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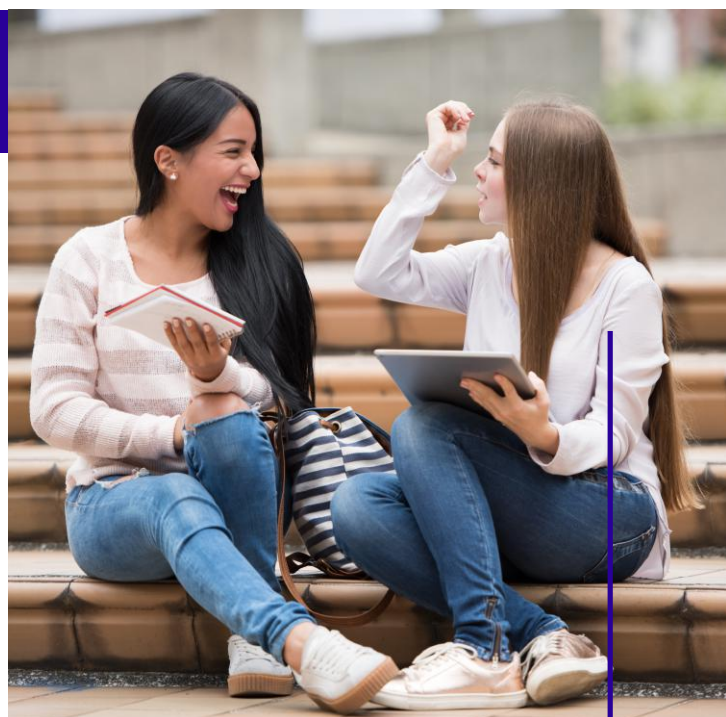
Two Good Friends that Cause Trouble to Learners: Similarities and Differences between English and Spanish

English and Spanish are two of the most important languages in the world. Both are spoken by millions of people in different countries around the globe. Although these two languages share some similarities they are quite different. In this article, we will explore the differences and similarities between English and Spanish.

Spanish Interference in English Language Learning

Spanish is a Romance language; it is called Romance because it originates from Latin which was spoken by the Romans. English has had its fair share of influence from Romantic languages, such as Latin and French, which is the reason why there are many similar words in English and Spanish and that is both a blessing and a curse for Mexican learners.

But English is not a Romance language, it is a Germanic one. So English and Spanish have different syntax. For example, adjectives are positioned differently in English and Spanish. Also, because the English vocabulary has some Latin and French words, false cognates and false friends are difficult for learners. For example: assist, actually, deception.



This difference also affects the orthography of both languages. Generally, in Spanish, what you read is what you say. This is called phonemic orthography versus non-phonemic orthography, but this is not the case in English, a letter we represent in a written word (morphemes) can sound quite different when we say it (phonemes).

Spoken English has different sounds and stress, Spanish is simpler in that aspect. For example, Spanish has 5 vowels whereas English has 12. English almost always uses a Subject-Verb-Object structure (SVO) ; Spanish is much more flexible in this aspect. Punctuation is different too. For example, Spanish questions and exclamations (¿, ¡, ?, !) use two symbols, whereas English only use one (? , !).



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Beyond Language: Sociocultural and Sociolinguistic differences of English and Spanish

People in English speaking countries have different customs and traditions to the ones we have in Latin America and Spain. So learners tend to transfer their own customs into the target language. For example, some students want to say 'mande' or 'buen provecho' in an English-speaking context. Spanish and English are diverse languages that have different dialects and sociolects.

These are dependent on the geographic, social and cultural background of their users. So, there's no such Standard Spanish or Standard English. Learners may tend to think that there are only two varieties of English: American and British, so it is important that they get exposed to a fair share of global examples.

Culture and traditions have also shaped the language. Some of the most confusing items for students are phrasal verbs as there is no equivalent in Spanish. Similarly, idiomatic expressions can cause trouble because some students might want to literally translate this.

Learners bring their own backgrounds into the classroom, which is why some people have negative attitudes towards the language. Such as those based on political and emotional barriers against the United States.



Some learners are afraid of making mistakes. These insecurities and fears are mostly based on cultural influence. So learners avoid mistakes so that they are not seen as incompetent. Also, students might not feel motivated due to not seeing the relevance of speaking English in Mexico. Sometimes it's difficult that learners get opportunities to practice the language with English speakers in Mexico.

Quality basic education is mostly reserved to middle- and upper-income households. English is mandatory in public education, but limited due to different factors, such as infrastructure, teacher training and emphasis on grammar instead of communicative competence. Mexican students are sometimes very used to teacher-led instruction and expect to get all the correct answers from their teachers.