

The sampler edition of
**TYPICAL
ERRORS IN
ENGLISH**

**An essential guide to
getting the language right**



ROGER HARTOPP

tErtium

Welcome to the book and enjoy some TEE!
First, here is a list of what you will find in the actual book:

An introduction from DOCTOR DOT FULLSTOP

Unit 1: An untypical foreword to Typical Errors in English

Unit 2: Misunderstandings, colloquialisms, wrong words and false friends

Unit 3: Word order

Unit 4: Cultural differences

Unit 5: Grammar

1. Adjectives
2. Apostrophes
3. Articles and determiners
4. Prepositions
5. Pronouns
6. Verbs and adverbs
7. Other grammar problems

Unit 6: Confusing words

Unit 7: Intonation and pronunciation

Unit 8: Translations

Unit 9: Glossary of language terms used in this book

Key to exercises

Bibliography

Index

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An introduction from **DOCTOR DOT FULLSTOP**

If you enjoy the English language, then I believe you are going to enjoy this sampler. Even more so if you get the book.

Let me introduce myself – my name is Doctor Dot FULLSTOP. (I wanted my full name put in, *Dorothy*, but the author of this book thought it would be funny to use my short-form name instead. You will realise as you go through the book that he has a sense of humour and he likes poems.) I am in charge of the grammar laboratory here at TEE Towers. Our job is to conduct and *corroborate* (a word that means to confirm or give support to facts presented here) all the research obtained from listening to people speaking, checking other grammar books, and other people's opinion as to what is or is not the correct use of English.

You are not only going to be treated to a large collection of typical errors made by students of English as a second language, but also a collection of cartoons, some extra information about many of the grammar points mentioned, a few exercises at the end of each unit so you can test yourself on many of the points raised, and a glossary of all the grammar terms used (along with a few examples not mentioned, but very useful – even important – to know).

And plenty of humour. We have attempted to produce a grammar book that is a lot less boring and can even make you smile from time to time!

Oh yes, and you will occasionally see some notes from me. When there is some particularly interesting information I feel you need to know, I will come along and tell you all you need. And I may also say a few things that you might not necessarily agree with, but that is good. It, as we say, stimulates discussion. It will make you talk about it.

So enjoy this little 'taster' of TEE. Next, we have an edited version of the foreword and in those fewer words, we will learn a little bit about the history of this book and why it exists.

Of course, you can find more TEE being served up at www.typicalerrorsinenglish.com.

See you there!

Unit 1: An untypical foreword to Typical Errors in English

Ah, the English language.

For many of those attempting to learn English as a foreign language, the frustrations it can pose could be summed up in this little poem:

*A Dutchman by the name of Van Dammar
Had trouble with his English grammar.
He said, 'If I had my way
I would spend the whole day,
Smashing it all up with a hammer!'*

I did consider calling this book *Typical Terrors in English* as there are so many traps in the language that both the learner and the native speaker can fall into. It sometimes decides to contradict some of the things that we think we already know. Dictionaries and grammars have to be updated all the time. It is continuously evolving, uncontrollably, in many different directions. One reason for English's uncontrollable behaviour is that it does not have an academy or organisation that regulates or monitors the language. There is no official rulebook. Not even this book is any kind of official rulebook: it is only a *guide* to what we already understand and know about the language.

As a rule, I include mistakes that I have heard many times made by students rather than just once. If there is a word, phrase or grammar error that I have not heard regularly, then I have not included it. (This does not mean to say, of course, that such examples will not be included in any future updates of the book.) However, I have broken this rule once or twice because there are examples that may trap the English language student, potentially leading to significant mistakes in speaking and writing.

I have placed the different mistakes into seven categories or units, but it is here where I am sure many of you might disagree if, for example, you believe that the pair *friends/colleagues* should be in the unit *Confusing*

words (which it is not) or *Misunderstandings, colloquialisms, wrong words and false friends* (which it is). I have also included a selection of panels such as *Grammar Goodies* and *Vexing Vocabulary* (vexing = to make you feel annoyed, puzzled and frustrated). And then there is Doctor Dot Fullstop, our resident grammatologist who is doing the same role, but adding some extra pieces of information. She is also part of my very active imagination and helps to make the book more interesting...

