to help me with the preparations for the party"

NO SE DICE: I LIKE IT "TOO" MUCH

I am not really sure where this mistake comes from, but it is the basic translation of:

"Me gusta mucho"

"I like it too much" is not correct because when you use the word "too" it means "demasiado" and therefore, in English at least, is something negative.

We use the word "too" (in this case) when we describe something that we know is not good: "I drink too much beer" etc.

The correct version, in this case, is:

"I like it a lot"

For example:

- "Did you like the film?"

- "Yes, I liked it a lot, it was amazing!"

¿"DAR POR HECHO" EN INGLÉS?

In modern day society, we take a lot of things "por hecho" but I am not going to "dar por hecho" that you know how to say "dar por hecho" in English.

So, the correct way to say "dar por hecho" in English is: "to take (something) for granted".

For example:

"I take running water (acceso al agua) in my house for granted"

YOU CANNOT "MAINTAIN" A CONVERSATION

Clearly, you can see where I am going with this one...right? "Mantener una conversación" is programmed into your brain so you will naturally be pulled in that direction when you speak English. "Maintaining" a conversation in English, however, is a little tricky!

It's better not to use that construction at all and chose the more simplified form: "have a conversation".

For example:

"It's very easy to have a conversation with him about anything"

You can use the word "maintain" in English but it's more commonly used when you are talking about a car or machine that needs to be "maintained".

COULD YOU "MAKE" ME A FAVOUR?

"Do" and "make" are horrible in English, and most students ask me about the rule which I then explain but does not seem to help much at all... interestingly!

My preference in these situations is to increase your exposure to English so that it eventually becomes obvious which is the correct choice.

Spanish speakers are likely to say "MAKE me a favour" because you are unconsciously thinking about "hacerme un favor".

Try to avoid that pitfall by saying:

| *"Could you DO me a favour"*

DON'T TAKE YOUR JACKET OFF UNTIL 40th MAY

I am sure most of you know this expression in Spanish? I can't remember the first time that I heard it, but it somehow stuck in my head! Is it a Madrid thing?

I can remember thinking that the 40th of May (or 10th June approx) is quite late to take your jacket off especially considering that the weather in Spain is quite good.

After having lived here in Spain for a few years, it seems to me to be good advice though. It is not always correct but overall pretty precise!

**"BETTER TO HAVE A BIRD IN YOUR
HAND RATHER THAN 100 THAT ARE
FLYING!"**

That is my bad translation of the famous Spanish expression. Interestingly, there is a very similar English one! I sometimes wonder how two very different languages can have such similar phrases!

The English version is:

"A bird in the hand is worth two in the bush"

It is interesting that in the UK we refer to a "bush" (*arbusto*) and the Spanish one refers to 100 birds flying!

¿"ME PUEDES ECHAR UN CABLE" EN INGLÉS?

This is not a spanglish mistake, I don't think I have ever heard somebody say:

"Can you give me a cable?"

It is still interesting to think about this phrase though because you might be stumped (*perplejo*) about how to translate it into English.

The best approach is to use the slightly more common: "echar una mano" which works perfectly in English:

"Can I give you a hand?"

or

"Do you need a hand?"

¿"ESTADO DE ÁNIMO" EN INGLÉS?

How do you feel about your English? Happy? Confident? I hope so because that is where you need to get to.

It is crucial to feel happy about your progress! If you feel happy and are enjoying the learning process, then your progress will be exponential!

So, make sure you are in a good mood (*estado de ánimo*) when you are learning because everything will seem so much more comfortable and a bit of a doddle (*súper fácil*).

¿"NO ME FÍO" EN INGLÉS?

This came up in one of my classes recently and I am sure that many Spanish speakers are not really sure about the correct translation. The most obvious option is:

"I don't trust them/him/her"

That is fine. Try to avoid the word "confidence" because that does not work so well in this context. Other alternatives could include:

"I am wary of..."

or

"I am suspicious of..."

Overall, I would choose to use the word "trust" because it is an important word to remember in a whole variety of contexts both professional and personal.

¿"NO LO AGUANTO" EN INGLÉS?

I think I can count the number of times that I have heard a Spanish speaker translate "no lo aguanto" into English correctly. It is hard, I understand that. The English version is not even close to the Spanish version so that makes it even more difficult and it is very tempting to use the easier version which is something like:

"I don't like that/him/her"

I always say that these easier/alternative versions are fine and are an important strategy when you are not sure about how to translate something. Simplification is vital and required in many situations.

It is always good to stretch yourself though and if I heard you say:

"I can't stand that/him/her"

I would be impressed and you could give yourself a good pat on the back!

"IT'S RAINING WITHOUT STOPPING"

I love this one. In Spain, you will not have to use it that much because the weather is good, but if you go to the UK you will need to find an expression that covers:

"Está lloviendo sin parar"

It goes without saying that "It's raining without stopping" is not ideal although I am sure it would be understandable in most cases. But if you are looking for a more "native" approach, there are some better alternatives.

For example:

"It is tipping (down) with rain"

or

"It's been raining all day"

I would avoid the classic "It's raining cats and dogs" because although I am sure you have learnt that expression at school it is hardly ever used by native speakers in the UK!

Capítulo 7 - Palabras esquivas

Vocabulary

"Although we are hardly aware of it, we all have different sets of vocabulary for different situations. Building your English vocabulary is essential but knowing which set of vocabulary is best for you is vital. It is impossible to be an expert in all sets of vocabulary whether that is in a foreign language or your mother tongue. " - Daniel Smith

A "TOPIC"?

Many Spanish speakers use the word "topic" when they speak in English but sometimes they use it in the wrong way because it a "false friend". When Spanish speakers use "topic" in English they are often referring to what in English is called a "stereotype".

So, the Spanish speakers might say:

"Women being more intelligent than men is a topic"

When a native person hears this they will be confused! Instead you need to say:

"Women being more intelligent than men is a stereotype"

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "LOS DEDOS DE LOS PIES" IN ENGLISH?

Many Spanish speakers don't know how to say this in English. Most of the time they say "fingers of the feet" but, of course, they know that this is not correct.

The correct translation is "toes" which is pronounced exactly the same way as the famous brand of jewellery called "Tous".

"NEW" OR "NEWS"?

Spanish speakers like to translate "noticia" into "new" but this is not correct. In English you can only use the word "news".

The word "new" in English always means "nuevo".

If you need to say "noticia" then it is best to say something like:

"Today I read SOME news"

"TRIP" OR "TRAVEL"?

This is a very common mistake for Spanish speakers. The main problem is that Spanish speakers like to use "travel" in many situations where it cannot be used.

So, an example sentence is:

"Yesterday I made a TRAVEL to Seville"

This sentence is wrong for a number of reasons but the main thing to remember is that "travel" is a verb not a noun (*sustantivo*).

So, the correct sentence is:

"Yesterday I went on a TRIP to Seville"

The verb "travel" is used as a verb in sentences like:

"He travels all around the world"

DO YOU KNOW WHAT "RUSTY" MEANS?

When I first meet some students who want to learn English many of them tell me that their English is a little "oxidado".

In English, we do use the word "to oxidise or oxidised" but this is mostly in connection with a scientific context like a chemistry experiment. The best way to say "oxidado" in English is "rusty".

Is your English rusty? Is your car rusty?

PLEASE DON'T SAY "FATHERS"

This is a silly one but I hear it so often that it is worth highlighting. I think Spanish speakers say it because they are not concentrating. It is clearly spanglish because people think of "mis padres" and then just do the direct translation and say:

"my fathers"!

Most of the time people know they have made a mistake immediately but still PLEASE avoid "fathers" in this context.

"HISTORY" OR "STORY"?

This is a mistake that MANY Spanish speakers make all the time. They get confused between the two and this can make the conversation VERY difficult to understand. "History" is everything that is connected with the past.

So, for example:

"Rome is a very interesting city and has a rich history"

The meaning of "story" is different because it is an account of imaginary or real people told for entertainment.

So, for example:

"I told my friend the story about when we went to Japan"

or

"I like to read a story before I go to bed"

Try to avoid mixing the two versions.

¿CUANDO PUEDO USAR "GOOD NIGHT"?

The simple answer to this is that it is only in very specific situations that you can use "good night".

Lots of mistakes are made because Spanish speakers often think about "buenas noches" in their mind and then come out with "good night" as a form of greeting.

This is not ideal because "good night" can only be used when you are basically saying "goodbye" late at night.

"URBANISATION" CANNOT BE USED IN ENGLISH

Many Spanish speakers use the word "urbanisation" to describe where they live but a native speaker would be confused by this description.

It is better to say that you live in a "block of flats" or an "apartment complex".

The word "urbanisation" in English means the "process of a rural area becoming more urban".

HOW DO YOU SAY "ESTACION DE ESQUÍ" IN ENGLISH?

I have heard this mistake many times during the time that I have been in Spain. Most Spanish speakers will translate this as: "ski station" but this is not how a native would describe this type of location.

A native would probably use:

█ *"ski resort"*

The word "station" is very much associated with either a "bus station" or "train station".

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "LENTILLAS" IN ENGLISH?

This is a classic and can be very funny in many situations. Most Spanish speakers fall into the spanglish trap when they think of "lentillas" in English.

What do you think the translation is? Are you thinking about "lentils"? Some of you are, for sure! "Lentils" is wrong, of course, because it means "lentejas".

