

# False Friends between English and Italian

---

Hefler, Matija

Undergraduate thesis / Završni rad

2017

Degree Grantor / Ustanova koja je dodijelila akademski / stručni stupanj: **University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences / Sveučilište u Rijeci, Filozofski fakultet u Rijeci**

Permanent link / Trajna poveznica: <https://um.nsk.hr/um:nbn:hr:186:504057>

Rights / Prava: [In copyright](#) / [Zaštićeno autorskim pravom.](#)

Download date / Datum preuzimanja: **2025-01-26**



Repository / Repozitorij:

[Repository of the University of Rijeka, Faculty of Humanities and Social Sciences - FHSSRI Repository](#)



Matija Hefler

# **FALSE FRIENDS BETWEEN ENGLISH AND ITALIAN**

Submitted in partial fulfilment of the requirements for the B.A. in English Language and Literature and Italian Language and Literature at the University of Rijeka

Supervisor:

Dr. Branka Drljača Margić

September 2017

## **Abstract**

False friends, false pairs or faux amis are a linguistic phenomenon presenting a great deal of trouble to translators. False friends are two words from different languages that may look and sound similar, but their meaning is either partially or entirely different. This paper is focusing on false friends between just two languages, English and Italian. English, being a global language is one of the most translated ones. When it comes to translating from English to Italian, false friends may cause a lot of problems for translators. English and Italian have a lot of false friends because of the influence French, which is a Romance language just like Italian, had on English.

**Keywords:** false friends, false pairs, true friends, English, Italian, translation, linguistics

**Content**

Introduction ..... 1

Previous research..... 3

Methodology ..... 8

Results ..... 9

Discussion ..... 17

Further research..... 18

Conclusion..... 19

REFERENCES ..... 20

## Introduction

This paper deals with false friends between English and Italian, but in the introduction, I will try to explain the very phenomenon of false friends. False friends are, as I previously mentioned, two words from different languages that have a similar form, but a different meaning. This phenomenon occurs primarily in translation because of the interference of source language with the target language and vice versa.

Before emerging ourselves into the world of false friends, we should get acquainted with a few terms and provide them with definitions. The first one is Cognates, or True friends (Vrais amis), which are pairs of words that are perceived as similar and are mutual translations. The spelling can be identical or not, e. g., en. *nature* – fr. *nature*, en. *recognition* – fr. *reconnaissance* (Inkpen, Frunza, Kondrak, 2005, p.p. 252).

False friends (Faux amis) are pairs of words in two languages that are perceived as similar but have different meanings, e.g., fr. *main*, 'hand' – en. *main*, fr. *blessier*, 'to injure' – en. *bless* (Inkpen, Frunza, Kondrak, 2005, pp. 252).

Partial cognates are pairs of words that have the same meaning in both languages in some but not all contexts. They behave as cognates or as false friends, depending on the sense that is used in each context. For example, in French, *facteur* means not only 'factor', but also 'mailman', while *étiquette* can also mean 'label' (Inkpen, Frunza, Kondrak, 2005, pp. 252).

Genetic cognates are word pairs in related languages that derive directly from the same word in the ancestor (proto-) language. Because of gradual phonetic and semantic changes over long periods of time, genetic cognates often differ in form and/or meaning, e. g., fr. *père* – 'father', fr. *chef* – 'head'. This category excludes lexical borrowings, i. e., words transferred from one language to another at some point of time, such as *conciierge* (Inkpen, Frunza, Kondrak, 2005, pp. 252).

As the differences between the aforementioned terms are subtle, a translator should be extremely careful when dealing with this linguistic problem. The most confusing ones would definitely be Partial cognates because we may be certain its translation is correct in one particular context, and use it confidently in another context where the translation would be incorrect. However, the topic of this paper is not based on Partial cognates, but rather on False cognates or False friends.

