
B. Other literature


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doi:10.1093/ijl/ecn029
Advance access publication 22 July 2008


*Semantics and Pragmatics of False Friends* presents a comprehensive summary of the current research on the phenomenon of false friends across a broad range of languages.

Chamizo Domínguez skilfully combines a large selection of examples in context with references to different former works from the same field of study and the theory basis which support his work on false friends and their classification. The researcher spares no effort in compiling different materials either from the lexicographical field or other related disciplines such as Philosophy, Pragmatics, Semantics or Discourse Analysis. A discussion of the examples, which have been mainly excerpted from English, Spanish, French, German, and Catalan, can be found. In addition, although to a much lesser extent, examples are discussed from other languages, such as Polish, Dutch, Latin, Greek (both classic and modern), Italian, Norwegian, Arabic, Slovakian, Swedish and Portuguese.

Chamizo Domínguez poses the phenomenon of false friends as a source of misunderstanding, giving typical cases taken from the few previous lexicographical studies (Hill 1982; Prado 2003). He reviews former research on the subject to find common features among which he highlights those approaches aiming towards pedagogical perspectives which do not pay attention to the
evolution of senses in cognates. This is due to the fact that previous works and research on the subject were mainly written by language trainers and translators to provide useful lists of terms focussing on synchronic examples. Therefore, a diachronic point of view is not usually found in those former studies and only a few attempts at theoretical analysis are known. The emergence of false friends connected with the lexicalization of figures of speech has seldom been seriously taken into account by researchers.

The book is divided into six chapters. _Clearing the Terrain_, the first chapter (pp. 1-30), reviews existing literature and proposes a method to identify and classify false friends providing many instances of these terms in different languages. Chamizo Domínguez proposes a method that can be valid for a good many European languages and which might produce a significant change in future lexicographical compilations, although one can guess that this method could be applied to more European languages as well. It widens the old-fashioned contrastive scope that is characteristic of the previous literature on the topic, mainly bilingual comparisons, and opens a way for similar works to appear in the future among more world languages.

After revising the existing definitions of the problem, the author selects what he considers the most reasonable and easily understandable one which is, in his opinion, the one provided by T. Hayward and A. Moulin: ‘The best definition of the problem one can give is probably in Saussurean terms. In the learner’s mother tongue a particular _significant_ is associated with a particular _signifié_. Once the significant appears, even in a foreign-language context, the above-mentioned association is so strong that the user automatically thinks of his mother-tongue _signifié_ (in its totality).’ (quoted in Buncic 2000:2)

This definition really embodies the whole typology of false friends which the author goes on to develop. He presents a classification of pairs of words which bear phonetic and/or orthographic resemblance and summarises them in two basic types, namely, chance false friends and semantic false friends. Chance false friends are those pairs of words which are (graphically and/or phonetically) the same or similar in two or more given languages, but without any semantic or etymological reason that may account for this sameness or similarity. One of the examples analysed by the author is the Spanish term _rape_ ‘anglerfish’, ‘hair cut’ and English term _rape_ ‘violation, assault, ravishment’. Those pairs are less problematic than the semantic false friends which are far more numerous and treacherous. Semantic false friends are those pairs of words that bear a similar or identical spelling or phonetic realization and, besides, they are etymologically related. They may come from an original source for European languages – mainly Latin or Greek and, to a lesser extent, Arabic or Hebrew – or likewise one language has borrowed terms from another language and these borrowed terms have changed their original meaning, lost some senses or acquired new senses in the new language.
Inasmuch as two or more languages are closely related, semantic false friends are more common and particularly deceptive, especially in those cases where these languages share senses and signifiers. Thus, Chamizo Domínguez distinguishes between two different groups:

(1) Full semantic false friends: those whose meanings in two or more given languages are completely different so one should never be translated by the other in any case.
(2) Partial semantic false friends: those in which two or more given languages share some of their meanings, whereas other meanings are not common.

Those former terms are really scarce and dictionaries do not classify words with these criteria. Given that the majority of false friends are of the latter type and share some of their meanings where some other meanings are different, the context will be determinant to obtain the right translation.