For this book I am making the general assumption that, unless stated otherwise, many of our speakers are learners of English (with many of them from Poland) and are simply practising the language, either with a native speaker or with each other. And as I am based in Kraków, Poland, and most of my readers, checkers and proofreaders are also based in Poland, this country perhaps gets more than its fair share of references, for which I apologise.

Now I have attempted to write this book in a register that would be understood at an intermediate level of English (in European terms, B1). I have chosen to write in an informal style as I believe that so many grammar books take themselves too seriously. So you will not only learn, but also smile and perhaps laugh at a grammar book that can be enjoyed by the casual learner. Occasionally unavoidable grammar terms are used, but these are listed in an easy-to-understand (I hope) glossary at the end of this book.

Right, that is it – now sit down, relax and enjoy the fun and the handful of examples taken from *Typical Errors of English*, and learn a lot along the way. If you would like plenty more TEE, then visit one of many good bookshops in Poland or order online. All details can be found at www.typicalerrorsinenglish.com.

And it is at that website where you can write to, find out more and keep in touch with all the latest news as regards the book!

Roger Hartopp

PS

Some advice about making the other kind of TEE... in this case, ENGLISH TEA.

We only add a drop of milk. Not tea with 50% milk. And we like *strong* tea.

Unit 2:

Misunderstandings, colloquialisms, wrong words and false friends

Many students studying English as a second language often use words from their vocabulary which, when translated, either have completely different meanings, use the wrong synonyms, or are simply using words in the wrong contexts. Many of these examples are called 'false friends', that is, words which look and/or sound similar in different languages, but have totally different meanings.

Now I could dedicate more than a hundred pages to one unit on false friends alone, but not in this edition. Among my favourites are preservatives (meaning in Polish: condoms), manifestation (a demonstration or protest), and even lunatic (in Polish, lunatyk means a sleepwalker!) But as this book is about those mistakes that are frequently made, I have included some of the most regularly heard false friends in this unit and hopefully put things right on them. And I am sure that many of these examples appear in other languages too.

We also look at a few colloquialisms (no rude ones), and much more.

GERALD: I think your flat needs painting. The walls are getting very dirty.

TERESA: I wish I could, but I have no occasion to do any decorating at the moment.

In the example the speaker is talking about the fact that they are always too busy to find a free period of time when they can do this particular job. But the word *occasion*, although appearing to be correct (it means 'a time at which something happens'), just seems out of context with the rest of the sentence. To say *I have no occasion* is also not what would be considered an accepted phrasal structure.

What our speaker should have said was *I have no time*. Also they could say *I have no opportunity/chance* to do the decorating in the flat.

There are some structures with *occasion*, the most popular meaning being 'a particular time': *They met on two occasions. I saw him on one occasion last year. We see them occasionally* (using the adverb). It also refers to a special time or event: *His party will be a big occasion*.

There are formal (and not particularly common) uses that are similar to the example expressed above, such as *This would be a good occasion to clear the cellar* (meaning a good time or opportunity), but this is a different sentence structure from the example.

Now if the speaker was being a little more formal then they might say *There hasn't been any occasion to decorate the flat*, and although *I cannot find a suitable occasion to decorate the flat* is correct as an accepted word order, it does sound strange and a little *pompous* in spoken English (to behave and sound in such a serious way that the speaker believes they are more important than they really are).

So it is **not** *no occasion*, but *no time*: *I have no time to do my homework*.



Our tourist is just explaining to an English-speaking friend that he is on a tour in which he has, in fact, already visited Germany, the Czech Republic, and Slovakia.

German, Czech and Slovakian (also Slovak) are either languages: German is a close cousin of English, or nationalities: I met some beautiful Slovak [or Slovakian] girls. The Czech roads are getting better. German engineering is regarded as the best.

Unit 3: Word order

Unfortunately for the English language, it is not only students in Poland but all the other nations using European languages that tend to think that our language is the confusing one; our habit of putting adjectives and possessive forms before nouns, for example.

But we do have a few rules which place emphases on certain points which the learner has to try and learn. So here are a few examples and a few explanations as to why our word order of things is the way it is...

Me and my family like to go on holiday to the Canary Islands.