Metaphor, metonymy and polysemy are one of the main phenomena that lead to the existence of false friends. The example of *Flanell* in German and *flannel* in English shows instances of metaphoric and metonymic extension. In German *Flanell* is used to refer to a certain type of cloth, in English to a certain type of cloth, but also to a cloth with a certain function (a wash-cloth for washing the body).<sup>2</sup> The metonymic link that is exploited is the one between material and function.<sup>3</sup> Furthermore, flannel can be used metaphorically in English to mean 'evasive talk' (Chamizo Domínguez, Nerlich, 2002, pp. 1834). This example shows that words can have similar or even the same meaning in two or more different languages, but the word may have more metaphoric or metonymic meanings in one language than it has in others. This type of false friends, also called partial cognates, cause a lot of difficulty for translators because of the nuances in their meaning.

The best definition of the problem one can give is probably in Saussurean terms. In the learner's mother tongue a particular signifiant is associated with a particular signifié. Once the signifiant appears, even in a foreign-language context, the abovementioned association is so strong that the user automatically thinks of his mother-tongue signifié (in its totality) (Hayward, Moulin, 1984, pp. 190).

I conducted this research using several different methods. First of all, I collected all the literature relevant to the topic I could find online. The topic is very limited, so the only literature I could find was the one I found online, as the libraries that are at my disposal do not keep that

kind of literature. The second tool I used in this study were dictionaries. I used an English-Italian false friend glossary and then I searched for the words and their definitions in both languages to see how similar or how different they actually are. After providing all the results of the study in form of examples, definitions and explanations, I made a brief discussion regarding the matter. The discussion included my opinions and other things I did not get to mention in the main part of this paper. After the discussion part, I listed a few of the things I would recommend for further research because I did not have the time or did not have the necessary literature to do it myself. Finally, I summarized all the issues and topics I dealt with throughout this paper in the conclusion.

## **Previous research**

Not many studies have been done in the linguistic field of False friends regarding the connection between English and Italian. Most of the studies that have been made on this topic included three or more different languages. The most common combination was English, Italian and Polish. In a paper regarding faunal phraseology, a Polish scientist Szerszunowicz compared these three languages comparing the idioms that contained terms referring to animals.

Numerous idioms belonging to the group are those realizing the pattern 'be + a faunal term', which is observed especially if Italian and Polish are compared, e.g. lit. "be a lizard", respectively: *essere una lucertola*, 'love basking in the sun' or *być jaszczurką*, 'be a malicious woman'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp. 1056).

There are phrases that are practically the same, but they just have more components in some languages. For example, eng. *buy a pig in a poke* and it. *comprare un porco*, which would translate into English as 'to buy a pig'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp.1057) are almost identical in

form, but differ in meaning. The English phrase would mean 'buy something unsatisfactory, bought unseen by a buyer', while the Italian one would be translated as 'leave quietly, without saying goodbye, take a French leave'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp.1057).

There are also examples in which the components are similar, but the structure and the meaning are different. For example, eng. *send somebody with a flea in one's ear*, 'to snub or rebuke a person', is similar in its components to it. *mettere la pulce nell'orecchio*, lit. 'put a flea in somebody's ear', 'make somebody doubt or suspect something'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp. 1057).

In the same paper, I also found an example in which the components are similar, the structure is identical, but the meaning is completely different. The idiom it. *dire l'orazione della bertuccia*, lit. 'make the Barbary ape's speech', 'swear under one's breath', has the same structure as eng. *an ape'spaternoster*, meaning 'chatter one's teeth from cold'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp. 1057-1058).

There is also a case of idioms that are polysemous in one language and monosemous in the other. For example. it. *essere un montone*, lit. "be a ram", has two meaning in Italian, 'be a stupid man' and 'be a man who is very active sexually'. The same idiom in English, however it means only 'be a man of great sexual activity'(Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp. 1058).

There are also some idioms that differ only in their stylistic value. They may be very formal in one language, very informal or even vulgar in the other etc. The idiom it. *pelato come il culo della scimmia*, lit. 'be as bald as the monkey's ass', is informal and even vulgar in Italian. However, eng. *as bald as a coot*, is not vulgar and makes part of the formal register (Szerszunowicz, 2005, pp. 1058).