So, you need to be careful before you say:

"Are you wearing/using lentils?"

The correct translation is:

"contact lenses"

240

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "PUENTE" IN ENGLISH?

This is an interesting one because the idea of the "puente" doesn't really exist in England. The obvious spanglish version is "bridge" but of course nobody would understand this in the UK because the only "bridges" we have are the physical ones!

The best way to translate a "puente" would be:

| *"a long weekend"*

or

| *"a bank holiday weekend"*

Most of the national holidays in the UK are placed on a Monday so it is impossible to create a "bridge"!

241

"HAM" OR "JAM"

Imagine you need to show some international clients around your town, so you show them the old town, you tell them about the amazing weather in Spain, you take them to have some amazing wine and then finally you tell them all about the amazing "jam" in Spain! "JAM"!?

Although you might think this is silly, the number of Spanish speakers that get this wrong is extraordinary.

The right way to say it is "ham" of course.

So, remember: "SPAIN HAS AMAZING HAM"!

DO YOU KNOW WHAT A "TRAFFIC JAM" IS?

So, you are late for a meeting which is in English and you need to come up with an excuse about why you are late.

In your mind you think: "OK, I know, I will say that there was an *atasco*", but then suddenly you realise that you don't know how to say "atasco" in English.

The answer is "traffic jam"!

Many Spanish speakers don't know this word and when I tell them they are surprised because they think it is a bit strange because of the word "jam" (*mermelada*).

So remember:

| *"traffic jam"*

Did you get stuck in a "traffic jam" this morning?

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "OBRAS" IN ENGLISH?

Many Spanish speakers don't know how to say "obras" in English or they use the spanglish version which is "works". The correct way to say "obras" (for your house) is: "to refurbish" or "to renovate".

So, an example sentence is:

"I am refurbishing my house to make it look more modern"

If you are talking about "obras" in the street then you need to use: "road works".

Example sentence:

"There is a traffic jam because of the road works"

HOW DO WE SAY "MACHISTA" IN ENGLISH?

This is a word that I hear many Spanish students say and I never really knew the best way to translate it. The most common example would be something like:

"The man who sits opposite me in my office is very "machista"".

Most of the time Spanish speakers don't know the translation of this word and just use the spanglish version.

A native speaker might understand you but it is good to use the correct version which in this case is: "sexist".

WHAT IS "ASIGNATURA" IN ENGLISH?

Many Spanish speakers don't know how to say this word properly in English. They often use the word "signature" or something similar. "Signature" means "firma" in Spanish. The correct translation is "subject".

So, for example:

| *"How many subjects did you study at school?"*

or

| *"What was your favorite subject at school?"*

THE FAMOUS "FUNCIONARIOS" IN SPAIN

The moment that I arrived in Spain I heard a lot about "funcionarios". Some people think there are too many and some people think there are not enough.

The idea of the "funcionario" is an interesting concept because in the UK we don't have the exact same type of role. The exact translation of "funcionario" is "civil servant" but "civil servants" only work directly for the national government.

Others, that work for the local government, are called "local government employees".

Interestingly, these employees are not given any special "protection" and can be fired just like people in the private sector!

"CHILDS" AND "CHILDRENS" ARE BOTH WRONG

I hear this mistake almost everyday. It is a very common mistake for Spanish speakers.

For example:

| *"My childs get up very early in the morning"*

or

| *"My childrens don't like pasta"*

The mistake happens because Spanish speakers are thinking about the word "niños" in their head and therefore make this mistake. The rule is that in the singular you need to use the word "child" and in the plural you need to use "children".

You will say: "Daniel, that is easy". Yes, it is easy but I hear the mistake so often that it is worth highlighting it.

DO YOU SAY THIS: WHEN I GO TO THE BANK I USE MY "TARGET"?

This is a classic mistake and obviously comes from the word "tarjeta".

In English, the word "target" is used when you are talking about sales.

For example:

"My sales target this week is 1000 units"

In other words, we use "target" to describe an objective. The correct translation of "tarjeta" is "card".

So, for example:

"When I go to the cash machine I use my bank card"

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "COMPROMISO" IN ENGLISH?

This is a very common false friend. Most people translate "compromiso" into "compromise" but "compromise" has a different meaning in English which is: "llegar a un consenso".

The correct translation of "compromiso" is "commitment".

So, be very careful when you are doing your sales pitch and you want to say:

| *"Lo puedes probar sin compromiso"*

because you need to translate the word "compromiso" correctly!

250

DO YOU KNOW HOW TO SAY "COMPORTAMIENTO" IN ENGLISH?

I have noticed that this is a word that many Spanish speakers find difficult to translate. They start the sentence but then half way through they say something like:

| *"Cómo se dice "comportamiento" en inglés?"*

It is an important word especially if you are working in human resources because you often need to be able to talk about people and their reactions. So what do you think the correct translation is?

Answer:

| *"behaviour"*

WHAT DO YOU GET WHEN YOU BUY A PRODUCT?

Most Spanish speakers would tell me that you get a "ticket" but this is not correct in English.

A "ticket" in English is only used in very specific situations which include: "cinema or theatre tickets" or a "parking ticket" (which means "una multa"). The thing that you get when you buy a product is a "receipt".

So, remember, this Christmas when you get all your presents, you need to keep the "ticket regalo" or in English:

"The receipt" (remember that the "p" is completely silent!)

A "TIP" HAS THREE MEANINGS IN ENGLISH! DO YOU KNOW THEM?

When I ask Spanish speakers this question most of them only know one meaning which is: "propina". The second and third meanings are a little more difficult to know.

So can you tell me what they are?

Answer:

2) Un consejo

3) Un lugar para dejar basura

HOW DO YOU SAY "AGUAFIESTAS" IN ENGLISH?

To be honest, this is a word that I only recently picked up (phrasal verb = *aprendí*) but I think it is quite interesting because the translation into English is a little complicated and is not a word that you hear everyday.

So, do you know what the translation is, off the top of your head (expression that means: without thinking very much)?

Answer:

1) *Spoil sport*

2) *Party pooper*

POLITICAL ENGLISH

I thought it would be good to cover a few key words in this area. The first is the difference between: "politics" and "politicians".

Many Spanish speakers get confused with these two words.

The first is:

| *the profession*

and the second is:

| *the people who work in that area*

¿"AGUJETAS" EN INGLÉS?

Last week, for the first time in my life, I played game of "pádel"! It was great fun but left me in no doubt that I need to improve my fitness because the next day I had "agujetas".

I wasn't the only one, thankfully, but my fellow players confessed to me that they didn't know how to say "agujetas" in English and, as they are quite good at English, I thought it would be a good subject to explore.

The correct translation is:

"to feel stiff"

Example:

"I feel stiff because I played "pádel" yesterday"

ARE YOU "SENSIBLE" OR "SENSITIVE"?

I am surprised that I have not done this tip before because it is quite a common mistake.

When Spanish speakers hear the word "sensible" in English they naturally think of the Spanish word "sensible" as being the correct translation BUT THIS IS WRONG. "Sensible" in English means: "sensato".

For example:

"He is a very sensible man, he never does anything stupid!"

The word "sensitive" means: "sensible" in Spanish. For example: "My teeth are very sensitive so I can't eat ice cream".

I hope that is clear? Remember:

SENSIBLE (ENGLISH) = SENSATO (SPANISH)

and

SENSITIVE (ENGLISH) = SENSIBLE (SPANISH)

HOW WOULD YOU TRANSLATE "OPOSICIONES" INTO ENGLISH?

Since I arrived in Spain in 2007, I have always heard a lot about the famous "oposiciones" and how many people study for them for years and years to become full government employees.

In England, we don't have anything that is quite the same as these tests and for that reason we don't really have a very good translation for them!

The best option might be:

| *"government exams for civil service entry"*

**MY COLLEAGUE HAS BEEN
PROMOTED AND I HAVEN'T, IT'S SO
"INJUST"?**

Does this ring a bell (*te suena*)? Many Spanish speakers don't know how to say "injusto" in English so they normally try the spanglish version and say "injust".

Having lived here in Spain for many years I know exactly what this means when someone Spanish says it but someone native might find it a bit confusing. The correct way to say "injusto" is: "unfair" or "not fair".

Kids love to say this word because for them many things are "unfair"!

I PUT MY CAR IN THE "PARKING"

Although you might think that the word "parking" MUST be an English word, the way in which Spanish speakers use it is often incorrect. The correct version of the sentence above is:

"I put my car in the car park" (British version)

or

"I put my car in the parking garage" (American version)

So, as you can see, neither of these versions is like the original Spanish version. The only time we really use the word "parking" is when we use it in the present continuous form:

"What are you doing? I am PARKING my car"

"ÉXITO" IN ENGLISH?

This is one of those situations when you know you should really know the translation but it just does not come naturally.

Most upper level students know what the translation is but some lower level students are always attracted to the idea of the spanglish version: "exit". "Exit" in English is: "salida".

So, things can get confusing, as you can imagine. The correct translation is "success" and if you want to use it as an adjective then you need to use:

| *"successful"*

DO YOU PAY FOR THE "LIGHT"?

I always find this funny because in English it is impossible to pay for the "light". Spanish speakers say this because they are translating directly from Spanish:

"Tengo que pagar la luz todos los meses"

If you say that you need to pay for the "light" to someone native they will look at you very strangely". In this case, the word "luz" needs to be translated into "electricity".