Many native speakers use this structure. Some teachers even do this. And consequently many foreign students have heard this and then use it in conversation. But it is actually wrong... just take your family out of the sentence and see what you have got left. *Me like to go on holiday to the Canary Islands.* Now does that look and sound correct?

Me and my family is an example of a very frequently used English colloquialism, an informal word or phrase that is common in everyday conversation, but it is not always correct. The correct and accepted phrase here is *My family and I like to go on holiday to the Canary Islands.* Your family and you are the subject of the sentence. To say *I and my family* is not actually wrong, but it is not considered as being the accepted word order.

But if you were to say, for example, *She gave the car to my family and I,* this would be considered incorrect as this time *she* is the subject (*she* being the subjective pronoun), and she is giving the car to the object: *my family and me.*

A good rule to remember is to use an objective pronoun when following the verb: *She gave the car to me/you/him/her/us/them.* You would not say *I gave it to I, he, she, they, we, would you?*

It would also be okay to say *My brother has more money than me,* but it is more formal to say *My brother has more money than I [have].* When used informally, *me* can be used for emphasis when announcing yourself: *It's me!* You could also say *It is I,* but this sounds a bit too important. You could also say *That was me on the telephone,* but in writing *That was I who was on the telephone.* Remember: Who was on the telephone? *I was on the telephone* (not *me* was on the telephone!)

Unit 4: Cultural differences

There are many mistakes made by both sides – English natives and learners of English – that are not so easy to avoid, mainly because translations and wrong words are less of a problem than the cultural differences that occur in language when it comes to expressing yourself. There are many that say that to truly understand a new language you have to get yourself immersed – that is, fully involved – in the culture of the country. Some expressions in one language may seem perfectly natural, but when translated into another seem strange, unusual, or may even be misunderstood to the point where offence can be taken...



Well, that is nice to hear, but that depends on what the second meal is. From the context of the picture, our happy diner is perhaps looking forward to supper, which is maybe another four or five hours away.

I believe our gentleman means his second course, the main course, or even the main meal after

his *first course* (in this case, the soup) at the restaurant.

As an additional reference, the *starter* is in fact a small amount of food served as the first course (in American English, *appetizer*). The *entrée* can either be the main course or a dish before the main course, and this is usually served at restaurants or formal dinners.

www.typicalerrorsinenglish.com

EXTRA GRAMMAR GOODY: Speech marks

When writing dialogue in stories, which is the correct use of **speech marks** (or inverted commas) in English?

1. "I can't believe what they've written!" he cried.
2. 'I can't believe what they've written!' he cried.
3. „I can't believe what they've written!" he cried.
4. – I can't believe what they've written! – he cried.
5. «I can't believe what they've written!» he cried.

The answer is the first and second examples. The double quotation mark (“”) is more popular in American English writing, while the single (‘’) is popular in British English, but generally there is no problem as to which style to use in writing.

The third and fifth versions are popular as speech marks in other languages; the fourth with the dash I have seen used in Polish literature. The dash is also used in English for speaking, not in literature but for short script dialogue, for example:

- *I didn't know you worked for Eltex!*
- *I didn't know you were a sales representative!*
- *Well, it's great to see you, Max!*
- *You too, Hal!*

SIDNEY: Will you be all right driving to that address?

HELENA: I will be okay. I have my GPS.

SIDNEY: Oh... right, of course, your Sat-Nav. I had to think about that for a moment.

Sidney had to think about what a GPS was because Helena is referring to her *Global Positioning System* receiver.

GPS is a term used to describe systems that allow us to find where we are located in or around any part of the world, using a system of satellites. It covers many areas including map-making, synchronising clocks, aircraft tracking, robotics, and surveying. It also includes *geofencing*, which is used for tracking people, pets, and vehicles. In the United Kingdom we do not think of this device as tracking us (but that is precisely what it *is* doing), but we are simply thinking of it as a device for assistance to navigation, so in the UK at least, Global Positioning System Receivers are often referred to as *Satellite Navigation systems*, or more colloquially, *Sat-Navs*.