The processes by which new senses of words are coined are carefully described (pp. 61-90), which brings a new light to lexicographical studies in finding an explanation of the *modus operandi* by which meaning continually changes. Thus, classifications of false friends are considered from the perspective of vagueness, lexicalisation, or their exploitation and translation. In order to illustrate the processes by which new senses are coined, the author presents many instances among which we can mention the evolution that the Spanish noun *guerrilla* suffered in the English language (pp. 83-84). English borrowed the Spanish noun *guerrilla* but the meaning of ‘one engaged in such warfare’ was added to the meaning of ‘an irregular war carried on by small bodies of men acting independently’ (*OED*). Consequently, this term turned into a polysemous word which is not in its source language, Spanish, where *guerrilla* only means ‘partida de paisanos, por lo común muy numerosa, que al mando de un jefe particular y con poca o ninguna dependencia de los del ejército, acosa y molesta al enemigo’, *(DRAE)* [guerrilla band]. Therefore the English term *guerrilla* is polysemous while Spanish word *guerrilla* is not and subsequently ambiguities can appear in English as it occurs in the sentence “terror has become the mark of guerrillas and the petty dictator” (Allan, 2001:156), which could be understood either as ‘terror has become the mark of guerrilla groups and the petty dictator’ or ‘terror has become the mark of guerrilla individuals and the petty dictator’. The first chapter ends with the proposal of exploitation of this phenomenon of linguistic interference in a positive way to favour conversational implicatures and to produce cognitive and literary effects which are enlightened by means of some examples excerpted from literary works.

The second chapter *Synonymy, Polysemy, Homonymy, Register and Diachrony* (pp. 31-60) constitutes a detailed analysis of the notion of synonymy, particularly when such a relationship allows the substitution of a
term in any language by another term in another given language which often results in the emergence of full semantic false friends or partial semantic false friends. The same occurs with other linguistic phenomena such as homonymy, polysemy, register and diachrony.

These reflections might challenge criteria in lexicography when compiling glossaries or dictionaries. For instance, the term *meta* ‘goal’, ‘finish line’ in Spanish could be a source of misunderstanding while the same signifier in Catalan means ‘boob, tit’, ‘finish line’ and ‘goal’. Examples of use in context have not traditionally been given in monolingual or bilingual dictionaries. However, there are a few exceptions like Seco et al. (1999), where this context for the word *meta* is accurately given. Since such homonyms are usually marked in dictionaries by subscripts or superscripts, speakers do not frequently resort to them. As the author points out, the ambiguity caused by homonymy can be solved if we are provided with the context of use (pp. 41-42).

Borrowings, calques and inheritances are other sources of interference and hence of false friends. This is thoroughly discussed in chapter three, *Semantics of False Friends: Borrowings, Calques and Inheritances* (pp. 61-90). The author makes a determined and successful attempt to show how false friends emerge and presents with originality many cases of the basic processes by which they are formed due to the following reasons: 1) a given borrowed word adds a new meaning to a signifier that already exists in the target language; and 2) the target language takes from the source language some signifiers for substituting other native signifiers that have become old-fashioned or hyponyms of the loan word (pp. 81-82). Dictionary entries such as the noun pair *meeting* ‘gathering’/*mitin* ‘scolding’ can result in complex processes as they are used either as a foreign term in sport competition context (Doval 1996) or as a loan adapted into Spanish *mitin* with the meaning of ‘political gathering’ or the new sense coined in Spanish ‘a lengthy reprimand or warning’ and even the bullfighting jargon where the word *mitin* has two main meanings, namely, ‘failure in general’ and ‘disastrous use of the sword by a matador, particularly when he tries to kill the bull’ (Belcher 2004: 348). Explanations of this kind and examples in context are not usually present in most dictionaries.

This fundamental explanation of the phenomenon of false friends by means of an incessant process of export/import of meaning and signifiers among different languages is followed in chapter four, *Semantics of False Friends: Tropical False Friends* (pp. 91-132), by the description of how new meanings are coined in different languages due to the linguistic mechanism of the different tropes. A detailed analysis of the role of metaphor and a subsequent explanation of specific tropes or metaphorical processes make us see false friends in a different light and clarify their existence in natural languages in such a transparent and consistent manner that it provides a valid model for further research. This chapter contains, in my view, a wide and accurate selection of terms that are false friends due to metaphorical processes such as
metonymy, synecdoche, euphemism, dysphemism, irony, amelioration, pejoration and by the collocation of words in certain phraseological units. Chamizo Domínguez has gathered the valuable information given by major diachronic lexicographical compilations (Corominas and Pascual 1984-1987, Simpson and Weiner 1989) and offers the scholar in this volume a way to be alert for constant semantic change.