The main reason why Italian and English share many false friends is because they both have their origin in Latin. For example, *it. finalmente* and *eng. finally* both come from a Latin root *finalis*. However, the meaning of the words that stemmed from Latin differs greatly in their respective languages. While in English, *finally* can be used as an adverb and as a sentence connector, in Italian *finalmente* can only be used as an adverb.

Few learners or translators have problems with the more obvious false friends, such as (taking examples from English and Italian) *camera* and *camera* ('room') or *stamp* and *stampa* ('print or 'the press'). But they can have problems with words whose meanings in two languages overlap. This is the case of words such as *sanity* ('mental health') and *sanità* ('health in general') in which one term is more restricted in meaning than the other (Partington, 1995, pp. 104)

Another study was conducted on the proficiency bilinguals and trilinguals have with regards to true friends. The bilinguals used in this research spoke English and Spanish, while the trilinguals spoke English, French and Dutch. With respect to the processing of cognates in the native language (L1), the empirical evidence is not so clear-cut. For instance, Caramazza and Brones (1979) studied lexical access to cognates in adult Spanish–English bilinguals. In their study, English (L2) lexical decisions to cognates were faster than to English control words, but Spanish (L1) lexical decisions to cognates did not lead to any reaction time (RT) differences. Van Hell and Dijkstra (2002) observed cognate effects with trilinguals in the L1 only when proficiency in the weaker language(s) was relatively high. They tested Dutch–English–French trilinguals, all of whom were Dutch native speakers with a higher proficiency in their L2 (English) than in their third language (L3) (French). In Experiment 1, participants did an L1 (Dutch) lexical decision task and showed facilitation effects for Dutch–English cognates but not for Dutch–French cognates. In Experiment 2, Dutch–English–French trilinguals with a much higher level of French proficiency were recruited (i.e., university students of French). For these trilinguals, cognate facilitation effects in Dutch were obtained for both Dutch–English

(L1–L2) and Dutch–French (L1–L3) cognates. These results suggest that for adults, relative proficiency in another language (L2 or L3) affects the size of the cognate facilitation effect in L1. This observation led us to investigate L1 and L2 cognate facilitation in children at different stages of L2 learning (Brenders, van Hell, Dijkstra, 2011, pp. 384)

Questions about relationships between lexical representation of translation involve the use of a third type of word, in addition to cognates and noncognates. Consider a word such as ESTATE. The English ESTATE and the Italian ESTATE are not translations of each other. The two readings involve completely independent meanings and referents, yet they are orthographically identical. Does presentation of ESTATE in English facilitate lexical decision when ESTATE is subsequently presented in Italian, or vice versa? The answers to questions about the representation of ESTATE are important theoretically, and for second language instruction generally. Where theory is concerned, the pattern of cross-language facilitation is important. Evidence that exposure to ESTATE in English facilitates performance when FIN is subsequently presented in French, or vice versa, would falsify the claim that morphology is critical, for morphology involves meaning as well as form (Lalor, Kirsner, 2001, pp. 553).

A lot of studies have been done on relation between English and Spanish. Since Spanish is also a Romance language, the relationship it has with English is similar to that Italian has with English. Spanish is a direct descendant of Latin. Even though English is a Germanic Language it has been extensively influenced by Latin at various times, especially during the Middle English and Early Modern English Periods. It can be said that one of the major sources of loanwords into English, together with French and Scandinavian, has been Latin. The relationship of English and Spanish with Latin has occasioned a non-parallel lexical development and thus we can find in both languages many words with a common Latin origin which nevertheless have evolved differently, giving rise to uneven correspondences. What is

more, since English and Spanish are in contact in many parts of the world, false friends between these two languages continue to appear (Beltrán, 2006, pp. 30).

Many studies have been done regarding false friends English has with several other languages, Spanish and French being amongst the most popular. Even though Italian was not considered as much as these other global languages, I will try to give a brief overview over the research that has been made in this field. The main field in which false friends occur between English and Italian is everyday language because the more official and technical fields tend to have more carefully picked words that usually come from Latin and their meaning do not differ between various languages.