So, in England we always talk about:

"the electricity bill"

or

"We pay too much for our electricity"

So, remember, NEVER USE "LIGHT" when you are talking about your bills.

MY "COUPLE" WORKS AS AN ENGINEER

This is a very common mistake because people translate directly from Spanish and they think about the words "mi pareja". The correct version of the sentence above is:

"My partner/husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend works as an engineer"

We do use the word "couple" but we use it in a slightly different context. For example, you can say:

"Do you know if they are a couple?"

which is when you are asking whether two people are linked romantically. The other way we use couple is to talk about "two things".

For example:

"Can I have a couple of beers, please?"

This means that you want two beers.

THE "HOST" OF THE PARTY

The word "host" is not often used by many Spanish speakers. The exact translation to Spanish is "anfitrión".

Do you know the word "host"? Have you used it before? I guess most of you haven't because even high level students often don't know this word.

Most of the time it is used in the context of entertaining guests (*invitados*). It can also be used in the IT (information technology) sector when you are talking about servers or in biology when an insect lives off its "host".

¿"MORCILLA" EN INGLÉS?

I had never tried morcilla before I came to Spain but interestingly we have something very similar in the UK which is called "black pudding".

As I am sure you are aware, English people have a big breakfast in the morning (not "strong breakfast") and sometimes that can include "black pudding" especially if you are a "hard" northerner! (Black pudding is more common in the north).

Anyway, because I am a soft southerner, I never ventured into the domain of "black pudding" in the UK but somehow that all changed when I came to Spain! Maybe it was a friendly gentleman or a beautiful "señorita", I can't remember, but when they convinced me to try it, there was no going back.

Now, I enjoy morcilla with or without rice, with onion or with pine nuts (*piñones*)...have you noticed how expensive they are?

Anyway, thank you, Spain for introducing me to "morcilla"!

¿QUÉ ES UN "KETTLE"?

"Kettle" is an interesting word because when I mention it to Spanish speakers the majority of them have no idea what a "kettle" is. It is especially interesting because in many ways British people could not live without a "kettle".

Having lived in Spain for quite a few years it is obvious why Spanish speakers don't know the word and the reason is, that (in general) they don't use "kettles". So, now you are asking:

"What is a kettle?"

Well, most likely you have come across (phrasal verb = encontrar por casualidad) one in a hotel room because they are often provided to help you make a cup of tea.

The exact translation from the research (*investigación*) that I have done is:

"hervidor (de agua)"

WHAT IS "MOBBING"?

There are lots of interesting words in Spanish but from time to time there are some that are very surprising and this is especially the case when the word seems to have been imported from English.

The most famous example of this is: "footing" which seems as if it is English but when I first arrived in Spain I had no idea what "footing" was. It was only later when someone kindly explained the meaning to me that I understood!

The word "mobbing" is similar. It uses the gerund (ing) form and therefore seems to be an English word but once again I had no idea what it meant.

Having done some research it seems that it does exist as an English word but is almost never used. Instead, we (native English speakers) prefer to use the word "bullying" both in the context of a school and work.

"HOLY WEEK"?

I have often gone into a class with Spanish speakers and started talking about Easter, only to notice about 5 minutes later that nobody knows what I am talking about.

They all say:

| *"Easter? What is that?"*

Well, for those of you who don't know, "Easter" is "Semana Santa". It is quite common for Spanish speakers to talk about this specific holiday as "the holy week" but in the UK we generally say "Easter" or "Easter Holiday" or even "Easter Sunday" for the specific day.

Generally, it is traditional in the UK that children are given "Easter eggs" or need to search for them in the garden.

DO YOU NEED A "CITA"?

Spanish speakers often get confused when they try to translate "cita" into English. Many students think of the word "date" because this is maybe what they have heard in American films or series. The problem here is that the word "date" is mostly used in a romantic context: "I am going on a date with her/him tomorrow."

If you want to talk about a "cita" that is more formal or work related then you need to use the word "appointment".

This word is especially used in terms of going to the doctor or the dentist:

"Tomorrow I have an appointment with my doctor"

So, remember, there are two words that you need to think about when you think of the word "cita": 1) date, 2) appointment.

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "WILLING"?

This is an interesting issue because it often causes confusion for Spanish speakers. They like to use the word "willing" but they use it in the wrong context.

For example they say:

"I am willing for next week to arrive"

So, in other words, Spanish speakers use it to say they "are looking forward to something". The problem with this is that "willing" means something different.

The word "willing" is used to say that you are happy to do something or in Spanish:

"estar dispuesto"

HOW MANY "MATES" DO YOU HAVE?

The word "mate" is often an unknown. The reason for this is that it is generally used verbally rather than in the written form and, in addition to that, it is a colloquial expression. The students that I know who use it, tend to have gone to the UK or Australia for a year or so. The meaning of the word "mate" is "friend".

So, you can say:

"I have got a lot of mates in London"

or

"Do you know where the train station is, mate?"

The second example is a good one because it shows how the expression is often used and it is especially strange because it is often used even in the context where you are speaking to someone who is NOT your friend but complete stranger! I know... a little weird!

Some of my Spanish students say that it is similar to the word "tio" in Spanish.

LET ME EXPLAIN "CHEERS"

Spanish speakers mostly understand the word "cheers" as saying: "salud" when you are drinking a few beers in the pub with your friends. The second meaning, however, is less known but probably more important because it is used quite commonly in the UK as a way of saying "thank you".

So, for example, you might hear the following when you are ordering something in a bar:

| *"Here is your drink!... Oh, cheers!"*

So, remember: CHEERS = THANK YOU.

"FRIKI" IN ENGLISH?

Interestingly, in Spanish a "friki" can be anyone with an obsessive approach to a certain issue or subject (Am I right?). I often hear the word "friki" used in my classes and most students think that I should know what it means because I am English!

It is true that the word does have a connection with the word "freak" in English but a "friki" and a "freak" are not the same thing. A "freak" in English is someone who looks physically strange which is different to a "friki" in Spanish.

So, now you are thinking:

"How do you say "friki" in English?"

Well, that is an interesting question because the "friki" people we have in the UK are mostly connected with computing so our words to describe these types of people are connected to that context. They are: "nerd" or "geek".

ARE YOU A "PELOTA"?

In most of my classes there is always one student who does all the homework, studies everything very carefully and works very hard to improve their English. Of course, this means that when the other students notice this, they always say to the good student:

| *"You are a pelota!"*

In most cases, the students don't know how to say "pelota" in English. So, the next thing that I hear is: "Teacher, how do you say "pelota" in English?"

The most logical translation of "pelota" is "ball" but in this case that does not work. "Ball" is only used if you are talking about a "pelota" that you use in the park to play football.

The correct translation of "pelota" in the classroom is: "teacher's pet" (notice the saxon genitive = the pet that belongs to the teacher!).

TO BE "AWARE" OF SOMETHING

This is a verb that is quite unusual and therefore not well known. It is generally used in business contexts and more formal emails. Even high level students do not use it very often. To be "aware of something" is: "ser consciente de algo". I like to highlight this verb because it is a little more elegant than "do you know".

For example, below there are two sentences that mean exactly the same but the first one is much better in a formal context:

Are you aware that there is no meeting this Friday?

Do you know that there is no meeting this Friday?

Both sentences are fine but the first one is a little nicer and more refined.

"ESTRENAR" DOES NOT EXIST IN ENGLISH

Some words are just difficult to translate! This is true in some cases and there are quite a few words in Spanish that are difficult to translate correctly. One that I found the other day was the verb "estrenar".

Do you know how to say this verb in English?

The truth is that "estrenar" is difficult to translate and although online translators suggest that the translation is: "release" this is only correct in some situations.

For example it is fine when you use it like this:

"The film will be released on Friday"

The problem is that Spanish speakers also use the verb "estrenar" for when you wear new clothes for the first time. So, in this case, the word "release" is not appropriate.

In this context, there is no easy way to translate the meaning so you have to use a long sentence:

"Today I am going to wear this for the first time!"

THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN "REMIND" AND "REMEMBER"

To be honest, I am not exactly sure why there is so much confusion about these words but many Spanish speakers use them incorrectly. For example:

"This car remembers me of my childhood"

The correct version of this is:

"This car reminds me of my childhood"

So, when do we use these terms and how do we use them correctly? The word "remind" is used in a context when you are thinking about an object or situation that brings back memories about the past. It is also used when you want someone not to forget about something that is very important:

"I remind you that you need to be here at 9am"

The word "remember" is purely about what you have memorised from the past:

"I remember that when I went to university it was a very exciting experience"

DO YOU HAVE "PUNCTUAL" CLASSES?

This one is interesting. The classic sentence would be something like this:

| *"I would like to have "punctual" classes"*

If a native person hears this sentence they probably will think that the student wants the teacher to arrive "on time" (not late). The Spanish person, of course, does not want to say this.

What they are trying to say is that they would like to have classes from "time to time" or sporadically when it suits them best. Are you a punctual person?

The English are famous for being punctual although that is not always true.

"HOMEMADE"

It is important to know this word especially because Spanish speakers like to know if something is "homemade".

The word "casero" was one of the first words I learnt in Spanish because people here in Spain want to know if the food is "homemade". In the UK there is not such an emphasis on this but that is purely a cultural difference.