Online orders (in Polish): <http://www.tertium.edu.pl>

Online orders (in English): <http://hatteria.pl>

Unit 5: Grammar

To help go through this unit, I have broken it up into several smaller sections: **1. Adjectives; 2. Apostrophes; 3. Articles and determiners; 4. Prepositions; 5. Pronouns; 6. Verbs and adverbs; 7. Other grammar problems.**

This is the unit which I am sure will expand and grow into some other monstrous creature that will threaten to take over the world...

I am really interesting in photography.

Are you really? Can I watch? I would love to see what makes you so interesting.

This is a simple case of the wrong adjective – here, using the *-ing* adjective (*interesting*) instead of the *-ed* form (*interested*).

Basically, the *object* of your attention is *interesting*, and you are interested (you *like* the object, you are *not* the object of your attention). In the example, what you should say is that YOU are *interested* in photography, and that in your opinion the object of what you would like to give some attention to – the activity or hobby of photography – is **interesting**: *I am really interested in photography because photography is interesting. The science world is very interested in Stephen Hawking because he is an interesting man. He has had an interesting career.*

Here are other examples with some different adjectives, but the rules are the same. Use the *-ing* form to talk about what someone or something is like, and the *-ed* form to express an opinion about how we feel, usually because of something else: *I am bored with this job* (my opinion about how I feel) *because the job is boring* (what the thing is like). *He talks about the same things every day. He's boring. I am bored with him. I was disappointed with the movie. The movie was disappointing. Italy were disappointing in the 2012 European Championship final.*

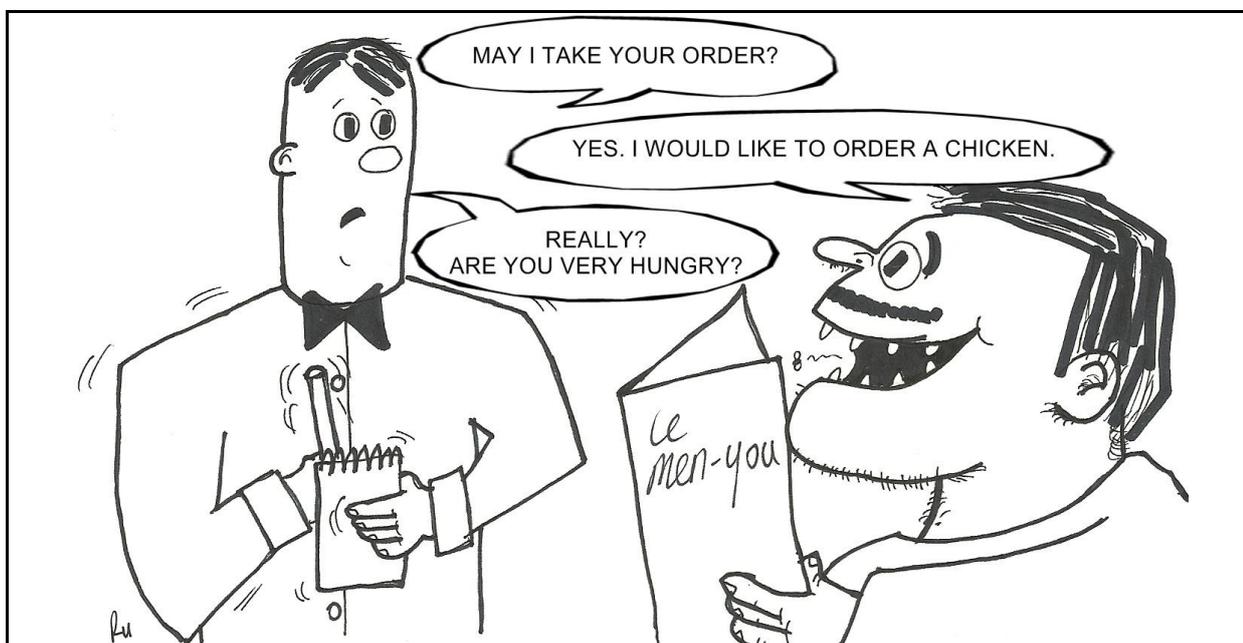
Its a nice day today.

An easy mistake to find when you see it, but probably a mistake that not all students understand.