There is also a study by the University of Pretoria regarding false friends between Dutch and Afrikaans. This is an interesting combination because Afrikaans is a mixture of English, Dutch and other less known African tribe languages. Afrikaans developed from seventeenth century Dutch and at present the lexicon of Afrikaans still displays a strong Dutch base. For the purpose of the current study the 10-million-word Pretoria Afrikaans Corpus PAfC (De Schryver, Prinsloo, 2003) was contrasted to the 48-million-word Dutch CONDIV corpus (Grondelaers et al. 2000). A comparison of Afrikaans and Dutch immediately reveals the large number of mutual lexical items occurring in both Afrikaans and Dutch (Gouws, Prinsloo, de Schryver, 2004, pp. 797). This list includes highly used true friends such as *en* 'and', *in* 'in', *op* 'on', *maar* 'but', etc. But also frequently used false friends such as *van* 'of', but also 'surname' in Afrikaans, *een* 'one', but also 'a' in Dutch, *niet* 'not' in Dutch, but 'nothing' in Afrikaans, *voor* 'in front of', but also 'for' in Dutch, etc. A comparison of all non-hapaxes in PAfC and CONDIV indicates that over one fifth of the lexical items have the same orthographic form in Afrikaans and Dutch. This only reflects exact homographs, thus excluding lexical items with different formal characteristics that should be added to the overlap percentage for lexicographic considerations in terms of false friends (Gouws, Prinsloo, de Schryver, 2004, pp. 798).

## **Methodology**

The subject of this study is the connection that the English language has with the Italian language through false friends. The aim of this paper is to try and shed a light on the difficulty translators that translate from one of these languages into the other face. This issue has been tackled by linguist before, so my contribution can be seen in the references I mention and the examples I think are the best representation of the issue. As the two languages are not from a same language group, one of the explanations for the existence of false friends between them is definitely the influence Latin has had on both of these languages.

The main aims of this paper are to explain, in the simplest way possible, the linguistic phenomenon of false friends, their origin and finally their use in everyday language. The aim is to collect all the important information from the literature that is available and to try to compare and critically assess all the examples that are offered. Finally, the most important aim of this paper is to discuss the problems that false friends cause in linguistics and translation and to provide possible solutions for them.

There are a few research questions that I would like to ask and then answer in this paper. How much influence do false friends have on writing, translation and general communication between two or more speakers of these two languages? Can they significantly damage the quality of information that is being transmitted? What is the origin of most of these false friends? Does Latin have a huge influence on both of these languages, therefore causing the appearance of false friends? Does French play a role in creating many words in English that are similar to the ones in Italian? Which register has the most false friends between English and Italian? Are these false friends more common in business language, political language or some other specific part of language? What is the most efficient way to overcome this issue?

## Results

For this study, I compared false pairs, that is words in two different languages, in this case English and Italian, that have similar form, but different meanings. Various examples are shown in this paper, as some of them are homographs, some are just similar in spelling, some have a similar meaning or fall into the similar area, while others have completely different meaning. As I have already mentioned before, the reason for the existence of false friends between Italian and English lies in Latin. Latin is a language that has influenced greatly both English and Italian. The examples I am going to analyze in this paper are the ones that are most common and therefore cause most difficulty.

### *actually vs. attualmente*

*Actually* and *attualmente* are both adjectives that have a similar spelling, but a different meaning. *Actually* means ‘in act or in fact’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/actually>), while *attualmente* means ‘currently, at the moment’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/attualmente>). The Italian translation of *actually* is ‘realmente, effettivamente’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/actually>). Their similar meanings, may confuse the speakers and the translators.

### *attend vs. attendere*

*Attend* and *attendere* are two verbs from two different languages that have similar spelling but different meanings. *Attend* means ‘to be present at, to go to’ (<https://www.merriam->

[webster.com/dictionary/attend](https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/attend)), while *attendere* means ‘to wait, to await’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/attendere>). In Italian, *attend* is translated as ‘partecipare, visitare’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/attend>).

