

The question was:

What are cognates, false friends, false cognates, loan words and pseudo-Anglicisms?



These terms are too often confused or sloppily used, especially but not exclusively on websites.

1. **Cognates:** are words that derive from the same source and appear in a number of different languages.

For example, the term *Pfad* in German and *path* in English mean much the same and derive from the same root. Latin-derived words in European languages are very numerous and usually mean much the same thing as their recognisable counterparts in other languages. For example, *administer*, *administrar*, *amministrare*, *administrer*, *administrar*, and *administra* all mean much the same in English, Spanish, Italian, French, Portuguese and Romanian respectively.

Greek-derived words, like *democracy*, especially in certain fields such as science, politics and theology are also recognisable and recognisably carry similar meanings across a range of languages (not just confined to Europe).

2. **False friend:** is the term used to describe cognate words in two languages, which derive from similar sources but **have acquired different meanings**.

For example, *marmalade* in many languages simply means *jam made from any fruit* although in English the word has only the meaning of *jam made from oranges* (or, sometimes, other citrus fruits).

The Spanish word *embarazada* means *pregnant* but derives for the same source as the English word *embarrassed* which simply means something like *discomfited*.

3. **False cognate:** is often confused with false friend. It actually refers to words in different languages which look the same and mean something similar **but which come from completely different roots**.

For example, the word *okuru* in Japanese means something like the English *occur* but the words are not connected historically – it's just a coincidence.

Similarly, the word *Gift* in German and the word *gift* in English look the same but derive by different routes from a similar source (*Gift* in German means *poison*; *gift* in English means *present*).

4. **Loan words:** are words taken from a foreign language with no or very little change in meaning. There are two sorts:

- foreign words which have not changed their spelling or pronunciation such as *café* in English which is borrowed from French. An obvious example is a word like *whisk(e)y*

which is taken from English into many languages with no change in pronunciation or meaning. (It actually derives from the Gaelic expression *uisge beatha*, *water of life*.)

- loan words proper such as *chófer* in Spanish (from the French *chauffeur*) which has altered both its spelling and its pronunciation to conform to Spanish usage but whose meaning is retained. (In English, incidentally, the French word is used but its meaning is confined to a servant who is paid to drive rather than describing any person who drives.)

5. **Pseudo-Anglicisms:** are words taken from English, so may be called a subset of loan words, but whose form or meaning would not be recognisable to most native speakers of English.

For example:

- A *smoking* in French (and also in Danish, Dutch, French, German, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Portuguese, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Spanish, Swedish, and Turkish) describes a *formal dinner jacket* rather than a smoking jacket in the antique English sense
- *Apart* in Japanese and Korean means apartment (not degree of separation)
- *Autostop* means hitch hike in many languages, including Bulgarian, Czech, French, Greek, Hungarian, Italian, Polish, Romanian, Russian, Serbo-Croatian, Slovak, Spanish and Turkish and would not mean much to a native speaker of English
- *Goalman* means goalkeeper in German, Slovene and Serbo-Croatian
- In Dutch, an *agenda* is a *calendar* and a *beamer* is a *type of projector*
- In French a *building* refers to a *skyscraper*
- In German, a *handy* is a *mobile telephone*
- In Greek, *jean* means *denim*
- In Italian a *tutor* is a *speed camera*
- In Polish *dres* means a *tracksuit*

and so on.

Transmission between languages is, of course, not confined to in and out of English although English is particularly rich both as a source and in sourcing words from other languages. Turkish, for example, contains many loan words from Arabic and Persian and Spanish draws heavily on Arabic, as does Persian. Indonesian draws on Dutch and elsewhere, colonial history has played a part in forming local languages.