Its without the apostrophe means to 'belong to something', for example: *The cat's sitting in its basket.* *It's* with 's means 'it is', for example: *Oh look, it's sunny!* It is also used as a contraction for *it has*: *It's got sharp teeth.*

Here is another example of a sentence with *it* words and apostrophes used in the right way: *Look at that elephant, mummy! It's got a trunk and it's putting its trunk into its big bowl of food and it's eating its dinner.*

So *it's* good to always put *it* into *its* correct context so *it's* acceptable.



Another example of how the article makes all the difference.

If you order chicken at a restaurant, then you are ordering a piece of meat that is *chicken* meat, and so *chicken* in this context is an *uncountable noun*. You are more likely to order *some chicken* or *a piece of chicken*.

But if you order *a chicken* – well, there are two possibilities.

The waiter might bring you a whole bird (who knows – perhaps it will lay an egg for you) and will make lots of noise (*not* the waiter, the chicken) or, 99% more likely, will bring you *one whole cooked chicken*.

But maybe you *are* that hungry...

I feel really tired. I just want to go to a bed.

Bed has two meanings. If we talk about *a* bed or *the* bed, we mean the piece of furniture we use to sleep on, but we are only talking about it as a piece of furniture. *Let's sit on the bed and read through the notes. I've got a water bed. Put your things on the bed and we'll put them away later.*

But if we talk about *bed* without the article, then we mean to use this piece of furniture to get some sleep. So we say, *I feel really tired. I just want to go to bed.*

However, if we say to someone 'let's go to bed' without intending to sleep, then that means... um...

Unit 6: Confusing words

This is an area that I am sure even many native speakers have problems with and not only learners of English. In this unit we feature many examples where it is not always clear what the exact differences are between words. Often these words are synonyms, but can seem strange when used in the wrong context.

ANTONIA: Why do you like going to the mountains?

MORELA: Because it's very quiet. Very little people live there.

This might be okay if Morela is going to Lilliput, a fictional island created by Jonathan Swift for his book, *Gulliver's Travels*. In this, Lilliput, and on another island called Blefuscu, the populations are only 12% of the height of the average person.

We use *little* as an adjective mainly to describe small in size, for example: *a little chair, children have to use little spoons*, or a small amount of something, used with uncountable nouns: *I would like a little wine. There's little time to waste! She only has a little money.*

Few means *not many*, or *a small number of* (depending on the context), and is used with countable nouns: *I only know a few people in Minsk. Few people outside Poland know that Łódź is pronounced 'woodge'.*

So Morela goes to the mountains because there are so *few* people there.

VEXING VOCABULARY: Little and a little, few and a few

Note that there is an important difference between **little/a little**, and **few/a few**.

If we say, for example, **I have a little time to help you**, this suggests a *positive* idea. It means the person has some time available to help the listener. If the speaker says **I have little time to help you** (without 'a'), then this suggests a *negative* idea, and that the speaker has little or no time available for the listener.

A little red wine with your meal is good for you. Unfortunately, in my opinion, **little red wine** is drunk with main meals when it could be so beneficial to your health.

Few/a few works in a similar way: **I've got a few ideas so we should be able to do a good job.** (Positive: I've got some ideas.) **I'm afraid I've got few ideas on the best way to finish this job** (without 'a'). (Negative: I've nearly no ideas.)

A few students got Grade A, which was great./**Few students** got Grade A, which was disappointing.

I often use public transport (i.e. bus, train, tram) to get to work because I don't have much choice (e.g. I don't have a car and I live a long way away).

Even native speakers have problems when it comes to telling the difference between e.g. and i.e.

So we will start with a little lesson in Latin.

e.g. means *exempli gratia*, literally translated as *for the sake of example*. And as the translation suggests, we use this when we want to give examples and other possibilities for the term or phrase given: *There are many countries in the European Union (e.g., France, Belgium, Hungary, Austria)*. A nice rule for this (thank you Daniel Scocco) is to remember the letters e.g. as meaning *example given*.

Now i.e. translated from the Latin *id est* means *that is*. This is used when we need to explain, to clarify, or reword a phrase if it is felt the term or phrase given is not clear enough: *I only drink water and juices, i.e., I don't drink alcohol*. You could try to remember the letters as *I'll explain [what I mean]*. (Thank you me.)