Closely connected to this word is: "handmade" which can be translated as "artesanal".

**"SWEAR WORDS" (PALABROTAS)
THE FIRST THING THAT YOU
LEARN WHEN YOU START
LEARNING A NEW LANGUAGE ARE
THE SWEAR WORDS.**

Although I am very confident that almost all my students know the swear words in English, the actual term "swear words" is often not immediately known or recognised by Spanish speakers.

"Swear" can also be used in the verb form: "He swears all the time" or can also be used in a court of law (albeit with a different meaning: "to promise"):

"I swear to tell the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth"

"TERRIFIC" DOES NOT MEAN "TERRORÍFICO"

Sometimes I use this word in class and the Spanish are often a little confused by its meaning because it does not have anything to do with "terrorífico". We use the word "terrific" in a variety of ways but most of the time it is used to describe something that is huge, massive, great or gigantic.

So, for example, you can say:

"I was walking down the street when I heard a terrific noise (loud noise)"

or

"I hope you have a terrific day (wonderful day)"

or

"The concert was terrific (amazing)"

"SWEET" OR "SWEAT"?

Normally I would refrain from speaking about bodily excretions in my posts but in this case I think it is worth it. For some reason, Spanish speakers often get confused about how to say "sudar" in English.

They often think about "sudar" and then translate it as "sweet" or at least pronounce it that way which, of course, means "dulce".

The correct word, however, is "sweat" which is pronounced:

| *"suét [pronunciar en español]"*

Interestingly, Spanish speakers "sweat like chickens" (*sudar como un pollo*) but the English "sweat like pigs".

"EVEN" AND "ODD"

After the new policy in Madrid with regard to car access was implemented recently, many students tried to talk about "par" and "impar" but did not know how to say these words in English.

So, just to make it clear, "par" = "even" and "impar" = "odd".

Not many Spanish speakers know this vocab or least most of my students don't.

So, for example:

"Yesterday, cars with number plates with an even number were not allowed to drive in the city centre"

GUTS?, ¿QUÉ ES?

In general, most Spanish speakers don't know this word and certainly don't use it in their everyday language. The exact translation for "guts" is "tripas" which is a word that I remember very clearly in Spanish because of the first day when someone offered me the traditional Spanish dish:

| *"callos"*

Anyway, the reason that the word "gut" or "guts" is important in English is not because we eat them but because these words are included in a number of different expressions which are quite useful to know.

The first is:

| *"He has got guts"*

which means to be brave (*valiente*).

The second is:

| *"a gut feeling"*

which means "corazonada" or "sensación".

"MOTHER-IN-LAW" OR "MOTHER- IN-LOVE"?

This is always a funny one for me but it is simply an issue of pronunciation. When Spanish speakers talk about their family-in-law (*familia politica*) they often pronounce the word "law" as "love"!

I don't know why this happens but the number of students that I have heard saying "my sister-in-love" is quite high so I assume that this is quite a common mistake.

The important thing to remember here is that in English we say "brother-in-LAW" which is "LEY" and which, of course, is very different to "LOVE"!

HAVE YOU EVER WONDERED HOW TO SAY "BUEN PROVECHO" IN ENGLISH?

The UK has never really been famous for the quality of its food. In fact, in many cases it has been famous for the exact opposite.

This is, slowly but surely, changing and now you can eat good quality food all around the UK but, of course, food will never have the same importance as it does in Spain. It should come as no surprise that the English do not really have a good translation of "buen provecho".

There are two options: the first is "enjoy your meal" which is used more in the US than the UK and the second option is "bon appetite". Clearly stolen from the French!

IT'S NOT A "SPOT", IT'S AN "AD"

Some of my students start talking to me about an amazing "spot" that they have seen on TV. It is understandable that they would use the word "spot" because "spot" is an English word, right?

Well, yes it is but a "spot" is a "spot" not an "ad". A "spot" in English is commonly used for teenagers who go through the horrible experience of having "spots" on their faces.

Equally, you could wear a "spotty" dress, if that takes your fancy. If you want to talk about the "spots" on TV then you need to use the words "advertisement", "advert" or just, very simply, an "ad".

So, have you seen any good "ads" on TV recently?

YOU KNOW WHAT A "WALLET" IS BUT WHAT IS A "PURSE"?

I have not met many Spanish speakers that know the meaning of "purse". Considering that in Spanish the word "cartera" covers everything it is hardly surprising that people don't search for this word.

So, to explain: a wallet is generally used by men whereas a "purse" is used by women to store money (notes and coins) as well as important documentation.

By the way, did you know that it is not a requirement in the UK to carry formal identification or an ID card?

In the UK, there has been a debate about the need for ID cards for many years but, in the end, the UK still does not issue ID cards.

ON MONDAY I WILL HAVE A "PROOF"

This is a classic. I hear it all the time! Clearly, this comes from Spanish and more specifically the word "prueba". So, the thought process, in this case, is something like this: I need to say "prueba", mmm...how can I translate "prueba", probably something starting with "p" ... I know:

"proof"

In many ways that is correct because SOMETIMES "proof" will be the right word but only if you are in court of law and you need to provide some "proof" that something happened. The more common use of "prueba" needs to be translated as a "test".

For example:

"I am going to have a medical test on Monday"

THE "PRINCIPAL" PROBLEM IS THAT I HAVE NO TIME

This sentence is actually correct and can be used in English but I prefer to use the word "main".

So, the sentence would be something like:

"The main problem is that I have no time"

In addition to this, you need to be careful with the different uses of "principal" and "principle" both of which are pronounced the same but have different meanings. "Principal" is often used in the context of a school when you want to talk about the director of the school, for example.

"Principle" on the other hand, is connected to the idea of morals:

"It is a matter of principle"

I WILL SEE YOU IN A "FORTNIGHT"!

This is a word that very few of my students know. If you use it when you speak English then...I am impressed! Well done. To those of you who are not sure what it means, the basic translation is:

| *"Te veré dentro de dos semanas"*

There are other ways to say this that are a little easier such as: "in two weeks" and many of you will want to just stick to the easy version when you are speaking (that is fine) but you also need to be aware (*ser consciente*) about what a "fortnight" means because when a native speaker uses it, you want to be able to understand it "a la primera" (instantly / immediately)!

"CAMPO" IN ENGLISH?

The direct translation of "campo" into English is "field" which can lead to Spanish speakers making a few mistakes (recuerda que es: "MAKING mistakes")!

The other way to translate "campo" is "countryside" which is more commonly used. So, for example:

"I am going to the countryside this weekend (NOT "field").

Another example: "The countryside (NOT "field") is very beautiful here". We use "field" more when we are talking about something related to agriculture:

"We are growing vegetables in this field"

"MY WEB" HELPS SPANISH SPEAKERS LEARN ENGLISH!

Lots of Spanish speakers make this mistake. The main problem is that they tend to say "my web" which is a direct translation of "mi web" but this does not make much sense in English.

A "web" in English is mostly associated with a spider's web. So, to avoid this mistake it is better to use the full version which is: "website". That way there will never be any confusion: "My website helps Spanish speakers learn English".

The only time that you can use "web" in relation to the internet is when you are talking about "THE WORLD WIDE WEB (WWW)" in general.

For example:

"You can find a lot of info on the web"

"FALL" OR "AUTUMN"?

Recently I noticed that Spanish speakers sometimes don't know that "fall" and "autumn" are the same thing! Most people know that "autumn" is "otoño" because they sound quite similar. Americans, however, don't use "autumn" and say "fall" instead.

That is why you will often see the word "fall" when you are watching film trailers!

Example:

"This fall prepare yourself for the most exciting film of the year!"

¿CONOCES LA PALABRA "TACKY"?

As is the case here in Spain, in the UK there are a wide variety of different shops ranging from very expensive to extremely cheap. One chain (*cadena*) of cheap shops that exist in the UK (which I have seen much less in Spain) is called "Pound shop".

These shops generally sell all their items for 99p (pence) or 1 pound. These can be great if you are looking for a cheap solution but in many cases they are a little "tacky".

This means that the products are generally low quality and cheap.

So, for example:

"This shop is a little tacky"

or

"The products in here are very tacky"

"NOTES" OR "MARKS"?

When Spanish speakers are talking about their exam results they often fall into the trap of talking about their "notes" because inside their head they have the word "notas".

For example:

"At school I always had good notes"

is not correct.

If you want to talk about your academic performance it is much better to use the words "marks" (UK) or "grades" (US).

For example:

"My marks at school were terrible (muy malos) but when I got to university they got better"

We use the word "notes" more commonly with money (*billete de 100 euros = 100 euro note*) or music ("These notes are very high").

"TIQUISMIQUIS" IN ENGLISH?

This is a word that I only recently came across (phrasal verb = encontrar por casualidad).

To be honest, I have never heard anybody Spanish use this word but a follower of my posts sent me a message to ask me what the proper translation would be. The first word that comes to my mind when I think of "tiquismiquis" is "picky".

So, for example:

"He is a bit picky about his food"

or

"She is very picky about the type of decoration in her house"

HE REALLY IS SO "CABEZOTA"

This is not really a "spanglish" mistake but it is a word that many Spanish speakers struggle (*les resulta difícil*) to find the translation for. Automated online translators translate this word as "headstrong" which, although is not completely incorrect, I prefer to replace with "stubborn".

