10 COMMON CHALLENGES SPANISH SPEAKERS HAVE WHEN LEARNING ENGLISH

English is a very complex language. There are various grammatical rules and tedious words to those rules that even native English speakers commit mistakes regularly. Spanish is the most studied foreign language in the United States, and there are many differences between English and Spanish. For Spanish Speakers trying to learn English, it is important to recognize the more common mistakes immediately and to learn proper grammar and vocabulary from the beginning. Here we are going to list 10 common challenges Spanish speakers have when learning English.

Vocabulary Difficulties

The large number of similar words in Spanish and English has disadvantages as well as advantages. Many false cognates confuse the Spanish student of English. These pairs sound alike but have different meanings. Some of these false cognates in English and Spanish include “assist” and “asistir;” “college” and “colegio;” “exit” and “éxito;” and “library” and “librería.” In addition, Germanic components of English, such as phrasal verbs like “look for,” are often more difficult for Spanish speakers than the Latin or French-derived vocabulary.

Spelling and Punctuation Difficulties

Those who speak Spanish have trouble with English spelling, coming as they do from a more phonetic system. The different ways to spell the
same sound in English can cause problems, as in words like “tough” and “fluff.” The large number of vowel sounds and diphthongs are also troublesome. Native Spanish speakers often simplify English clusters of two or three consonants and are confused by when to spell double or single letters. They sometimes put exclamation points or question marks at both the beginning and end of sentences in writing. In addition, they frequently use commas to connect independent clauses, resulting in comma splices.

**Subject-Verb Agreement**

Improperly pairing plural nouns with singular verbs and vice versa is perhaps the most common mistake Spanish speakers make. Language such as Spanish do not has this rule or has an entirely different set of rules regarding singular and plural subjects and verbs. The most common form of this mistake occurs with forms of the verb “to be”, “is,” “are” and “am”-paired with the wrong singular or plural noun. Examples of this mistake reflect in “She are smiling” and “I is going.”

**Verb Tense**

Another thing that sets English apart as one of the more difficult languages to learn has to do with verb tense. Some languages such as Spanish have very limited connotations of verb tense, sometimes basically just present and past, making it relatively simple to grasp. In Spanish, the verb tenses change with the subject, however, English is a bit more complex. For example, in different situations it may be appropriate to use any of the following tenses: present, past, future, past perfect, present continuous tense or present perfect. For instance, the verb ‘keep’ can be used in the following forms depending on tense: keep, kept or keeping, which can be very difficult for Spanish to grasp.
Dialects

Dialects affect the way people speak and learn English and much depends on where they spend most of their time. There are various kinds of dialects in English. This makes learning the language from the beginning a confusing ordeal, namely because no correct dialect exists, especially in American English.

Omission of the Subject

English grammar is particularly confusing to Spanish speakers. Because Spanish has more verbs endings than English, a complete sentence in Spanish does not always need a subject. Because of this, Spanish speakers often omit subject pronouns from their English sentences, so actually it is unnecessary to say “I” or “he” or “it” in communication. While subject is an essential part in English sentences. But Spanish students always forget that, leading to sentences like “are the right person to do this job”, this is very funny.

Pronunciation Difficulties

Spanish speakers learning English frequently have problems with pronunciation because of the differences between the two languages’ sound systems. English has 12 vowels and eight diphthongs, while Spanish has only five of each. Spanish speakers, therefore, often have trouble distinguishing between words like “beat” and “bit.” They also confuse the consonants “v” and “b” and the “s” as in “Sue” with the sound of “z” in “zoo.” Since Spanish has an “e” before “s” on word beginnings, they find an initial “s” difficult to pronounce. They frequently add an “e” sound, which makes “sock” into “esock.” Spanish rhythm gives syllables equal length, while English gives more time to accented
syllables. The even rhythm in English of some Spanish speakers can make them difficult to understand.

**Stress**

The stress in Spanish language is regular and always marked. While English doesn’t necessarily have more regular consonant or vowel sounds than Spanish, but how the stress is placed on some of those consonants or vowels that make it such a difficult language for Spanish speakers who are learning English. The unusual combinations and ever present rule changes in the pronunciation of words make English much more complex to learn than it would seem.

**Slang**

Slang is reasonably common across the board in all languages, but in some areas, especially when talking about American English, slang is more widely used than proper grammar. To be truly comfortable communicating, someone must be comfortable speaking and be able to understand the language how it’s spoken within an area, and different slang terms make an almost entirely different language that must be learned. Therefore, Slang is also a challenge for Spanish students.

**Literal Translations**

A common example occurs when learners use “I am agree” instead of “I agree” because they have too literally translated the sentence “estoy de acuerdo” from Spanish.

English may be the most difficult language for a native of a non-English speaking country to learn, such as for the native Spanish speakers, but for the potential benefits that could come along with it, it’s most certainly
worth the added effort to learn.