So the example above should read *I often use public transport (e.g., bus, train, tram) to get to work because I don't have much choice (i.e., I don't have a car and I live a long way away)*. Incidentally, it is up to you if you want to put the e.g. and i.e. examples in brackets (), but when writing formally, it is advised you use the brackets (i.e., if you don't want to lose marks in a writing test).

As an extra note, if you start a sentence with e.g. or i.e. (as I have done so in the explanation above), then you should use lower case letters, and split them with full stops. (In British English abbreviations are frequently written without full stops – simply writing *eg* is often acceptable – but it would be safer to include them.) There are also suggestions that e.g. or i.e., before listing your examples, should be followed by a comma, but there are many examples both on the Net and in print which do not follow this convention.

Now you may have also seen the use of n.b. (or nb, NB and N.B.) in texts, such as *NB: only one small piece of hand luggage may be taken on the aircraft. n.b. when you see this symbol, press enter*. This is used if you want to get the attention of the reader on what you are about to say or write. In Latin and Italian it translates as *nota bene*, meaning 'note well', 'pay attention', 'take notice', or in some cases, particularly in legal texts, simply *note*.

Unit 7: Intonation and pronunciation

There are many academics who feel that learners of English should not be too concerned about this area, but there are many students who disagree – for them, perfecting intonation and pronunciation is a key goal in speaking English, particularly when they are keen on taking out any obvious signs of what would be regarded as a foreign accent.

ENGLISHMAN ON THE TELEPHONE: I'd like to get more information. Could you give me your website and e-mail addresses?

COMPANY ASSISTANT PRACTISING THEIR ENGLISH: Of course. It's www.hickey-jeux.vsi.com, and my e-mail address is g_vichy@vsi.com.

Dictating website and e-mail addresses is a frequent problem for people from Poland and many students studying English. Many of the problems are simply through habit, for example, in Poland using Polish pronunciations of letters instead of English, and replacing '@' (at) with *małpa* (Polish for *monkey*, as the symbol looks like it has an arm going around its body, just like a monkey). Other words used for @ include *arobase* (French), *arroba* (Spanish), *At-Zeichen* (German), and rather charmingly, *chiocciola* (Italian). In Russian and Ukrainian, *sabachka* is a small puppy. How sweet!

So if you are a Polish student or learning English as a second language, your task is to try to read these addresses properly.

Students are always told that when they have a problem trying to say the words in the address, then they should spell them out. The letters used in the example are the ones that students have most problems with, and so this is how you should say them:

C/c (say 'see') /si:/

G/g as in Gmail /dʒi:/

I/i as in i-Pad, i-Pod or i-Phone /aɪ/

K/k as in Kate /keɪ/

S/s as in escape /ɛs/

V/v as in TV /vi:/

E/e as in E-mail /i:/

H/h (say 'aitch') /eɪtʃɪz/

J/j as in Jane /dʒeɪ/

Q/q (say 'queue', or QE2) /kju:/

U/u (say 'You') /ju:/

W/w: ('Double-You') /dʌbəlju:/

X/x as in ex-husband /ɛks/

Y/y (say 'why') /waɪ/

Z/z [say 'zed' /zɛd/ (British English)

or 'zee' /zi:/ (American English)]

So when you read out websites, DO NOT begin by saying 'VOO VOO VOO' /vu: / /vu: / /vu: / (Or just *Voo Voo*, which I understand is the name of a Polish jazz-rock band). Say 'double-you, double-you, double-you' /dʌbəlju: / /dʌbəlju: / /dʌbəlju: /. And please do not say 'three W's'. This is not only considered lazy, but can be interpreted literally as 'three W's'. (There is more information on emails in the book.)

POETRY CORNER

*Vera Wagner wore a west vest, very, very wet
Which way the violet wall display for violin or vet?
We wail when fewer verbs work well, and vowels are very wearing,
Varied versions, Eve won't tell. She's vexed and very caring.*

*The server's sewers wandered round, their viewers had no fevers,
The wavy veggies verified they pulled the correct levers.
So volleyball and videos, view wipers, vipers, weaves
When ewes work out which way to say those W's and V's!*

Do you like my poem? Okay, it is a lot of nonsense, but there is a good reason for this.

This is just a simple exercise in pronunciation – practising your w's (pronounced *double-yoo* /dʌbəlju: /) and v /vi:/ (as in *T.V.*), and then saying them the right way. Great fun not only for Polish students, but for Germans or any other nationalities that do not have the letter **V** in their alphabets.