So, for example:

"She never listens to my advice, she is very stubborn" (Recuerda que "advice" es singular: no se dice "advices")

or

"He is so stubborn that I am not even going to try to convince him"

Just like in Spanish, the word "stubborn" usually has a negative connotation.

"TACAÑO" IN ENGLISH?

It took me a while to learn this word in Spanish but it is useful so it is worth knowing in English too. Probably the best translation is the word "stingy".

So, you can say:

"My friend is very stingy, he never wants to pay for anything!"

Another alternative is "tight-fisted".

"RELATIVE" OR "FAMILIAR"?

So, imagine you are talking about your family or, more specifically, your wider family which includes your aunts and uncles, cousins, nephews and nieces. If you want to talk about your wider family in a generic way then it is best to use "a relative".

So, for example you might say:

"I have a few relatives who live in Burgos"

Spanish speakers will always be tempted to use "familiar" in this context but it is something you should avoid.

The only real use of "familiar" in English is when you have a certain amount of knowledge about something:

"I am familiar with the concept of corporate responsibility"

300

"EXPECTATIVES" IS SPANGLISH

My "expectatives" for this English course are very high! Some spanglish words are very close to the correct word but not quite.

Here the word "expectatives" clearly comes from the word "expectativas" in Spanish but unfortunately it is not correct in English. The correct version in English is "expectations".

So:

"My expectations for this English course are very high... I think it will be amazing"

301

"ELECTRODOMÉSTICOS" IN ENGLISH?

I struggled with this translation for ages because I could never remember the correct word in English. In the end (not "at the end"), the translation is quite similar to Spanish: "domestic appliances".

An alternative to that is:

| *"kitchen appliances"*

Just to give you a bit of help with "domestic appliances" vocabulary, here are some examples: "freezer", "washing machine", "dishwasher", "fridge" and of course the famous "thermomix" which very few people in the UK know!

YOU CANNOT USE "MIDDLE" FOR "LA MEDIA"

When Spanish speakers want to talk about "la media" in English they often choose the word "middle" which, unfortunately does not work in English.

We use "middle" when we are talking about something physical such as "a road":

"Don't drive in the middle of the road"

or

"You need to cut the orange in the middle"

If you are talking about numbers then you need to use the word "average".

So, for example:

"The average age of people who go to a pop concert is 19"

or

"On average I get 100 emails per day"

"ELECCIÓN" IS NOT "ELECTION"

This is not a post about politics, it is about the fact that when Spanish speakers think about the word "elección" they sometimes use the word "election" in English.

Unfortunately, the word "election" in English can only really be used with reference to the political process of choosing a new government.

So, when you think of "elección" in Spanish you need to use the word "choice".

For example:

"At the end of the year I need to make a choice about whether I will continue on this course or not"

¿CÓMO SE DICE "GANGA" EN INGLÉS?

Most people when they go shopping are looking for a "ganga". They would like to buy a product that is cheaper than it usually is.

So, how do you say "ganga" in English? Clearly, it is an essential element of your English vocabulary if you go shopping on a regular basis.

I think the best way to translate "ganga" is the word "bargain". "Bargain" can be used both as a noun (*sustantivo*) and as a verb.

For example:

"This t-shirt is a bargain"

or

"I went to Africa, and I learnt that it was vital to bargain for everything!"

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "GROUNDBREAKING"?

This is an expression that if I heard a Spanish speaker use it, I would be impressed. It is not commonly used but can be heard in the business sector from time to time (*de vez en cuando*).

So, what does it mean? Well, if something is "groundbreaking" it means that it is very innovative and unique.

A good example of this is when the first iPhone was produced and it became clear that it was a "groundbreaking" product.

¿CÓMO SE DICE "DESFILE" EN INGLÉS?

After the 12th of October, I was speaking with lots of my students about the "desfile" that happened on that day. It is sometimes not very easy to find this type of vocabulary off the top of your head (*derepente..sin pensar mucho*).

So, how do you say "desfile" in English? My original thought was that it would be a "procession", but that would be more associated with a religious event, for example, like the ones that occur in Spain during Easter (*Semana Santa*) - (*No se dice: "Holy week"*).

After a while, I started to think that, in fact, a better translation is: "parade".

So, the correct sentence would be:

| *"There was a military parade in Madrid"*

307

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "HECTIC"?

I use this word quite a lot, and when I use it in class, many learners are not sure about the meaning.

The general definition of "hectic" is that something has been very "busy" or "frenetic". It is used when you need to fit in a lot of activities into a short period of time.

For example:

"I have had a hectic day full of meetings"

or

"We had a hectic holiday because we needed to see so many people"

¿QUÉ ES "MARMITE"?

An essential element of learning a language is learning about the culture of the country where they speak it. It is challenging to get a feeling for a language if you do not know about the small and strange curiosities associated with a country.

So, if you have the opportunity to travel, do so, and try to pick up as many difficult cultural quirks as you can. In England, "Marmite" would probably fall into this category because it is not widely available elsewhere.

The slogan associated with this product is:

"You either love it, or you hate it"

It is very difficult to explain what Marmite is! The best way to find out is to try it!

¿QUÉ SIGNIFICA: "TRICKY"?

This is a word that I use a lot, almost without thinking. To be honest, I'm not sure why I use it, but I do. It is also a word that many new students are unclear about.

The meaning of "tricky" is "difficult".

Learning the irregular verbs in English can be "tricky" or passing your driving test can be "tricky".

YOUR CAR HAS BROKEN DOWN, AND YOU NEED TO CALL THE "GRÚA"!

The only reason that I am covering this vocabulary point is that I have noticed that many students are not sure how to say it. In many ways, it is not surprising because although "grúa" is quite an easy word in Spanish, there is no easy equivalent in English.

The best option is:

| *"tow truck"*

The word "tow" (pronounced: "tóu" [leer en español]) is often used in verb form and means: "remolcar".

A "grúa" that is used on a construction site is translated as a "crane".

"BROTHERS" IS NOT "HERMANOS" (IN SOME SITUATIONS)

This is a common mistake! While it is clear that "brothers" can be translated as "hermanos" this is only the case if ALL your "hermanos" are male!

If you have a mixture of male and female "hermanos" then you have to use the cumbersome phrase: "brothers and sisters" or, if you prefer, another option is: "siblings".

For example:

"This weekend I am going to see all of my siblings"

or

"This weekend I am going to see all my brothers and sisters"

¿"PESADO" EN INGLÉS?

The temptation to translate "pesado" as "heavy" is obvious but incorrect. The word "heavy" can be used in cases where something weighs a lot or as a description of the weather: "heavy rain" but otherwise is fairly limited.

What I would like to focus on here are situations where you want to say that someone or something is "pesado".

The word "heavy" cannot be used in such cases although I hear it all the time with my students.

A much better alternative is:

█ *"annoying"*

For example:

█ *"He tries to speak to me all the time; he is very annoying"*

¿"DEPÓSITO" DE TU COCHE, EN INGLÉS?

A high-level student asked me this question the other day, so I thought it would be worth sharing with you. The obvious mistake that you might make in this case is to say something like: "I need to fill the deposit".

The word "deposit" in English is used in more financial contexts where you need to leave a certain amount of money to guarantee that you will look after something (car or house etc.). The best way to translate "depósito" for your car is "tank".

For example:

"I am going to run out of fuel, I need to fill the tank now!"

¿"PROHIBIR" EN INGLÉS?

The reason that I am highlighting this verb is that when I use the English translation most of my students say: "What?".

It is possible to use the spanglish version here and say: "to prohibit" but it is not commonly used and, in fact, I very rarely use it.

The better option, in my opinion, is the verb:

"to ban"

For example:

"Smoking has been banned in all pubs and restaurants"

"YELLOW PRESS" AND THE "PINK PRESS"

From the moment that I arrived here in Spain people have spoken to me about "yellow" and "pink" press. At first, I had no idea what this meant so I had to ask my students for clarification especially because in the UK these terms are not common.

Once I found out about the meaning I started to think about what the equivalent terms in the UK would be.

The first term that we commonly use is "tabloid press" which is a set of newspapers that print sensationalist stories. This would be quite close to "yellow press" in Spain.

The translation of "pink press" would be something like:

■ *"celebrity magazines"*

¿"POBRECITO" EN INGLÉS?

This is an interesting one and something that I picked up in a class. As you can see I get most of my inspiration from my students! Sometimes I feel I should pay them, especially when I walk away with about five new ideas for my blog posts!

Anyway, I have noticed that many student translate "pobrecito" as "poor". The only problem with this is that when you use the word "poor" just by itself, then you will normally be referring to the fact that the person you are talking about has no money!

So, instead of using the word "poor", you need to say:

| *"poor thing"*

317

UN "IDIOMA" NO ES UN "IDIOM"

There is a lot of confusion about this because although these two words are very similar, they mean different things. The Spanish word "idioma" means a "language", but I think that is quite clear for everyone. The word "idiom" in English is a little more confusing.

You would expect it to mean a language as well but in fact, the real meaning of an "idiom" is "an expression" or "frase hecha".

| *"I heard it on the grapevine"*

is a good example of an idiom.

"AYUDAS" IS NOT "HELPS"

The more and more I write these tips, the more I believe that although most Spanish speakers try not to translate in their mind when they are speaking English, there is a subconscious tendency to opt for a Spanish construction. It is fascinating!

