

Common Semantic and Syntactic Errors in the English Language Learner

Use of Prepositions

Spanish use of prepositions	English equivalent	Possible misuses of prepositions in L2 (English)
“en”	“in” and “on”	Put the food in the plate.* Put the food on the bowl.*
“pensar en” “pensar de”	To think about or think of	I think on him everyday.* You can do it if you think of it.*
Enojarse con	Get mad at	Get mad with.*
Soñar con	To dream of	I dreamt with you last night*
Decidir de	To decide on	Have you decided of what you want?*
Casarse con	To marry or be married to	Is he married with her?*
Estar enamorado de	To be in love with	Is he in love of her?*
Consistir en	To consist of	What does your plan consist in ?*
Buscar	To look for	I’m looking my toy.*

Use of Verb Phrases

Spanish phrases with multi-purpose verbs	English equivalents	Possible misuses of multi-purpose verbs in L2 (English)
Tomar una decision	To make a decision	Did you take a decision?*
Poner una cita	To make an appointment	Do you want to put an appointment?*
Tener hambre	To be hungry	Do you have hunger?*
Tener X años	To be X years old.	I have 6 years.

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Use of Syntax

Spanish syntax	English Syntax	Examples of forward transfer
Statements Flexible word order	Relatively rigid word order	<i>Juan me hit</i> for <i>Juan hit me.</i>
Modifiers Noun + adjective word order	Adjective + noun word order	<i>She is a girl very nice</i> for <i>She is a very nice girl</i>
Questions No auxiliary	Auxiliary Ex. am/is/are, do/does/did	<i>Where you went?</i> for <i>Where did you go.</i> Or <i>Why you no share?</i> for <i>Why didn't you share?</i>
Pronouns Dropping of pronouns	Maintenance of pronouns	<i>Is hot today</i> for <i>It is hot today.</i>
Negation Double negatives	Single negative	<i>I no want nothing</i> for <i>I don't want anything.</i>
Plurality Double marking of plurals	Single marking of plurals	<i>The bigs trees</i> for <i>The big trees.</i>