Now I am off to have a game of wollyball...

A little gap filler: ph

When the letters *p* and *h* go together in this order there is only one kind of sound that they make: **/f/**

So the following words are all pronounced with the **/f/** pronunciation: *Photograph*, *telephone*, *phoneme*, *physics*, *telegraph*, *emphasis*.

Unit 8: Translations

It takes many years to become a truly skilled translator, but to be so it is not only about translating the words, the structures, the culture, the jokes, the rhymes, and matching the number of lines in the poems, but making sure that the translator does not translate anything that may well make perfect sense in one language but would be totally lost in another. The most difficult part is to come up with a piece of translated text that looks as if it was originally written in the English language, and often translators come to English natives to do that job.

Of course, many of the examples featured in this unit are based on Polish translations, for which I am sorry if you are not a student from Poland, but perhaps there are similar mistakes made by other translations.

ALBERT: I've got satellite television.

LUDMILA: I've got cable.

ALBERT: What's your favourite programme?

LUDMILA: Cartoon Network.

Many students of English often point out that there is a mistake with the two opening lines of dialogue. Why does Ludmila say *I've got cable* instead of *I've got cable television*? The fact is there is no error. The second student has simply decided to leave out the word *television*. In grammar terms, this is called *ellipsis* – the leaving out of elements such as words or sentences because it is clear from the context or situation what is meant. Indeed, Albert and Ludmila could simply have exchanged their lines of dialogue to read: *I've got cable television. I've got satellite*, and it would still be clear as to what is meant.

The real error, if you have not spotted it, is one of those where you will probably be annoyed with yourself because you *do* know.

In English, Cartoon Network is a television *channel*. 'Dexter's Laboratory' is a television *programme* (or program if you want American English). If you enjoy the fun of the eight-year old genius boy who has a secret laboratory hidden under his parents' house, then you can follow his adventures on the Cartoon Network, a television *channel*.

Unit 9: Glossary of language terms used in this book

It is in this section that you can find out what all these wonderful grammar expressions used in this guide actually mean. I have also added a few more that have not been mentioned, but do come up quite frequently in conversations as regards grammar. I have tried to include as many examples as would be reasonably possible for the language levels this book has been written for. So if you are looking for the definition of non-finite clauses, detailed explanations of adverbials, or whether something is the subjunctive, conjunctive, or conjunctivitis, you will need to consult a more detailed grammar book. Or a doctor.

Here are a few examples:

apostrophe A word that many students have problems pronouncing. A - pos - tro - fee /əpɒstrəfi/. An apostrophe is actually the mark ('). It is used to show that either letters have been removed (as in contractions): *didn't*, *can't*, *they'll*, and is also added to nouns to form possessives such as *Joanna's birthday*. *The dog's dinner*.

consonant In written English, these are the letters *b, c, d, f, g, h, j, k, l, m, n, p, q, r, s, t, v, w, x, y, z*. However, these can be represented differently depending on the pronunciation; for example, the 'h' in *honest* is not pronounced, resulting in *onest*, and is therefore sounded as a vowel, using 'O'. The letter 'y' can also pose problems for students: See *y*.

future perfect continuous This is used to describe a continuous activity that will still be happening by a particular point in the future. For example, you are working on a difficult project. You started work on the project five months ago and expect to be still doing the project when the next month begins: *By next month, I'll have been working on this project for six months*. We use *will + have + been + -ing*.

indefinite article a/an. It is used only with a single countable noun, with *a* being placed before nouns that begin with consonant sounds, and *an* before nouns that begin with vowel sounds. Generally, they are used when a noun is introduced for the first time: *A man and a woman were sitting on the floor*. They are used to mean 'one': *Anna's got a dog* (there are many dogs, and Anna has got one of them). They are also used when it is not clear what object is being talked about: *Have you got a car?* (I do not know if you have got a car and that is why I am asking you if you have got a car).

modal verb These are auxiliary verbs such as *can, could, may, might, must, shall, should, will, would*, and they tell us how the meaning of the verb that follows is to be spoken. This could be expressing the attitude of the speaker (personal) or the likelihood of something happening (logical). This could be ability, permission, necessity, obligation, intention, and possibility. e.g., *You can open the window.* 'Can' is the modal verb, and is used here to express permission. See also *semi-modal verbs*.