The idea of "ayudas" is a good example of this! I have spoken about the word "ayudas" in many of my classes because it is often translated by Spanish speakers into "helps"! Come on...you know you have done it!

Anyway, the concept of "ayudas" cannot be translated so directly even though it might make perfect sense to you! A much better option is: "a grant" or "subsidy".

For example:

"When I went to university I got a grant which helped me a lot"

I LOVE WRITING "INFORMS"

You are going to tell me that this does not happen and that I am making it up (inventando... oh yes, I know you like those phrasal verbs!). I am sorry to tell you that I have heard this many times.

Again, I don't really think that it is a conscious mistake. I think that the word "informes" is programmed into your minds and the moment that you need to pull out the translation for "informes" your brain scans around and says: "not really sure about the translation, so I will use "informs"!"

I completely understand...believe me.

I would even recommend this type of "language guessing lottery" because it makes speaking a foreign language more fun and a bit like a game!

The only thing to remember here is that when you crash and burn, always learn from your mistakes and always use the word "reports" rather than "informs".

320

¿"NORMATIVAS" EN INGLÉS?

You know that "normatives" in English is wrong... I assume? In many ways, I could forgive you for using "normatives" in English because lots of Latin root words can be taken across from Spanish to English directly.

In fact, the word "normative" does exist in English, it is just that there are better alternatives which I would recommend using instead.

So here they are!

My preference would be the expression:

"rules and regulations"

For example:

"We need to understand the rules and regulations before we start our import/export business"

321

¿"MALGASTAR" EN INGLÉS?

When Spanish speakers think about the word "malgastar" in English most of the time they go for the word "spend".

The word "spend" is fine in other contexts such as when you are "spending money" or "spending time" but it is not the correct option when you are trying to describe the idea of "malgastar". A much better option is the word "waste".

For example:

"Don't waste your money on sweets, you should buy something more healthy"

or

"I wasted a lot of time today by getting stuck in traffic"

"UN ANCIANO" IS NOT "AN ANCIENT"

I have experienced this mistake in a few of my classes. To be honest, I have not heard many people use the word "anciano" in daily life here in Spain, but clearly, it is a sufficiently important word to have an impact on some of my students English!

So, you cannot use the word "ancient" in English to describe an old person! In fact, even the word "old" is not ideal because "old" people could potentially be offended by it!

A better option is:

█ *"elderly"*

The word "ancient" can be used in English but is more commonly connected to "ancient civilisations" or "Ancient Greece".

¿"FAMILIA NUMEROSA" EN INGLÉS?

When I first came to Spain, I was surprised by the idea of a "familia numerosa" because it is not a common concept in the UK.

Families with more than three children are very unusual in the UK, so I think that no specific subsidies for these types of families have ever really been established.

For that reason, it is also quite difficult to translate.

Using "numerous family" will probably just confuse people, so it is much better to say "large family".

¿"PRECIPITADO" EN INGLÉS?

I have heard this word lots of times when Spanish speakers are having a conversation, and I always was wondering what the best option would be in English.

"Precipitated" is one option but I don't like it much because it is a bit unusual and not commonly used in everyday speech! You might find it in complex high-grade academic papers or high-quality newspapers but not otherwise.

I think I would prefer to use an expression like:

"to jump the gun"

For example:

"I think we are jumping the gun"

An alternative is the verb:

"to be hasty"

¿CÓMO SE USA "SHAME" EN INGLÉS?

I have noticed that lots of students use the word "shame" when they are trying to translate "vergüenza".

Although this is not completely wrong and can be used in some circumstances, I would prefer you to use a different option. I generally use "shame" to say "¡que pena!".

For example:

"It is such a shame you can't come to the party"

If you are looking for the best option for "vergüenza" I would go for the word: "embarrassed" (*que no tiene nada que ver con "embarazada"!*)

For example:

"I am so embarrassed when I speak English"

¿CÓMO SE DICE "RARO" EN INGLÉS?

This is one of the thousands of false friends that exist between English and Spanish. One of my students used this the other day, so I wrote it down so I could share it with you. Imagine that you want to use the word "raro" in English? What is the first thing that comes to your mind? Is it the word "rare"? If it is, then don't worry because I think many Spanish speakers would choose that option. Unfortunately, you can't use the word "rare" because that is mostly used in contexts where something is unique or very uncommon.

For example:

"That is a very rare bird, it only lives in the Amazon jungle"

Another use is when you are describing how you would like your meat to be cooked! A waiter may ask:

"How would you like your meat? Rare, medium or well done?"

If you want to translate "raro" my preferred option would be "strange".

For example:

"He is a very strange man"

"ESTAR EMBARAZADA" IS NOT "EMBARRASSING"

I have never heard this mistake in class, but I think that it can sometimes occur because the words "embarazada" and "embarrassing" are so close. The correct translation for "embarazada" is, of course, "to be pregnant".

When I first came to Spain I heard people saying in Spanish: "Estamos embarazados" which I then heard from time to time converted into English:

| *"We are pregnant"*

It is important to note that this construction cannot be used in English and you need to keep to the more simple:

| *"My wife is pregnant"*

NO SE DICE: "NATIONAL SELECTION"

I am sure that many of you need to speak about football if you spend a lot of time in business environments, even if you have no real interest in it! An important point to remember is that when you are talking about your team, you need to avoid saying "national selection".

A much better option is:

| *"The National Team"*

When I hear the word "selection", it reminds me of Darwin's famous theory of "natural selection"!

Which is quite different... of course!

THE FAMOUS "FREGONA" IN ENGLISH?

When I first came to Spain, I didn't know much about the great Spanish invention: "the fregona". From that moment on, I have had some discussions with a wide variety of students about the famous "fregona".

From these conversations, I discovered what the "fregona" was! I think the reason we don't talk about the "fregona" so much in the UK is that most houses have carpet so a "fregona" is not so useful in the UK!

The best translation that I can think of, in this case, is "a bucket and mop".

"SHADE" OR "SHADOW"?

This seems like a straightforward issue, but in the end, it is a little complex to explain! I have heard Spanish speakers make many mistakes with these two words and I think the word "shadow" comes more naturally for some reason. The problem is that this is not always the right option!

The word "shadow" is used mostly when you are talking about the shape that a person or animal makes on the ground when they are exposed to the sun.

For example:

| *"When the sun is setting, palm trees cast long shadows"*

If you are talking about "shade", this is best described as a large area that is protected from the sun by an inanimate object".

For example:

| *"It was a hot day, so we sat in the shade"*

A bit complex, I know, but worth clarifying I think!

¿ALGO "POLÉMICO" EN INGLÉS?

This is one of those special words in Spanish that improved my English when I learnt about it!

When I first heard my students saying this word in English, my instinct was to correct them because it was not a word that I had heard in English before.

My students would say something like:

"It is a very "polemical" situation"

or

"It is very polemic"

My recommendation, in this case, is that in English it is better to use the word "controversial" and overall I still think this is right. I have, however, now had the time to look up the word in the dictionary and have seen that it can be used in English albeit in a more formal situation!

¿"PROTAGONISTA" EN INGLÉS?

This was another word that helped me improve my English because as I heard it more and more in Spain I kind of started to understand what it meant but had no idea that it could be used in English.

A few years later I noticed that "protagonist" is used in English in more formal literature circles especially when newspapers are writing a review about a new novel, for example.

It is used fairly rarely in general conversation though and you are much more likely to hear something like:

▮ *"the main character"*

or

▮ *"the star of the show"*

depending on the context.

¿"SOURCE" O "FOUNTAIN"?

I can remember quite a few times when I have been speaking to a Spanish speaker and as we enter the main square (*plaza*) of a village they would tell me excitedly that there was a "source" in the middle".

The word "source" does exist in English but is used in a different context. It is commonly used both in academic and journalism sectors to describe the original place where you got your information from but it can also be used to talk about minerals:

| *"Oranges are a good source of vitamin C"*

So, just remember, a "fuente" in a town square is a "fountain" and "source" is something else.

We will leave the word "sauce" for another day!

Capítulo 8 - Preparados, listos, ya

Verbs

"The irregular verb list is the typical nightmare for English learners, and I can understand why. There is nothing quite as boring as learning a whole set of irregular verbs. The bad news is that there is no getting out of this task. If you want to speak English well, you need to know them. The good news is that once you know them, the journey gets easier and more interesting." - Daniel Smith"

"TAKE" FOOD AND DRINK

One the of the MOST common mistakes made by Spanish speakers is when they talk about food and drink and they use the verb "take". This is not the correct verb to use in English and you need to use "have" instead.

So, a common mistake might be:

"Do you want to TAKE a beer?"

This is wrong and you need to say:

"Do you want to HAVE a beer?"

The same is true for food. The only situation where we use "take" is with medicine:

"I need to TAKE a paracetamol"

I AM "TAKING" THE SUN

The summer this year was boiling (very hot) and as usual many people went to the coast to enjoy the sea and the sand.

One of the mistakes that students make when they talk about going to the beach is when they say "I took the sun" or something similar.

In English, you need to use the verb "to sunbathe"

So, the correct sentence is:

"I am sunbathing"

or

"Last week I was sunbathing"

WHAT IS "FOOTING"?

