

Ideas and resources for teaching *False Friends*

<https://www.teaching-english-and-spanish.de>

Christine Röhl



Ideas and resources for teaching *False Friends*

Objectives

- to make learners aware of false cognates (*False Friends*) between German and English
- to achieve sustainable learning, i.e. learners transfer their knowledge about *False Friends* to their long-term memory in order to be able to translate *False Friends* correctly from German into English and vice versa

Introduction

English and German belong to the Germanic branch of the Indo-European language family. Due to their common roots, numerous related words or cognates can be found in the two languages that have evolved differently and taken on different meanings. In addition, there are loanwords in both languages that are derived from ancient Greek and Latin. German native speakers make a lexical error when they are not aware that a similar-sounding word in English is a false cognate and does not have the same meaning as the German word, for example *actual*, *become* or *sea*. This type of error often affects comprehension and can lead to confusion or even embarrassment – for example when translating *Rückseite* with *backside*. It is therefore important that learners are made aware of the issue of *False Friends* early on, so that the misuse of false cognates does not fossilise.

Ideas and resources for teaching *False Friends*

Several free materials and easy-to-use tools to teach *False Friends* are presented below, including two playlists of animated videos that illustrate a communication problem caused by the use of a false cognate.

For lists of German-English *False Friends*, visit the following websites:

<https://www.learngermanonline.org/german-english-false-friends/>

<https://www.lal.de/blog/false-friends-falsche-freunde/>

<https://www.fluentu.com/blog/german/false-friends-english-german/>

<https://www.br.de/grips/faecher/grips-englisch/23-present-perfect-vokabeln-false-friends100.html>

https://www.englisch-hilfen.de/words/false_friends.htm

Interactive online exercises can be used for expanded learning, which means that learners review new content after the first meeting and then at gradually increasing intervals.

Interactive online exercises can be found, for example, on the following websites:

<https://www.bento.de/today/englisch-quiz-erkennst-du-diese-falschen-freunde-a-00000000-0003-0001-0000-000002149169>

<https://www.ego4u.de/de/chill-out/games/false-friends>

https://www.lernort-mint.de/MCTest/Englisch/test_false_friends.html

Another useful tool are flashcards. **Quizlet** is an easy-to-use online flashcard app (<https://quizlet.com/de>) that can be used on a computer, tablet or phone. First, the teacher sets up a class account and creates bilingual flashcards with which learners can learn the *False Friends* and play online games. Several learning sets for *False Friends* have already been prepared, for example at

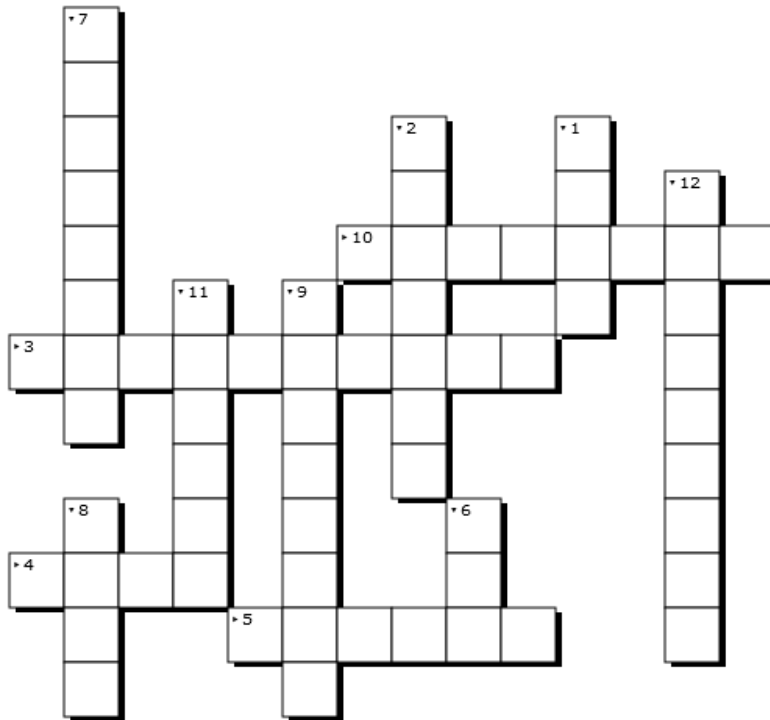
<https://quizlet.com/123323842/false-friends-englisch-german-flash-cards/>. (Registration is necessary to play the games.)

Learners can use the flashcards at home for revision or in a competitive classroom game that can be played individually or in teams. The teacher shows the German words with a projector and learners write down the correct translations. After that, the translations or phrases can be checked in the plenary or by another team.

Jeopardy is an American television game show featuring a quiz competition. Several online templates allow teachers to create their own questions and automatically record the contestants' or teams' score, for example <https://www.superteachertools.us/jeopardyx/>.