ordinal number These are words such as *first, second, third*, and are used as an adjective to tell you where something occurs in a sequence, e.g., *In first place, Australia; Second, India; and third, Luxembourg.* (Note: We do NOT say *number first, number second, etc.*: this should be *number one, number two.*) It is also used as a signal: *First, we'll talk about the main points; second, the plan of action.* In spoken English, they are also used to express the date: *I'd like the report on the twenty-first.*

present simple This is a tense that is used to talk about things in general, that happens all the time, or is repeated, e.g., *I speak French very well. How often do you play cricket? The shop opens at 7.30am every day. The Earth goes around the sun every 365¼ days.* It is used to describe permanent situations: *My friend lives in Manchester and has always lived there.* It is also used to talk about schedules and timetables in the future: *The flight departs at 0730. What time does the bus leave tomorrow?*

stative verb Also known as *state verbs*. These are verbs that are not normally used in continuous tenses as they are used to describe states and conditions and not actions. Or to put it another way, stative verbs such as *love, hate, know*, etc., are verbs that generally you would not actually see as actions; for example, you cannot actually see someone *knowing* something. However, stative verbs can be used in the continuous form when they become *gerunds*, for example: *Hating your job is not a good attitude to take. There's nothing there, you're seeing things. Knowing that kind of knowledge could be useful.* Also, some state verbs that get used as continuous verbs usually have a different meaning: *She's seeing him on Monday* (she has an appointment to see the person on Monday).

tag question Also known as *question tags*. These are very short clauses that are added to the end of a statement to make it a question, e.g., *It's a good film, isn't it?* Depending on the intonation, these are used to either invite the listener to agree with the speaker (mostly with negative tags), or is a real question (mostly with positive tags) used to ask for things or information: *They'll be here, won't they? You know how to play the piano, don't you? Hot, isn't it? Don't tell her what I said, will you? Let's have a look, shall we? You'll be here tomorrow, right?*

Y The penultimate, or second last letter, of the alphabet. It can be used either as a consonant or a vowel: in the words *cry* /kɹɪ/ and *mystery* /mɪstəri/, it is clearly being used as a vowel or even a diphthong. But the sound of *y* such as in *beyond* /biɹɒnd/ and *yellow* /jɛləʊ/ cannot always be represented by another letter, and so for this reason is regarded more as a consonant in English.

Z The last letter of the alphabet. However, it is pronounced *zed* /zɛd/ in British English, but *zee* /zi:/ in American English.

And now a little quiz...

Now test yourself!

At the end of each unit there is a chance to answer some questions so you can check your comprehension.

Here are a few questions based on the material featured in this sampler. Good luck and see if you get ten out of ten!

1. In unit 1, how much milk do you add to a cup of British tea?
2. In unit 2, if the language in Germany is *German*, what is the nationality?
3. In unit 3, is it better to say *my brother has a bigger house than me* or *a bigger house than I?*
4. In unit 4, what is a *GPS*?
a) *Global Place Searcher* b) *General Postulation Satellite* c) *Get Positioned Safely*
d) *Global Positioning System* e) *Global Positioning Satellite*
5. In unit 5, complete these sentences with the words *exciting* and *excited*.
I am very _____ about going to Spain. Barcelona is an _____ city. Life there is generally _____, but my wife is not _____ about flying there.
6. In unit 6, which of these sentences suggests a *negative* idea?
a) *I have little money.* b) *I have a little money.* c) *I've got a few plans about travelling to Greece.*
d) *I've got few plans about travelling to Greece.*
7. In unit 7, complete the tip: Say _____ as in _____-mail, and _____ as in _____-phone.
8. In unit 8, is *BBC Entertainment* a programme or a channel?
9. In unit 9, what tense is used to describe a continuous activity that will be happening by a particular point in the future?
10. What? What do you mean, there wasn't a unit 10? Okay, right, have to think of a question quickly... er... are you going to buy the book?

Answers can be found online at www.typicalerrorsinenglish.com, click 'quizzes and exercises' and you'll find them there. Hopefully.

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