

DIFFICULTIES IN TRANSLATION (I): FALSE FRIENDS

A. Translate the following sentences into Spanish, paying special attention to the underlined "false friend". Then translate it into English.

1. He is quite an artful person.
2. The actual value of an object.
3. They eventually decided to buy the house.
4. All the lecturers are adept at medieval English Literature.
5. The case seems to be still under adjudication.
6. The agenda contains four main sections.
7. He works as a confectioner.
8. She lives in a cosy attic.
9. He's gathering a few billets.
10. Much as they tried, they found nothing to cavil at.
11. Be careful with the water here, or your children may become constipated.
12. Central governments tend to devolve authority on the regions.
13. They ate like pigs, much to their mother's disgust.
14. He is said to have brought disgrace to his family.

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15. She is a very educated woman, which has brought her respect.
16. They went to celebrate Anne's birthday and got intoxicated.
17. She was wearing mascara.
18. John's addition to gambling has increased his family's misery.
19. She hit a man who was molesting her.
20. All the motorists were honking during the traffic jam.
21. He was famous for his parsimony.
22. She is a pedantic middle-aged woman.
23. He is a well-known physician.
24. James seemed rather preoccupied.
25. He is always repeating that refrain.
26. He has been traducing many famous writers for years.
27. She's become very voluble.

B. State whether the following pairs of words are “true” or “false friends”.

English	Spanish	T or F?	English	Spanish	T or F?
clandestine	clandestino		table	tabla	
lecture	lectura		topic	tópico	
denounce	denunciar		similar	similar	
idiom	idioma		unique	único	
silhouette	silueta		map	mapa	
practise	practicar		pretend	pretender	
sympathetic	simpático		diversion	diversión	
brave	bravo		demand	demandar	

C. Translate the following sentences into English. Then indicate the “false friend” and translate it into Spanish.

1. Tiene algunas cualidades relevantes.
2. El hombre adecuado para el trabajo.
3. Quiere que le pague en efectivo.
4. He perdido mi carpeta.
5. El preservativo es una medida para evitar la transmisión del SIDA.
6. Este novelista tiene un estilo peculiar.

KEY

A. Translate the following sentences into Spanish. Then indicate the “false friend” and translate it into English.

1. He is quite an artful person.
Es una persona bastante astuta
2. The actual value of an object.
El valor real de un producto.
3. They eventually decided to buy the house.
Finalmente decidieron comprar la casa.
4. All the lecturers are adept at medieval English Literature.
Todos los ponentes son expertos en literatura inglesa medieval.
5. The case seems to be still under adjudication.
El caso parece estar visto para sentencia.
6. The agenda contains four main sections.
El orden del día contiene cuatro secciones principales.
7. He works as a confectioner.
Trabaja de confitero/pastelero.
8. She lives in a cosy attic.
Vive en un/a desván/buhardilla acogedor/a.
9. He’s gathering a few billets.
Está reuniendo unos cuantos acuartelamientos/barracones militares.
10. Much as they tried, they found nothing to cavil at.
Por mucho que lo intentaron, no encontraron nada a lo que poner reparos.
11. Be careful with the water here, or your children may become constipated.
Ten cuidado con el agua de aquí, o es posible que tus hijos se estriñan.
12. Central governments tend to devolve authority on the regions.
Los gobiernos centrales tienden a delegar la autoridad/traspasar competencias a las regiones.
13. They ate like pigs, much to their mother’s disgust.
Comían como cerdos, para la indignación/repugnancia/repulsión de su madre.
14. He is said to have brought disgrace to his family.
Se dice que ha traído la deshonra/vergüenza a su familia / que ha deshonrado a su familia.
15. She is a very educated woman, which has brought her respect.
Es una mujer muy culta, lo que le ha propiciado mucho respeto.
16. They went to celebrate Anne’s birthday and got intoxicated.
Fueron a celebrar el cumpleaños de Anne y se emborracharon.
17. She was wearing mascara.

Comentado [Office 1]: Remember that “intoxicated” only makes reference to alcohol, and **not** to drugs.

Llevaba rímel.

18. John's addition to gambling has increased his family's misery.

La adicción de John al juego ha incrementado el sufrimiento/la desgracia/tristeza/pena de su familia.

19. She hit a man who was molesting her.

Golpeó a un hombre que la estaba acosando sexualmente.

20. All the motorists were honking during the traffic jam.

Todos los conductores estaban pitando en el atasco.

21. He was famous for his parsimony.

Era famoso por su mezquindad/avaricia.

