

EPISODE 4: TYPICAL MISTAKES

C: Typical mistakes.

A: Sure.

C: When you first came...

A: Getting married too young? No?

C: Language. Linguistic.

A: Got it.

C: When you first came here, you were teaching a class, did you know any kind of mistakes? Did you have to pick up any mistakes that people were making?

A: Well, I mean there's all types of mistakes. There's pronunciation, there's false friends, which are always fun. I know a friend here with a bilingual child, (0.32) the parents, one is Catalan, I think, one is American. The other day the child was going first day at school saying 'I can't find my carpet! I can't find my carpet!', which of course is 'carpeta' which is 'folder' or binder. So, this was fun. I've always enjoyed those kinds of mistakes, and in fact, talking like that on purpose is a never-ending source of entertainment.

C: I could never understand the one between a kitchen and 'chicken'. When I heard that mistake the first time I was like 'what? why? How are people making this mistake?'

A: Sure, but how many native speakers say 'nucelar' and the word is 'nuclear' and the reason they say 'nucelar' is because there are many more words in English that end with that like 'particular'. Versus 'nuclear', other than the word 'clear', it's very difficult to think of another word that ends with those sounds. So, they make the analysis, their brain says 'nucelar' like Homer Simpson or George Bush.

C: I love it when actors, actresses, bands, Oasis, 'U-dos', 'Los Red Hot'...

A: Well, in general there I think we get into the linguistic history of when you have an organization that tries to impose linguistic norms, you can go one of two ways. You can end up like Spain where everything is, not translated but phonetically translated into Spanish or you can end up in France, you know, they try very hard to be 'France, France, France' and how do you say 'weekend' in French? 'Le weekend'. That was the result of



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their efforts to control language and here they came through other ways. But of course, my favourite thing, though, I'm sure you know this. We have the movie Star Wars, we have two famous robots in it, right? The tall gold one and the short squared one that doesn't really talk. In English what is that one called?

C: R2D2.

A: in Spain, what is that one called?

C: Please, inform me?

A: 'Erre dos, de dos', right? Just the translation.

C: Right.

A: In Latin America, do you know what he is called?

C: No idea.

A: Arturito! R2D2, 'Arturito'. They took, when they were translating the movie back in the day, they decided, 'ok we can say R2D2...wow, that really sounds like 'Arturito'', not 'erre dos, de dos' but 'Arturito', I love that.

C: Right, right, 'Spider-Man'.

A: 'Wifi'.

C: But then there's other words like "vegetables".

A: What about it?

C: Comfortable, chocolate...

A: A ver, I fully understand why people say 'comforteibol'? No...

C: 'Comfortaibol'? What did you say? 'Comfortable'?

A: 'Vegetable', 'vegetable'...

C: 'Vegetables'.



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A: Yes, of course, but you know there's this linguistic tradition throughout the world of pronouncing letters that are there, while English is...

C: Why would you do that?

A: I mean, you can speak with the French, of course, they would agree. I'm not saying that I allow those errors but I sympathise with those, for sure.

C: 'Say me'! 'Say me'. Who- how do you make that mistake?

A: 'Dime'! It's translation! 'Dime'! 'Decir' is 'to say', right?

C: It's a translation mistake.

A: I have a little niece who...she doesn't say it as much now, she's four years old. But when she was three, three and a half, she would take her two dolls and when she wanted you to, like, make them have a conversation she would say 'talk them! Talk them!'. She would give you the two dolls 'make them talk to each other'. I thought that was wonderfully creative and fully acceptable although ungrammatical, the use of 'talk them!'.

C: People *is*, people *are*.

A: Totally understand also. Because it's a collective noun and...ok, you, I know you're Irish but I'm sorry here you are representing in general all of that part of the English-speaking world.

C: And proudly so.

A: Yes, ok, so the word 'class'. A class.

C: Right.

A: Singular or plural for you?

C: Hmm, it depends.

A: Exactly, it does not! 'A class' is one class. 'One class' in the US it's a class. 'That class is fun'. For you guys you have the option of making these collective nouns, plural like team, family...

C: Of course.



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A: No, of course, no.

C: Because it's a plural. 'The class are learning'. 'The team are playing'...

A: No! *The people* in the class are learning. The class *is* learning.

C: 'The government *are* raising taxes'.

A: Of course, but that's because they need to pay for public healthcare, which is fine.

C: Because they always do.

A: But...ok, but...no. No! I do not, I do not except that argument. However, the 'people is/people are', sure. Because in Spanish is 'la gente' which is why I always try to tell students that it should be 'people' as 'personas'.

C: Is there anything...? One thing I noticed from my language is that, having lived here for a number of years, when I go back to Ireland there's mistakes I make in English. And one of them for me is the 'no' at the end as a question tag.

A: I disagree that's a mistake. In the US I think that's a common thing some people do, no?

C: Yes, no? I mean when I first came here I loved this 'yes?' (question tag), 'no?'.

A: Well, right, cause in English the official rule is: if it's an affirmative sentence, then the tag is negative and if it's a negative the tag is affirmative. Innit?

C: 'We're going to have dinner at 7pm, no?'. And I remember my brother looking at me going 'well yes, we are. What is this person talking about?'.

A: You know, I feel like I hear other Americans at least, speaking the same way without the Spanish influence, but I won't go into that.

C: Maybe some words...I remember one time as well. 'Signal', talking about the mobile, when you have no reception. And I remember saying 'I've got no signal' and that was something...

A: And that's correct or it's not correct?

C: I don't know, I don't live there anymore.