### ***bank vs. banco***

*Bank* and *banco* are two nouns with a similar spelling and a different meaning. The English equivalent *bank* is interesting because it has two general meanings, the first one is ‘the rising ground bordering a lake, river, or sea or forming the edge of a cut or hollow’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bank>), while the second one is ‘an organization for the custody, loan, or exchange of money, for the extension of credit, and for facilitating the transmission of funds’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/bank#legalDictionary>). The Italian word *banco* has an English translation that is also similar in spelling ‘bench’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/banco>). The first meaning of *bank* is translated into Italian as ‘riva, sponda’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/bank>), while the second one is translated as ‘banca’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/bank>).

### ***brave vs. bravo***

*Brave* and *bravo* are two adjectives that both have positive connotation in their respective languages. *Brave* means ‘having or showing mental or moral strength to face danger, fear, or difficulty’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/brave>), while *bravo* means

‘good, able’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/bravo>). The Italian translation of *brave* is ‘coraggioso, ardito’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/brave>).

### ***canteen vs. cantina***

*Canteen* and *cantina* are two nouns that have similar spelling, but different meanings. This false pair is easily confused because both words refer to a certain space. *Canteen* means ‘a small cafeteria or snack bar’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/canteen>), while *cantina* means ‘cellar, basement’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/cantina>). The Italian translation of *canteen* is ‘mensa’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/canteen>).

### ***cold vs. caldo***

*Cold* and *caldo* are two adjectives with a similar spelling, but a different meaning. This false pair is one of the most common because these words fall into the same area, that is climate/temperature. That is why people who know one of these languages and start to learn the other often mistake these two words. The problem is more serious in this example because the words do not have similar meanings, but are in fact antonyms. *Cold* means ‘having or being a temperature that is uncomfortably low for humans’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/cold>), while *caldo* means ‘warm, hot’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/caldo>). The Italian translation of *cold* is ‘freddo’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/cold>).

### ***delusion vs. delusione***

*Delusion* and *delusione* are two nouns that have a similar spelling, but a different meaning. In English, *delusione* means ‘the act of tricking or deceiving someone’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/delusion>), while in Italian *delusione* means ‘disappointment’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/delusione>). The Italian translation of *delusion* is ‘illusione, inganno’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/delusion>).

### ***eventual vs. eventuale***

*Eventual* and *eventuale* are two adjectives that have a similar spelling, but a different meaning. These words are often confused because they both relate to time, or more precisely to something happening in the future. *Eventual* means ‘taking place at an unspecified later time’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/eventual>), while the Italian word *eventuale* means ‘possible, potential’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/eventuale>). The Italian translation of *eventual* is ‘definitivo, conclusivo’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/eventual>).

### ***fame vs. fame***

*Fame* and *fame* are two nouns that have identical form, but different meanings. These two nouns are homographs. However, their meanings are completely different. The English



word *fame* means ‘overall quality or character as seen or judged by people in general’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/reputation>), while the Italian word *fame* means ‘hunger, starvation’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/fame>). The Italian translation of *fame* is ‘fama, notorietà’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/fame>).

### ***firm vs. firma***

*Firm* and *firma* are two words that have a similar spelling, but different meanings. The English word *firm* can be both a noun and an adjective. *Firm* means ‘the name or title under which a company transacts business’ or ‘securely or solidly fixed in place’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/firm>). The Italian word *firma* means ‘signature, autograph’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/firma>). The Italian translation of *firm* is ‘azienda, ditta’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/firm>).

### ***library vs. libreria***

*Library* and *libreria* are two nouns that have similar spelling, but a few nuances in meaning. *Library* is ‘a place in which literary, musical, artistic, or reference materials (such as books, manuscripts, recordings, or films) are kept for use but not for sale’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/library>), while *libreria* means ‘bookshop, bookstore’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/libreria>). The Italian translation of *library* is ‘biblioteca’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/library>).