When I first came to Spain I noticed that people would talk about "footing" but I had no idea what that was because in English that verb does not exist!

After asking a few people about it, I understood that it was a sport.

The problem is that although this word seems like it is English it has no meaning for a native speaker so you should avoid it.

It is much better to use "running" or "jogging".

IT IS IMPOSSIBLE TO "LOSE" A TRAIN

Many Spanish speakers use the sentence:

"Sorry I am late, I lost the train"

This sentence makes no sense in English because if you lose something it has to be small.

So, for example, you can "lose your keys" or "lose your bag" but a train is a bit big to lose.

Instead, you need to use the verb "miss". So, the correct sentence would be:

"Sorry I am late, I missed the train"

DO YOU "PRACTICE" SPORT?

The phrase: "I like to "practice" sport at the weekend" is spanglish!

Instead, you need to say:

"I like to do sport at the weekend"

If you want to be more specific you need to use "play": "I like to play tennis at the weekend" (there are some exceptions, of course, like swimming and running).

The word "practice" is used more in connection with a musical instrument:

"I practice the piano every day"

FALSE FRIEND: "DISCUSS"

The word "discuss" or "discussion" is often used in the wrong way because people think of the verb "discutir" or "discursión" in Spanish and then do a direct translation.

The problem with this is that "discuss" in English means to talk about a subject in a relaxed or professional manner. The real verb Spanish speakers are looking for is:

"to argue"

So, an example sentence would be:

"My two colleagues argue all the time about the air conditioning"

340

HOW MANY TIMES HAVE YOU SAID THIS: "I HAVE 35 YEARS"

This is a very easy test for your English but the number of people who still make this mistake surprises me. When someone asks you for your age in English you need to use the verb "to be" not the verb "to have".

Spanish speakers like to use the verb "to have" because that is what is used in Spanish:

| *"Tengo 35 años"*

In English, it is impossible "to have" years.

So, you can say: "I have a car", "I have a house" but you CANNOT "HAVE" YEARS!

341

DO YOU AGREE THAT "I AM AGREE" IS WRONG?

Many Spanish speakers use the verb "to agree" incorrectly. Most of the mistakes come from people translating directly. They think in Spanish: "Estoy de acuerdo" and then put it straight into English.

The result is that they often say:

"I am agree"

or

"I am agreed"

Try to make sure you never say this. The correct version is to eliminate the verb "to be".

So, you need to say: "I agree" or "I don't agree" etc.

DO YOU SAY THIS: "THE ROOM IS PLENTY OF PEOPLE"?

If you do, then don't worry because about 75% of our students say the same. The correct version of this sentence is: "The room is full of people". The word "plenty" is used in a different context and means "más que suficiente".

So, imagine that you are invited to a dinner party and the host starts to put food on your plate, at that point you could say:

"That is plenty! Thank you"

Another context would be if someone asks you if there are enough chairs in the meeting room.

You could say at that point:

"Yes, there are plenty of chairs"

343

HE "ASSISTS" THE CLASS THREE TIMES PER WEEK: WRONG!

This sentence is used a lot and I guess I hear it frequently because we organise English classes for companies.

The mistake comes from the fact that Spanish speakers translate the verb "asistir" into "to assist" but this is wrong. The real meaning of "to assist" in English is "to help".

For example:

"I need to assist him with his application"

So, the correct way to translate "asistir" is to use the verb:

"to attend"

For example:

"Last week I attended all my English classes"

HOW DO YOU USE THE VERB "STAY"?

This verb is often used incorrectly because in English it can only be used in a few situations:

1) *If you are going somewhere on holiday then you will probably STAY there a few days (which means that you are sleeping there for a few nights).*

2) *"Stay" can also be used to say: "me quedo aquí".*

For example:

"I will "stay" at home because I am feeling a little tired"

It can also be used if you want to express the period of time that you were in a certain location.

For example:

"I stayed in the restaurant for 4 hours"

Spanish speakers like to use "stay" in many other situations but in most cases it is better to use the verb "to be".

345

DO YOU "MAKE" OR "TAKE" A PHOTO?

I hear "make a photo" all the time and I think it is something that just comes out naturally for Spanish speakers.

The correct version is:

"Take a photo"

So, if you want someone to help you, then you need to ask:

"Can you take a photo of us?"

To be honest, many of you probably don't need to ask this question anymore because people just take selfies of themselves but just in case you like to take photos the old fashioned way, you now know what to say when you need someone to help you.

THE DIFFICULTIES OF USING "SUENA" IN ENGLISH

You need to be careful when you are using the verb "suena" in English because you need to use different words in different situations.

If your phone is making a noise (*tu teléfono está sonando*), then you need to say:

"My phone is RINGING"

If, on the other hand, you remember something but you are not sure (*me suena*) then you need to use the expression:

"it rings a bell"

For example:

"I am not sure whether I have been to Toledo before but this square rings a bell"

If you think something is interesting (*suena bien*), then you need to say "sounds good".

347

YOU DON'T "CELEBRATE" AN ELECTION IN ENGLISH

During the recent elections in Spain I noticed that quite a lot of people say "We are going to "celebrate" the election next week".

In English, we don't "celebrate" an election, we normally say:

"There is going to be an election next week"

or

"We are going to hold an election next week"

We use the verb "celebrate" in connection with birthdays and other parties but not in connection with an election.

"TO CONTRACT"

I hear this mistake very often and it is something that people who work in HR (*RR.HH.*) need to get right, especially because they probably use this verb on a daily basis. The verb "to contract" is a good example of the type of spanglish that I hear every day. It comes directly from the verb "contratar" in Spanish.

In English, we need to use other options that sound better which include: "to hire" or "to employ".

So, the correct version should be:

We are going to HIRE someone next week

We are going to EMPLOY someone next week

When you use the word "contract" in English most people will always think of the noun (*sustantivo*) and therefore think of the actual document that needs to be signed:

We will send you the contract in a few days

When a native speaker uses the verb "to contract" they are often thinking of something close to the idea of "outsourcing":

We probably need to contract a few people to get this done quickly

"TO APPLY"

This is another tip (*consejo*) for those of you who work in HR (*RR.HH.*). The verb "to apply" is very useful in your field of work and you should know how to use it without thinking.

I have noticed, however, that many Spanish speakers don't know what it means or cannot think of the right word when they need to use it. Instead, they often use the spanglish version which is something like: "I will send my curriculum".

In English, however, it is much better to use the verb "to apply" in almost all situations:

I am going to apply for a new job

I am going to apply to go to university

I am going to apply to go on that course about presentations!

It is a very useful verb.

If you find it difficult to remember the word "apply" then an alternative is use "send in" which is a phrasal verb:

I sent in my CV last week

350

DO YOU "WISH" YOU WERE A MILLIONAIRE?

The verb "to wish" is often used incorrectly. It always needs to be used in connection with the past tense:

"I wish I KNEW the answer"

or

"I wish I HAD not done that".

It is used either in the context where you are talking about an imaginary situation or when there is something in the past you regret. Future aspirations are covered by the word "hope". For example:

I hope that we are able to solve this issue as soon as possible

This is generally confusing for Spanish speakers because "ojalá" can be used for the past and the future but this is not the case in English.

THERE IS NO VERB FOR "REGALAR" IN ENGLISH

Spanish speakers often ask me how to say "regalar" in English. Interestingly there is no such verb in English. The noun (sustantivo) form is a "present" or a "gift" but we can't use these words in the verb form.

"To gift" does not work.

So, if you want to use the verb "regalar" in English you have to use the verb "give".

Example:

| *"He gave me a present yesterday"*

or

| *"Do you want to give him the gift or shall I?"*

GUESSING (*ADIVINAR*) IS A KEY SKILL THAT YOU NEED TO DEVELOP WHEN YOU ARE SPEAKING A FOREIGN LANGUAGE

It is very unlikely that you will always fully understand everything that you hear in English. So, it is important to learn how to be comfortable with these unknowns.

You need to make sure that you develop a technique that allows you to guess from the context as much as possible. I don't understand everything that I hear in Spanish. Many things I don't understand at all!

When I don't understand something I immediately try to look for clues (*pistas*) as to what the person might be trying to express.

It will not always work but it can help from time to time (*de vez en cuando*).

MAQUILLARSE IS NOT "TO MAKEUP"

Students get confused with this one because although it might seem logical that "maquillarse" should be "to makeup" this is not the case. The correct way to translate "maquillarse" is "to put makeup on".

So, for example:

"She will be ready soon, she is just putting her makeup on".

It is important to make the distinction between "makeup" which is a noun (*sustantivo*) and the phrasal verb "make up" which unfortunately for Spanish speakers can have two meanings:

"Inventarse algo": "He had to make up a story because he was late for the lesson"

To resolve a previous conflict: "They were both angry but eventually they made up"

¿SABES CÓMO SE DICE "LEVANTAR" EN INGLÉS?

When we prepare for family events in our house we normally have to rearrange a whole load of furniture so that we can get everybody sitting around a table comfortably! My Spanish family is BIG! During this process, I normally have to ask people to move things and "levantar cosas"!

I have noticed both in class and during these family events that the verb "levantar" is tricky to translate. It doesn't roll off the tongue easily...as we say.

The correct translation is:

"to lift"

For example:

"Can you lift that side of the table?"

CAN YOU "AFFORD" A FERRARI?

