

# Re: Pseudo-cognates?

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  - *Date:* Thu, 14 Dec 2006 07:48:08 -0500
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erilar wrote:

In article <4uah9hF15tjbcU1@xxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxxx>, Harlan Messinger <[hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx](mailto:hmessinger.removethis@xxxxxxxxxxx)> wrote:

izzy wrote:

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".

False friends aren't sheer coincidence—they're words that *are* related but that cause confusion because their meanings are different. Examples are English "eventual" and French "eventuel" (= "possible"), English "actual" and French "actuel" (= "current", "at the moment"), English "smoking" and French "smoking" (= "smoking jacket").

What the OP is asking about is words that *appear* to be false friends but that aren't.

I believe "tori(or something with "tor" in it at any rate) is a kind of gate in Japanese?? Tor is a gate in German. I can see no way these two words can have any kind of linguistic relationship. So are they "false friends"?

No, that's the point. They're false cognates. Again, false friends are *real* cognates. Review my examples above. French "smoking," for example, is definitely cognate with English "smoking"—it's a direct loanword. But its meaning as used in French isn't "smoking". "J'aime bien son smoking" doesn't mean "I like his smoking", it means "I like his smoking jacket".

## Re: Pseudo-cognates?

In "Ocean's Twelve", when the French character Toulour, played by Vincent Cassel, tells Tess, played by Julia Roberts, who in the film pretends at one point to be Julia Roberts, that she doesn't look anything like Julia Roberts, he says, "Oh, by the way, I gotta tell you something. You don't look anything like her. Eventually the nose, but the ears and, I mean, the way you walk and you dress ...." (It was quite clever of the screenwriter to throw this into the script. Or maybe Cassel, an actual Frenchman, thought of it.) Toulour says "eventually" to translate the French word "éventuellement", which is cognate with "eventually", and which would have been applicable, but the English word "eventually" incorrectly translates "éventuellement". They're false friends. A correct translation would have been "perhaps" or "possibly".

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