### ***location vs. locazione***

*Location* and *locazione* are a common false pair, two nouns that have a similar spelling, but mean different things. *Location* is ‘a position or site occupied or available for occupancy or marked by some distinguishing feature’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/location>), while *locazione* means ‘lease, rent’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/locazione>). The Italian translation of *location* is ‘luogo, posizione, posto’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/location>).

### ***morbid vs. morbido***

*Morbid* and *morbido* are two adjectives that have similar spelling, but different meanings. The English word *morbid* has a negative connotation, while the Italian word *morbido* is neutral. *Morbid* means ‘abnormally susceptible to or characterized by gloomy or unwholesome feelings’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/morbid>). However, *morbido* means ‘soft, tender, smooth’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/morbido>). The Italian translation of *morbid* is ‘morbooso, raccapricciante, patologico’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/morbid>).

### ***novel vs. novella***

*Novel* and *novella* are two nouns that have a similar spelling, but different meanings. *Novel* means ‘an invented prose narrative that is usually long and complex and deals especially

with human experience through a usually connected sequence of events' (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/novel>). However, *novella* means 'short story' (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/novella>). The Italian translation of *novel* is 'romanzo' (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/novel>).

### ***parent vs. parente***

*Parent* and *parente* are two nouns that have a similar spelling, but different meanings. This false pair is among the most common, because both words fall into the "family" category. *Parent* is 'one that begets or brings forth offspring' (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/parent>), while the Italian word *parente* means 'relative' (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/parente>). The Italian translation of *parent* is 'genitore' (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/parent>).

### ***sensible vs. sensibile***

*Sensible* and *sensibile* are two adjectives that have similar spelling, but different meanings. This false pair is very common because of the nuances in meaning. *Sensible* means 'having, containing, or indicative of good sense or reason' (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sensible>), while *sensibile* means 'sensitive, sympathetic' (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/sensibile>). The Italian translation of *sensible* is 'sensato, ragionevole, saggio' (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/sensible>).

### ***sinister vs. sinistra***

*Sinister* and *sinistra* are two adjectives that are similar in form, but completely different in meaning. *Sinister* means ‘singularly evil or productive of evil’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sinister>), while *sinistra* means ‘left’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/sinistra>). The Italian translation of *sinister* is ‘sinistro, bieco, cattivo’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/sinister>).

### ***sympathetic vs. simpatico***

*Sympathetic* and *simpatico* are two adjectives with a similar form, but different meanings. *Sympathetic* means ‘showing empathy’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sympathetic>), while *simpatico* means ‘nice, sweet, likeable’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/simpatico>). The Italian translation of *sympathetic* is ‘sensibile, comprensivo’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/sympathetic>).

### ***test vs. testo***

*Test* and *testo* are two nouns that have a similar spelling, but different meanings. *Test* means ‘a critical examination, observation, or evaluation’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/test>), while *testo* means ‘text, lyrics’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/testo>). The Italian translation of *test* is ‘prova, esame’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/test>).

### *vacancy vs. vacanza*

*Vacancy* and *vacanza* are two nouns that have a similar spelling, but different meanings. *Vacancy* means ‘a vacant office, post, or tenancy’ (<https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/vacancy>). However, *vacanza* means ‘holiday, vacation’ (<https://glosbe.com/it/en/vacanza>). The Italian translation of *vacancy* is ‘posto vacante’ (<https://glosbe.com/en/it/vacancy>).

## **Discussion**

In the previous chapter of this paper, I enlisted several examples of false pairs between English and Italian. There were various types of false pairs: homographs, some had completely different meanings, some had similar ones and some had the same meaning in one context and a completely different meaning in another.

When it comes to registers, most of them are used in everyday communication. However, some of them may also be used in another form of communication, that is, another register. For example, bank and firm can be used in the economic register. Also, the Italian word *locazione* and the English word *vacancy* can be used in communication related to business. There are many other registers in which false pair occur, which I did not mention. However, most of them fall into the category of everyday communication because specialized language has terms with the same or similar meaning.

