



# Multilingual

## Hunting false friends

Did it ever occur to you, that you heard a word in another language, which you didn't know before, but because it is similar to words in your language(s), you thought you understood... but you actually didn't?

These tricky words are called "False Friends", let's hunt them!

<b>Discipline area</b>	Languages
<b>Topic</b>	Cultures, Language
<b>Estimated time</b>	2h
<b>Learning goals</b>	<p>If you go through this unit, you will</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• learn about words that sound similar but have a different meaning in another language</li> <li>• increase your awareness about false friends</li> <li>• get to know some false friends</li> <li>• learn to recognize possible misunderstandings</li> <li>• find strategies to clarify them</li> </ul>

## Warm-up

"My first language is Italian. I went to Spain with my class. There, we were supposed to order breakfast and tell the waiter what we would like to eat. I wanted bread (pane) with (con) butter (burro) and (e) jam (marmellata). So, I tried to transform Italian into Spanish and I said: 'Pan con burro y marmelada, por favor!' The waiter looked at me in shock..."

What does "burro" mean in Spanish? <sup>1</sup>

- butter   
  donkey   
  office

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# Learn

## 1

There are words in different languages which are identical or very similar, like "pizza", the color "blue" or "Internet", and mostly the meaning is the same... though not always, and that can be a problem! Or better, a challenge!

Here two examples:

1. In Germany the name of a popular toothpaste is "Putzi".

Even if you don't know any of these languages, try to guess: **why is it a good name for the German market but not for the Italian one?**

When you have developed some possible reasons, check the answer at the end of the unit.<sup>2</sup>

2. In Italian, when you are asked to develop a "conchetto" you are asked to develop first ideas about a topic. Whereas in German, when you are asked to develop a "Konzept", you are asked to write down much more than first ideas! A "Konzept" is a text of a few pages, with the description of goals, strategies, deadlines, etc.

Imagine you have just moved from Italy to Germany and the teacher asks you to elaborate a "Konzept" on a topic and you get back with a couple of first ideas!

Or that you have just moved from Germany to Italy and you are asked for a "conchetto". Instead of just sharing first ideas to your teacher, you present a whole well-defined project in which you put much effort without giving your teacher the chance to give you feedback.

Exchange with your buddy on following question, considering first one scenario and afterwards the second one:

How might the teacher in Germany/Italy interpret the unexpected deliverable and feel about it?

## 2

**Why** do you think different languages have similarities? (Similar words, expressions, grammatical structures... sometimes even identical!)

Exchange with your buddy.

When you are done...

How do you explain that sometimes identical or very similar words (e.g. "Konzept" - "conchetto") have different meanings?

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# Create

## 1

Find together false friends among the languages you know. If none comes to your mind, you can ask peers or other people you know or look them up on the Internet.

After laughing, as there are really very funny ones, choose some and **invent a sketch** in which one or more false friends are used.

How can you implement that? Choose a format: comics, audio-file, video animation, theatre piece and just do it!

## 2

Did your characters understand that they were misunderstanding each other?

Write down at least 1 hint: how can people understand that they are misunderstanding each other?

Did they solve their misunderstandings or how could they have done it?

Write down at least 1 strategy: how can people clarify a misunderstanding?

Create a postcard with your ideas, or if you prefer: with your favorite false friends!

# Reflect

What we say is sometimes different from what the other person understands, no matter the language(s) involved!

How can **awareness about hidden misunderstandings** be useful for your everyday life?

Share your ideas with your buddy.

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### Correct answers

1. Donkey
2. In German "Putzen" means "to clean", in Italian "puzzi" (which sounds like "Putzi", the toothpaste) means "you smell badly"!