Many Spanish speakers think that the verb "afford" has something to do with "afrontar" but that is not the case.

To "afford" something is:

"to have the ability to pay for something"

So, I may be able to "afford a bike" but I can't afford a Ferrari.

THE VERB "TO BEAT"

This is a verb that is not well known. I have often used this verb in class and every time I use it I get asked by someone to explain what it means.

In the modern day context, this verb is mostly connected with sports and it can be used to explain easily which team won a match:

"Real Madrid beat Juventus in the Champions League Final"

So, the basic translation into Spanish would be "ganar". If you don't want to use "beat" you can always use "won against". It is important to remember the word "against" in this context because "Real Madrid won Juventus" is wrong!

¿CONOCES EL VERBO: "TO FAST"?

Most of the time when we think of the word "fast" we think of it as an adjective like: "a fast car" or "a fast runner".

We can, however, also use it as a verb. "To fast" means to stop eating for a period of time and is a common practice in some religions.

This idea of "fasting" can also be found in more common words such as "breakfast" which essentially means that every morning you are stopping (breaking) your fasting period!

Which, interestingly, is exactly the same way "desayuno" is constructed!

¿DICES "GOING TO" O "GONNA"?

This is a tip about pronunciation. You may have noticed that your English teacher says "going to" very clearly and as two separate words? From this, you have the idea that this is the correct way to say it.

Am I right?

In many ways, this is the correct way to use it, but it isn't natural. Native English speakers don't really say "going to" instead they say: "gonna".

For example:

"I'm gonna do some shopping this afternoon"

Of course, it is important to remember that "gonna" can't be used in the written form!

¿"TACHAR" EN INGLÉS?

For some reason, I was speaking with a student the other day about the verb "tachar" and although the student knew that it was something to do with the word "cross" they were not completely sure.

The problem here is that if you just use the word "cross", then there is a high probability that you will be misunderstood because the word "cross" by itself can either mean "enfadado" or "cruz".

So, if you want to talk about "tachar" you need to use it in combination with the preposition "out".

For example:

| *"Do I need to cross out this paragraph?"*

360

¿"ECHAR (*BEBIDA*)" EN INGLÉS?

This is a word that I have been using with students for a long time and the probability of them translating it correctly is low. So, that is what inspired me to write this tip. I am not exactly sure why the translation of "echar (*bebida*)" is so difficult. Maybe it is just because Spanish speakers don't have many opportunities to use it in an international context?

Anyway, the best translation is:

"to pour": "The waiter will pour you some wine in a minute"

In English, the verb "to pour" can be used in other contexts as well:

"Pour the sugar into the bowl"

DO YOU THROW THINGS "TO" THE BIN?

I have heard this one so many times that it drives me crazy! I am joking...I love spanglish mistakes! I do... Believe me!

So why does this one happen so often, you ask me?

Well, the source of the problem comes from Spanish because subconsciously your mind is thinking about the phrase: "Tirar algo "a" la basura".

The fact that you have that "a" in the Spanish sentence means that you will be naturally attracted to the idea that you need to "throw" something "to" the bin.

Unfortunately, this is not possible in English.

You have two options here:

█ *"Throw it in the bin"*

or just

█ *"Throw it away"*

CUANDO TE VAS A LA PLAYA NO PUEDES TOMAR UN "BATH"

This issue comes up during my classes often. One of my students was explaining that she had gone to the beach for her holiday but that it was too cold to have a "bath".

The idea of a "bath" is incorrect in this case because you can only have "a bath" in your house when you are in the bathroom, and you are sitting washing yourself in the bathtub. That is "a bath".

If you are on the beach, then you need to say something like:

"I going for a swim"

or

"I am going for a dip in the water" (advanced)

¿"AGUANTAR" EN INGLÉS?

This verb doesn't cause mistakes, but it is difficult to find a good translation quickly. The reason for this is because the answer is a phrasal verb, but you will be happy to know that there are other options as well!

So, let's go with the phrasal verb first: "to put up with"

For example:

"My flatmate is so messy, but I guess I will just have to put up with him"

The other option is the verb "stand".

For example:

"I can't stand my flatmate"

Maybe that is easier to remember?

¿"RECOGER" EN INGLÉS?

The translation of the Spanish word "recoger" into English is a little tricky because you can only do it well if you use phrasal verbs.

Although I generally recommend that you don't spend a lot of time learning phrasal verbs, there are some that are unavoidable! The problem, in this case, is that "recoger" could be translated differently depending on the context.

So, if a kid has made a lot of mess in their room, you would need to say:

"Please make sure that you "tidy" your room before you come downstairs"

Alternatively, you might need to "recoger" someone from the airport which would be:

"I will "pick you up" from the airport at 5 pm"

365

NO "MARCAS" UN GOL EN INGLÉS

Whether you like football or not is irrelevant in this case because talking about football remains an important element to your small talk strategy! I think I could write a whole book about the different terms that you need to talk about football correctly in English. This is just one of them.

I suppose, considering that in Spain there is a football newspaper called "Marca", it is not exactly surprising that you might say:

"He marked a goal in the second half"

This is something that you should avoid.

The word "mark" is more closely associated with your marks at school (*tus notas*) or maybe when you have a mark on your shirt (*mancha*).

The correct way to say "marcar un gol" in English is:

"to score a goal"

¿QUIERES MÁS?

Are you super motivated or maybe you need a little help?

Learning English is a journey. It takes a lot of blood, sweat and tears. Don't expect the trip to be easy. If you have read all the way through this book then you are doing well! Congratulations! If nothing else, it shows that you are motivated which is a key element of pushing forward and achieving your objectives.

The problem with language learning is that you need to keep going. It is similar to fitness training, in that you can't expect to get fit and then assume you will be fit forever onwards. You need to maintain your habits and rhythms to ensure that you achieve the objective that you want!

It is important for you to understand the multifaceted nature of a language and the fact that you might be good at reading and writing but not so strong in verbal communication (a situation that is very common in Spain). So, be fair with yourself and make a balanced assessment of what your next objectives should be. Identify your weaknesses and focus on how you can improve these aspects of your English skills.

If you feel that more than anything else you lack a sense of confidence when you speak English, get in contact with us and we can try to help you push through that barrier! Building self-confidence can only really be done in a real-life situation when you are sitting opposite a coach who encourages you to speak and pushes you outside your comfort zone.

I wish you all the best for the future and please make sure that your journey is enjoyable. Your ability to learn will be multiplied dramatically by having fun while you learn!

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DANIEL SMITH - BIOGRAPHY

Algo más sobre mí

Soy Daniel Smith y el aprendizaje de idiomas lo llevo en los genes. De madre alemana y padre inglés, nací en el Reino Unido donde aprendí a hablar inglés y alemán. A la edad de 10 años, me mudé a Bruselas y, seguro que te lo imaginas, allí tuve que volver a empezar mi vida en un nuevo idioma, esta vez el francés.

Más adelante regresé a Inglaterra para estudiar arquitectura, pero seguía teniendo la inquietud de explorar nuevos idiomas. Poco después de terminar la carrera me mudé a España. Y aquí estoy, ¡escribiendo en español!

Pasé mis primeros años en España trabajando para varias academias, a veces en empresas o en programas intensivos. Me hacía sentir bien ayudar a la gente en un aspecto de su vida que necesitaban mejorar. En el Reino Unido había trabajado sobre todo en el ámbito empresarial y, aunque me gustaba, siempre sentí que me faltaba algo. El día a día en el mundo empresarial de Londres era anónimo e insípido. Ponía todo mi empeño para lograr buenos resultados; sin embargo, el nivel de satisfacción que obtenía era bajo porque sentía que el trabajo, aun siendo necesario, podría haberlo hecho cualquiera. Si bien podía marcar la diferencia en un proyecto, no cambiaba, ayudaba o aportaba nada a las PERSONAS. Venir a España lo cambió todo.

Tras algunos años trabajando como profesor, decidí emprender un camino en solitario. ¡Sí, tenía miedo! Pero salió mejor de lo esperado y conseguí encontrar clientes con relativa facilidad. Cuando me mudé a Alcobendas, las oportunidades aumentaron. Al principio empezamos dando clases tanto a particulares como a empresas y, según creció el negocio, aumentó nuestro equipo de profesores, que se aseguran de que la experiencia de aprender con nosotros tenga la máxima calidad.

Este camino nos ha traído a donde estamos hoy. Además de las clases que

impartimos, intentamos difundir entre la mayor cantidad de gente posible cómo mejorar sus habilidades en inglés, y lo hacemos a través de nuestro blog y de redes sociales como LinkedIn con el único objetivo de ayudar. Sabemos que todos vosotros podéis aprender inglés si os lo proponéis... Solo necesitáis algo de ayuda para hacer este camino.

Los hispanohablantes que mejor han conseguido hablar inglés son aquellos que han sido capaces de integrar la lengua inglesa en sus hábitos diarios y sus rutinas. ¡No es fácil aprender un idioma si no se está inmerso en el! Nuestra misión es motivar a los hispanohablantes para que hagan MÁS, para que lean libros en inglés, para que vean documentales, películas y series en inglés, para que utilicen el inglés cada día, tanto en el trabajo como en su tiempo libre. Pero también queremos ayudarles a disfrutar del inglés y, lo que es más importante, asegurarnos de que se sienten seguros cuando hablan e interactúan en inglés.

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