English Language Development

Common English Errors in Hong Kong emails

How would you rate your written English?

Let's look at some of the most common English errors in Hong Kong emails. Can you tell which sentences are correct and which ones are incorrect? **All the sentences are incorrect!**

Common Errors	Answers and Explanations
✘ The customer **showed a black face** when he discovered there was a charge.	✓ The customer **pulled a long face** when he discovered there was a charge. *Problem: incorrect collocated phrase; a direct translation from Chinese to English*
✘ The personnel department keeps employee records that are **up-to-date**.	✓ The personnel department keeps **up-to-date** records on all employees. ✓ The personnel department keeps employee records that are **up to date**. *Problem: Hyphenate compound adjectives <u>before</u> a noun.*
✘ The number of absent staff **are** increasing.	✓ **A number of** staff **are** absent today. ✓ **The number of absent** staff **is** increasing. *Problem: confusion between 'A number of' and 'The number of'* *'A number of staff' refers to each individual member of staff .* *'The number of staff' refers to the 'staff' as one group of people.*
✘ Please refer to the **below** application procedure.	✓ Please refer to the application procedure **below.** *Problem: incorrect word order*
✘ I suggest **to you to replace** the photocopier immediately.	✓ I **suggest replacing** the photocopier immediately. ✓ I **suggest that you replace** the photocopier immediately. ✓ I suggest **the immediate replacement of the photocopier**. *Problem: incorrect grammar structures of 'suggest'* *The three structures of 'suggest' are:* *a. I suggest +GERUND eg DOING SOMETHING* *b. I suggest +that you /we/etc. eg DO SOMETHING* *c. I suggest + NOUN PHRASE – eg SOMETHING*

✖ **I would be appreciated** if you could reply by 30 June.	✓ I **would appreciate it** if you could reply by 30 June. ✓ **It would be appreciated** if you could reply by 30 June. *Problem: confusion with the grammar structures of 'I would appreciate' and 'It would be appreciated….'*
✖ I look forward to **discuss** the plan in detail with you.	✓ I look **forward to discussing** the plan in detail with you. *Problem: incorrect grammar structure; 'look forward to +GERUND eg verb-ing*
✖ We did **a** market research last year, which showed product A was more popular.	✓ We did **some (or 'a lot of')** market research last year, which showed product A was more popular. *Problem: 'research' is an uncountable noun*

How did you do? Developing your language skills is essential because English is the number one language for businesses around the world. Poor English leaves a poor impression.

English **Language Development** provides a range of business English communication and language skills training courses designed to help you minimise errors, communicate effectively and increase impact.

Our most popular in-house programmes can all be customised to meet your specific needs:

- ✓ Professional Email Writing Skills
- ✓ Professional Business Writing Skills
- ✓ Presenting With Impact
- ✓ Business Oral Communication Skills
- ✓ Industry-specific English

Need more information?

Contact rachel@eldenglish.com to find out how we can help or fill in the **quick enquiry form** on http://www.eldenglish.com.