In chapter five, *Pragmatics of False Friends* (pp. 132-164), the author presents a good number of present-day examples excerpted from newspapers and books to illustrate the use of pragmatic strategies in the translation of texts containing false friends and errors in the communication with foreign speakers. Such strategies are based on two approaches, namely: 1) the correct interpretation of the meaning trying to make sense of apparently senseless utterances based on contextual assumptions or interpretation of figurative meanings; and 2) by means of the reconstruction of the original text.

The volume ends with chapter six, *Main Theses Exposed and Conclusions* (pp. 164-168) a summary of the main thesis and conclusions of the concepts presented throughout the previous chapters. They are summarised in 12 paragraphs which help to recall and reinforce the main ideas of the work. A section with notes is also included (pp. 169-170) along with an extensive and comprehensive bibliography section (pp. 171-177). The volume ends with a carefully outlined index which enables just a quick look at the book contents to search what the reader wishes (pp. 179-186).

As Chamizo Domínguez puts forward, two given terms will function as false friends if they occur during the same synchronic moment in two languages; therefore any term can eventually become a false friend with regards to another similar one in a different language in a certain moment of history due to many circumstances. Thus, false friends evolve within two or more different cultures and some will be lexicalised, as often borrowings and calques do. Subsequently, some pairs may cease to be considered false friends and some new ones will appear due to language change.

Translation studies will greatly benefit from this research on pragmatic strategies. Translators and interpreters themselves are often forced to adapt their glossaries and resources to real needs in their work. As León (2000: 287) states, false friends are ‘slippery terms’ that interpreters must avoid in order not to produce a reaction of superiority and disappointment in the interpreter’s target audience.

Du-Babcock et al. (2005:6) see the phenomenon in similar positive light as Chamizo Domínguez does since they identify those processes as intercultural competency: ‘The process involves diagnosing an intercultural competency, match (placing interactants in an intercultural corridor), identifying false friends (exact same terms with implicit embedded cultural meaning that are sending significantly different messages to intercultural interlocutors), and turning these false friends into rich points’. 
This unique and cross-linguistic examination of false friends adds new perspectives to different fields in which the translation task has a major stake since it is supported by a multidisciplinary scope. Consequently, the book can be of interest for the fields of linguistics, philosophy of language, sociology of language, psychology of language and therefore for translation studies, the theory of semantic change, for communication studies and, particularly, for lexicography itself as it introduces a new approach to the compilation of corpora for dictionaries and glossaries, either standard or specialised ones.

Traditionally, dictionaries within a contrastive approach have been listing terms and meanings that were different in two or more given languages just to make the user aware of the differences in meaning to avoid misunderstanding or false meanings in translation (Thody and Evans 1995; Prado 2004). An outstanding example within the scientific field is Navarro’s (2005) comprehensive contribution on false friends which does include information about the senses of cognate terms, explaining both similarities, differences and uses offering an accurate tool for specialists. Each entry can be browsed easily, finding the meaning of thousands of pairs of scientific terms which have been previously compared, filtered and illustrated with examples in context. The typology of false friends that Chamizo Domínguez poses in this book is attuned with the latest lexicographic compilations on the topic. The fact that the author is a philosopher of language is an asset for this distinctive perspective in the field of contrastive studies that is proposed in this book.

To sum up, Chamizo Domínguez’s contribution will clarify the way for scholars of many disciplines and translators, as this analysis of linguistic interference can be focused from a wide range of perspectives. It is manifest that the development of specialised languages in our new context of globalised communication makes the number of false friends that will cause interference likely to exponentially increase. Information Technology has produced a revolution in communication in all fields of knowledge and human activities. This poses new challenges for lexicographical compilation and tools to standardise terminology in order to facilitate communication. The accepted hegemony of English as lingua franca for academic, economic and political interaction goes hand in hand with policies of preservation of minority languages. Therefore, serious attempts to facilitate communication are needed in such a scenario where too many languages are in contact. Dictionaries and glossaries have always constituted the most essential tool for any human activity where communication between different cultures is involved. Compilation criteria in contrastive analysis must be drawn from well founded theories such as the one introduced in this work. As Steiner (1992: 29) stated, the more standardised a language seems, the more covered are indices of semantic dating, and new approaches in lexicographical compilation are needed in the era of communication to cope with the enormous demand of translation and communication in present times.
References

A. Dictionaries


B. Other literature


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doi:10.1093/ijl/ecn020
Advance access publication 20 June 2008