In addition, online **crossword puzzle generators** that allow the quick and easy creation of revision tests can be used, as shown in the following example:

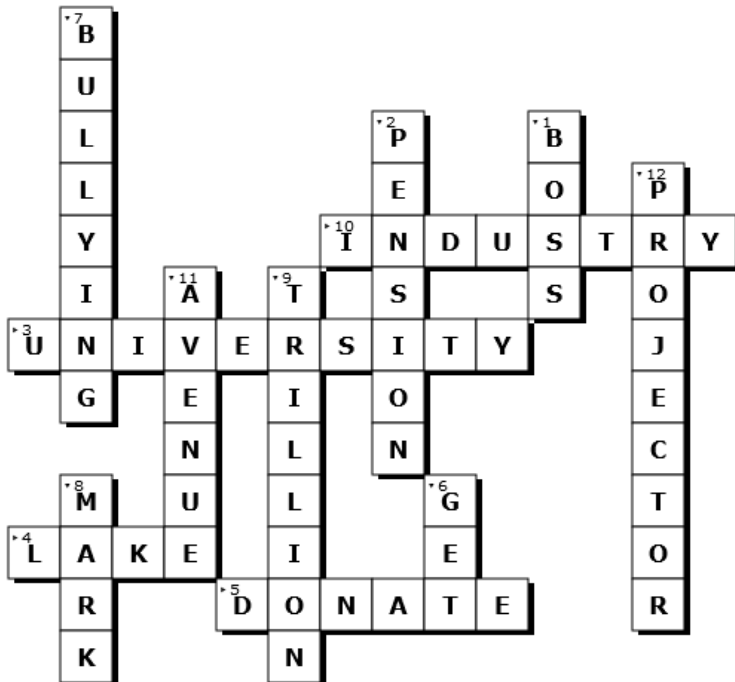
FALSE FRIENDS



- 1. Chef
- 2. Rente
- 3. Hochschule
- 4. See
- 5. spenden
- 6. bekommen
- 7. Mobbing
- 8. Note
- 9. Billion
- 10. Branche
- 11. Allee
- 12. Beamer

Created with XWords – the free online crossword puzzle generator
<https://www.xwords-generator.de/en>

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There is also a playlist of humorous videos on YouTube about *False Friends*. The videos can be shown in class or watched by learners at home. They can be accessed at

<https://www.youtube.com/channel/UCIFXIIQFyZYoHiTu-7oOqag>

The videos can help learners to achieve a higher recall value than text-based materials alone due to the "multimedia effect", which can be described as follows: "The multimedia effect refers to the finding that learners learn more from a multimedia explanation presented in words and pictures than from words alone".

Another type of words that can partly be considered *False Friends* are terms that do not have a direct one-to-one relationship in English and German, i. e. words in German for which there are two or more terms in English, such as *drive, ride, go by* (fahren), *motor/engine* (Motor) or *tube/pipe* (Rohr). This mismatch makes it difficult for learners to conceptualise the two or more different meanings in English. The channel mentioned above offers the playlist **Tricky words** containing various videos that deal with this issue.

The videos were created using an animation program called GoAnimate (now Vyond) (<https://move.vyond.com/animation-solutions/>) which allows users to create animated stories and add sound by means of a text-to-speech program. If teachers or learners want to create their own animations, online cartoon makers that offer free versions (without the text-to-speech option), are for example, <https://www.toonytool.com/>, <https://www.powtoon.com> or <https://www.animaker.de/>.

Teachers can supplement the videos with **worksheets** to focus learners' attention on the different meanings of the German and English lexemes (see example below).

Actual/aktuell

What does the word *actual* mean? _____

I paid €250 for this bike, but its actual (= real) value may be higher.

I expected the lesson to be boring but actually it was very interesting.

But *actual* does not mean *aktuell*. Now translate the following sentences:

Haben Sie den aktuellen Katalog? _____

Aktuelle Nachrichten _____

Die aktuelle Krise _____

Words in German for which there are two or more terms in English

Drive and ride

You can **go or travel by** car, train, bus, plane, boat or ship.

You **walk or you go on foot**.

When you **drive**, you move or travel in a motor vehicle (a car, truck, bus, train) as the person controlling the vehicle's movement. You can also drive a wheelchair (vehicle) when it has got a motor.

You **ride a horse, a bike or a motorbike**. This means that you are in control.

When you ride a bus or train, you travel as a passenger and you are not in control of it.

Are you going by train?" "No, I'm driving."

She drives a red sports car.

What means of transport do you use?

go by	ride	drive

False Friends can also be practised with questions:

False Friends Questions

What is the difference between a sea and a lake?

What do you train at a German *Gymnasium*? What do you train at a gym?

Do you normally get good ... in your exams?

Do you know an effective note-taking system ?

What's on the ... in the canteen today?

What is the name of your ... (your superior at work)?

How many zeros are in a billion? How many zeros are in a trillion?

What software te... will dominate the 2020s?

I need to buy some food. Where is the ... supermarket?

What search ... do you normally use?

Have you heard the ... news?

Is there a ... in the classroom to project a presentation?

Another example of a worksheet dealing with *False Friends* and tricky words can be found here:

<https://www.english-practice.at/b2/vocabulary/general-vocabulary/gv010-false-friends.pdf>

Suggested Procedure for teaching *False Friends*

Raise Awareness and Facilitate Understanding

Learners are shown (or watch at home) two or three videos per lesson. They then complete the corresponding paper-based translation exercises in class or as homework.

Revise and Consolidate Vocabulary

Learners complete exercises (online exercises, crosswords, Quizlet) either in class or at home spread over several lessons to allow for extended learning.

Apply and Create

Learners work in small groups. They are given (or draw from a pile) three two four cards that contain false friends. Each group writes a sketch showing misunderstandings caused by their *False Friends* and performs it in front of the class. The teacher acts as a facilitator to help the learners with this task. Alternatively, learners can film the sketch outside the classroom.