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A: I mean, in the US we say 'bars'. 'I got no bars'. 'I got two bars', 'three bars'. Cause you know, the little...and I think, I think that comes from a commercial originally because, again, it's the US.

C: And then some words as well. Like you probably say 'presencial'

A: Yeah, but that's been a concept that's brand new. The concept of something not being 'presencial', that didn't exist 30 years ago. You could have a phone call, but the idea of something occurring in that way that still includes a visual aspect, you know, zoom classes, things like that. Presencial...what do we say now?

C: That's just face to face, in person.

A: But here's the thing, face to face, sure. But when you're looking at zoom it's still kind of face to face, it's face to screen, at least.

C: Face to screen. 'Matriculate'?

A: 'Matriculate'. Is that not a real word in English?

C: Not for me...

A: For me, it's not. But I'm sure 200 years ago, sure. What would you say? I'd say 'to register'.

C: Sign up.

A: That's more informal. I'm a formal individual so I use the Latin-based word 'register'. You, being a **heathen**, say 'sign up', you go Germanic phrasal.

C: 'I'm embarrassed'.

A: 'I'm embarrassed', yes.

C: 'Embarrassed' is a classic as well, when people make that mistake.

A: But you see, I love those kinds of things because when you trace back the etymology and the history of the words, you see that it's not random, they're related. So, the totally random ones, which of course, now I can't think of an example of. But the totally random ones are the ones that I find that I have most sympathy for students with. You know,



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when it's two things that have, by bad luck, become similar. And of course, I can't support that with any example now.

C: For me, there's a couple of words like that which I think they borrow from the English but then they get it wrong. What is it a 'parking'? Are you talking about a car park? Or a parking space?

A: Well, maybe they got lazy and it was a 'parking lot' which is what we would say in the US, but then said 'that's a lot, we'll get rid of it, let's just call it a parking'. But with a q.

C: Where do you go camping?

A: in a camping.

C: *Campsite*.

A: Ok, but here's the thing, though. You're totally right but when people here, specially our students, when they talk about their camping, and I just got back from a weekend at the coasts so we drove by many campings. Camping is *not* a campsite.

C: Right.

A Camping is a collection of pretty nice wooden cabins that they call 'bungalops', not even getting into the fact that they're bungalows. They're basically nice cabins and for me, at least, that is not camping.

C: It's glamping

A: It's not even glamping! It's renting a cabin, for sure, you know, like, for me camping was like that miserable experience of going up into that with the crappy little tent, eaten by mosquitoes the whole time, you know, thinking about the movie 'Deliverance' playing a little bit banjo and then going home. So that's why you could linguistically argue that going to a camping is not the same thing as going camping. But let's talk about 'willing'.

C: If you talk about movies and TV shows, TV series...one of the things people talk about is they like to watch it in 'original version'. And there was one day when I realised, we don't say that in English, nobody would say it. For me the original version would be the director's cut.

A: Director's cut or like, American Airlines, not only them but any airline from the US, they used to take out the swear words in the movies because our delicate little ears



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can't handle those. So that would be (10:22) this film has been adapted or this film has not been adapted, sure. But, ok, let me take a little...

C: that would happen in the UK because you got the 9 o'clock **watershed**. This was classic in the 80s or 90s you couldn't have swearing before...

A: Oh, in the Us too, sure, for sure!

C: So, the movies where adapted so you would have, you know, people like Eddie Murphy, who swears a lot...

A: No, swears, no. *Used to* swear a lot, before he started making movies only for children.

C: So you'd watch it at 6pm and you'd have 'you motherfooder'!

A: 'Motherlover' is a good one too.

C: 'Go food yourself'! It was kinda obvious what they were saying. It's kinda worse nowadays when you watch it using the alternative.

A: Those are fun, but you know what? Related to that, there was a great segment that used to do on one of the late-night talk shows in the US. It was 'unnecessary censorship'. They would take a regular speech by a person that has no bad words, they would beep up words and your brain would 100% understand, it would plug in a bad word and it could take the most innocuous speeches and just make them unbelievably hilarious because they were like 'I can't believe you bleep that guy yesterday', and of course your brain is going dirty.

C: and... "do you have fire?"

A: In my belly, yes!

C: That's one of my favorites

A: But did people say that seriously or did they say that in this kind of *tonge and cheek* way

C: No, this is deadly serious

A: Yes?



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C: i remember, yes, specially late nineties teaching my first stated ... catalan students over, "do you have fire?"

A: Yeah

C: Sounded so prime!

A: I think that, what that brings to mind for me is the question in idiolect, an idiolect is that, you know, we have languages, we have dialects, the way a group of people speak, it's socioeconomic

Vocabulary bank

Folder (noun): a piece of plastic or cardboard folded down the middle and used for keeping loose papers in. *Synonym: binder.*

Reception (noun): the degree to which mobile phone, radio or television signals are strong and clear. *Synonym: bars (informal).*

Face to face (adv., adj.): directly meeting someone in the same place. *Synonym: in person.*

To register (verb): to put information, especially your name, into an official list or record. *Synonym: to sign up.*

Car park (noun): an area of ground for parking cars. *Synonym: parking lot.*

Camping (noun): the activity of staying in a tent on holiday.

Glamping (noun, informal): a type of camping that is more comfortable and luxurious than traditional camping. The word is a mixture of 'glamorous' and 'camping'.

Campsite (noun): a piece of land where people on holiday can camp, usually with toilets and places for washing.

Bungalow (noun): a house that usually has only one level, sometimes with a smaller upper level in the roof and windows that come out of the roof.

Cabin (noun): a small, simple house made of wood.

