

Common ESL Errors

Words that seem the same but are not

Significant / Important

Sometimes English uses significant rather than important.

Significant: meaningful in a specific context

Important: often has influence over things

A significant number of errors was found in this research.

An important man often has influence over others.

Interesting / Noteworthy

In an essay or research paper, interesting may suggest a lack of certainty.

Interesting: arousing or holding attention; requires further study

Noteworthy: deserving attention

The drama department is presenting an interesting play. (entertaining)

The researcher came to a noteworthy conclusion. (important to your paper)

Then / Therefore

Then: used to denote time

Therefore: used to create a link to the previous sentence

First this happened. Then something else happened.

The numbers in this study are significant. Therefore, it is important to examine them.

Make / Take

In English, we usually *make a decision or choice*.

Make a decision: the process of coming to a decision, working through the various options

Take a decision: the act of deciding and following through, more formal

Julie has to make a difficult decision.

The government took the decision to end the protest.

Double subject

Il est par là, le soleil.

Direct translation: It's over there, the sun.

Correct: The sun is over there.

Attache-les, tes chiens.

Direct translation: Tie them, your dogs.

Correct: Tie your dogs.

Il travaille fort, ton frère.

Direct translation: He works hard, your brother.

Correct: Your brother works hard.

A double subject also occurs in English, but it is wrong.

X By shopping today, it means we don't have to go tomorrow.

Correct: Shopping today means we don't have to go tomorrow.

In English, it is more common to put the most important part of the sentence (usually the subject) at the beginning of the sentence.

The most common sentence order in English is Subject – Verb – Object (SVO)