22. She is a pedantic middle-aged woman.

Es una mujer de mediana edad muy meticulosa/puntillosa.

23. He is a well-known physician.

Es un conocido médico.

24. James seemed rather preoccupied.

James parecía bastante ensismismado/absorto/distraído.

25. He is always repeating that refrain.

Está siempre repitiendo ese estribillo.

26. He has been traducing many famous writers for years.

Ha estado calumniando/difamando/vilipendiando autores famosos durante años.

27. She's become very voluble.

Se ha vuelto muy locuaz/habladora.

English	Real translation	False friend	Equivalent
artful	astuto/a	artístico/a	artistic
actual	real	actual	current/present
eventually	finalmente	eventualmente	from time to time
lecturer	ponente	lector	reader
adept	experto	adepto	supporter, follower
adjudication	visto para sentencia	adjudicación	awarding
agenda	orden del día	agenda	Notebook/diary
confectioner	confitero, pastelero	confeccionador	maker/taylor
attic	desván, buhardilla	ático	top floor, penthouse
billet	acuertelamiento, barracón militares	billete	note (BrE), bill (AmE)

Comentado [Office2]: Notice that the word "conference" is also a false friend. It means "congreso/jornadas", whereas "conferencia" would be translated as "talk, lecture, speech".
Note: the word "congress" is used for "congreso" in the context of politics.

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cavil	poner reparos, pegas a algo	cavilar	ponder
constipated	estreñido	constipado	to have a cold
devolve	delegar, traspasar competencias	devolver	return, give back
disgust	indignación, repugnancia, repulsión	disgusto	annoyance, displeasure
disgrace	vergüenza, deshonra	desgracia	misfortune, tragedy
educated	culto/a	educado/a	polite, well-mannered
intoxicated	ebrio/a, borracho/a	intoxicado/a	poisoned
mascara	rímel	máscara	mask
misery	sufrimiento, desgracia, tristeza, pena	miseria	poverty
molest	acosar sexualmente	molestar	bother, annoy, disturb
motorists	conductores	motoristas	motorcyclists
parsimony	mezquindad, avaricia	parsimonia	calmness, slowness
pedantic	puntilloso, meticuloso	pedante	pompous, pedant
physician	médico	físico	physicist
preoccupied	ensimismado, absorto, distraído	preocupado	worried
refrain	estribillo	refrán	saying, proverb
traduce	calumniar, difamar, vilipendiar	traducir	translate
voluble	locuaz, hablador/a	voluble	changeable, unpredictable, unstable

B. State whether the following pairs of words are “true” or “false friends”.

English	Spanish	T or F?	English	Spanish	T or F?
clandestine	clandestino	T	table	tabla	F
lecture	lectura	F	topic	tópico	F
denounce	denunciar	T	similar	similar	T
idiom	idioma	F	unique	único	T
silhouette	silueta	T	map	mapa	T
practise	practicar	T	pretend	pretender	F
sympathetic	simpático	F	diversion	diversión	F
brave	bravo	F	demand	demandar	F

English	Real translation	False friend	Equivalent
lecture	charla, conferencia	lectura	reading
idiom	expresión idiomática	idioma	language
sympathetic	compasivo	simpático	friendly
brave	valiente	bravo	wild, fierce
table	mesa	tabla	board
topic	tema	tópico	cliché, commonplace, stereotype
pretend	fingir	pretender	intend, mean
diversion	desvío	diversión	fun, amusement
demand	solicitar, exigir, reclamar	demandar	to sue

C. Translate the following sentences into English. Then indicate the “false friend” and translate it into Spanish.

1. Tiene algunas cualidades relevantes.
He has some prominent/outstanding/remarkable features.
2. El hombre adecuado para el trabajo.
The right/suitable/appropriate man for the job.
3. Quiere que le pague en efectivo.
He wants to be paid in cash.
4. He perdido mi carpeta.
I've lost my folder.
5. El preservativo es una medida para evitar la transmisión del SIDA.
Profilactics/Condoms is a means to prevent AIDS transmission.
6. Este novelista tiene un estilo peculiar.
This novelist has a characteristic/particular style.

Spanish	Real translation	False friend	Equivalent
relevante	prominent, outstanding	relevant	pertinente, significativo
adecuado	right, suitable	adequate	suficiente, válido
efectivo	cash	effective	eficaz
carpeta	folder	carpet	moqueta
preservativo	prophylactic, condom	preservative	conservante
peculiar	characteristic	peculiar	raro, extraño