

# Re: Pseudo-cognates?

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Snis Pilbor wrote:

Is there a special word for the event when two languages share a word, but only by sheer coincidence, NOT ... because of common heritage?

Informally, they are called "sound-alikes". Sometimes they are called "false friends".

And are there many examples where this occurs?

When comparing English and Hebrew, this happens sufficiently often that examples are not difficult to find.

In American English, the term "villa" brings to mind a luxurious single family home in the suburbs or country. In Israeli Hebrew, it is simply a small detached dwelling that may be quite the opposite of luxurious.

In Israeli Hebrew, protectzia does not mean "protection". It means having a friend or relative with political or economic clout, that is,

access to an insider who can "make things happen" for your benefit.

Q: Why don't they just fire him?

A: They can't.

Q: Why not?

A: Because his father-in-law is the chairman-of-the-board.

How about when a similar word takes opposite meaning, for example Japanese "ya" ("no")?

This can even happen within a single language. For example, the English verbs cleave and sanction.

Re: Pseudo-cognates?

ciao,

Israel "izzy" Cohen

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