There are fewer false pairs between English and Italian than between these two languages and other languages. For example, English has more false pairs with French because of the

borrowings that came into the English language after the Norman Conquest in 1066. Now it is said that almost 50% of words in modern English has a French origin. It is interesting because English is a Germanic language but it has more false pairs with Romance languages than it does with other Germanic languages like German, Dutch or Swedish. Italian is more similar to Spanish and that is why they share many similar words that most of the times stand for the exact same things. However, there are many cases where structurally similar expressions have different meanings, which may lead to misunderstanding. Italian is also similar to French, another Romance language, which is also the connection between English and Italian and the reason for their numerous false pairs.

### **Further research**

Further research could be conducted on the error rate in translation from English to Italian, or vice versa, regarding false friends between these two languages. A survey could be carried out with a group of speakers who speak English as their native language and Italian as their second language, and with a group of speakers who speak Italian as their native language and English as their second language. The results could then be compared.

Further research could also involve other (Romance) languages. Languages like French, Spanish or Portuguese can be compared with either Italian or English. If they are compared with Italian, the false friends will most likely have origin in Latin because they are all part of the same language group. However, if they are compared to English, their false friends will be rooted in French because it is in the same language group as the other languages and has given a huge amount of its vocabulary to English.

## **Conclusion**

To conclude, English and Italian are two languages with vast vocabularies. That is one of the reasons for existence of false friends between these two languages. Another reason, as I previously mentioned, is the Latin influence that both languages possess. Many examples have been made in this paper regarding false friends and their connections in form or meaning. This paper aimed to prove that some of the false friends are very different in meaning and are only confused by new learners of a language, while other are very similar in meaning so they are easily confused by all speakers. The nuances in meaning are sometimes so insignificant that even the most experienced speakers make mistakes. This paper was just a small insight in a greater linguistic issue that can and should be even more thoroughly researched in the future. The lack of literature was one of the main obstacles I encountered during my research. A lot of papers have been written on the topic of false friends, but only several were comparing them between English and Italian. Most of them dealt with English and Spanish and French. The research I conducted helped me realize the most common problems and mistakes that false friends cause for translators between English and Italian.

## References

1. Pascal Brenders, Janet G van Hell, Ton Dijkstra: “Word recognition in child second language learners: Evidence from cognates and false friends”, from *Journal of Experimental Child Psychology*, 2011, Volume 109, pp. 383-396
2. Rubén Chacón-Beltrán: “Towards a typological classification of false friends (Spanish-English)”, from *Revista Española de Lingüística Aplicada*, 2006, pp. 29-40
3. Pedro J. Chamizo, Brigitte Nerlich: “False friends: their origin and semantics in some selected languages”, from *Journal of Pragmatics*, 2002, Volume 34, pp. 1833-1849
4. Rufus H. Gouws, D.J. Prinsloo, Gilles-Maurice de Schryver: “Friends will be friends: true or false: lexicographic approaches to the treatment of false friends”, from 11th EURALEX International Congress (EURALEX-2004), 2004, pp. 797-806
5. Timothy Hayward, André Moulin: “False Friends Invigorated”, from R.R.K Hartmann (ed.), *LEXeter '83 PROCEEDINGS*, 1984, pp. 190-198
6. Diana Inkpen, Oana Frunza, Grzegorz Kondrak: “Automatic Identification of Cognates and False Friends in French and English”, from *Proceedings of the International Conference Recent Advances in Natural Language Processing*, 2005, Volume 9, pp. 251-257
7. Erin Lalor, Kim Kirsner: “The representation of “false cognates” in the bilingual lexicon” from *Psychonomic Bulletin & Review*, 2001, pp. 552-559
8. Alan Partington: “True friends are hard to find: A machine-assisted investigation of



false, true and just plain unreliable ‘friends’”, from *Perspectives: Studies in Translatology*,

9. Joanna Szerszunowicz: “Pseudo-equivalents in English, Italian and Polish faunal phraseology”, from *Proceedings XII EURALEX International Congress. Atti del XII Congresso Internazionale di Lessicografia, Torino 6–9 settembre 2006*, 2006, pp. 1055-1060

10. <https://www.merriam-webster.com/>

11. <https://glosbe.com/>