EASY ACCESS ENGLISH

False Friends

Activity One – Survey

Ask and answer the following questions:

How would you define a real friend?	
How long does it take you to trust someone?	
Do you often find people insincere?	
Do you often get let down by friends and decide that they have betrayed you?	
Have you ever been betrayed by a close friend?	
Do you have acquaintances you would consider to be a little 'false'?	
Do you have friends who you suspected were 'false' or insincere but who turned out to be true friends?	

Now let's discuss your answers.

Activity Two – Explain why the cartoon is about false friends:



Activity Three- Just when you think a word sounds familiar, as you relax, smile and think you know what it means…. It turns out you got it completely wrong! Yes, that word was a false friend to you!

Here are some of the most common French, English false friends…

Read their definitions.

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Actuellement vs Actually

Actuellement means "at the present time" and should be translated as *currently* or *right now*. Je travaille actuellement - I am currently working. A related word is actuel, which means *present* or *current*: le problème actuel - the current/present problem.

Actually means "in fact" and should be translated as *en fait* or *à vrai dire*. Actually, I don't know him - En fait, je ne le connais pas. Actual means *real* or *true*, and depending on the context can be translated as *réel*, *véritable*, *positif*, or *concret*: The actual value - la valeur réelle.

Assister vs Assist

Assister à nearly always means *to attend* something: J'ai assisté à la conférence - I attended (went to) the conference.

To assist means *to help* or *aid* someone or something: I assisted the woman into the building - J'ai aidé la dame à entrer dans l'immeuble.

Attendre vs Attend

Attendre à means *to wait for*: Nous avons attendu pendant deux heures - We waited for two hours. To attend is translated by *assister* (see above): I attended the conference - J'ai assisté à la conférence.

Avertissement vs Advertisement

Un avertissement is a *warning* or *caution*, from the verb avertir - to *warn*.

An advertisement is une *publicité*, une *réclame*, or un *spot publicitaire*.

Blesser vs Bless

Blesser means to *wound*, *injure*, or *offend*, while to bless means *bénir*.

Caractère vs Character

Caractère refers only to the *character or temperament of a person or thing*: Cette maison a du caractère - This house has character.

Character can mean both *nature/temperament* as well as a *person in a play*: Education develops character - L'éducation développe le caractère. Romeo is a famous character - Romeo est un personnage célebre.

Chance vs Chance

La chance means *luck*, while chance in English refers to un *hasard*, une *possibilité*, or une *occasion*. To say "I didn't have a chance to..." see Occasion vs Occasion, below.

Collège vs College

Le collège and le lycée both refer to high school: Mon collège a 1 000 élèves - My high school has 1,000 students.

College is translated by *université*: This college's tuition is very expensive - Les frais de scolarité à cette université sont très élevés.

Commander vs Command

Commander is a semi-false cognate. It means to make an order (command) as well as to order (request) a meal or goods/services. Une commande is translated by *order* in English.

Command can be translated by *commander*, *ordonner*, or *exiger*. It is also a noun: *un ordre* or *un commandement*.

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Finalement vs Finally

Finalement means *eventually* or *in the end*, while finally is *enfin* or *en dernier lieu*.

Formidable vs Formidable

Formidable is an interesting word, because it means *great* or *terrific*; almost the opposite of the English. Ce film est formidable ! - This is a great movie!

Formidable in English means *dreadful* or *fearsome*: The opposition is formidable - L'opposition est redoutable/effrayante.

Librairie vs Library

Une librairie refers to a *bookstore*, while library in French is *une bibliothèque*.

Occasion vs Occasion

Occasion refers to a(n) *occasion*, *circumstance*, *opportunity*, or *second-hand purchase*. Une chemise d'occasion = a *second-hand* or *used* shirt. Avoir l'occasion de means *to have a/the chance to*: Je n'avais pas l'occasion de lui parler - I didn't have a chance to talk to him.

An occasion is une *occasion*, un *événement*, or un *motif*.

Raisin vs Raisin

Un raisin is a *grape*; a raisin is un *raisin sec*.

Rater vs Rate

Rater means to *misfire*, *miss*, *mess up*, or *fail*, while rate is the noun *proportion* or *taux* or the verb *évaluer* or *considérer*.

Réaliser vs Realize

Réaliser means to *fulfill* (a dream or aspiration) or *achieve*. To realize means *se rendre compte de*, *prendre conscience de*, or *comprendre*.

Rester vs Rest

Rester is a semi-false cognate. It usually means *to stay* or *remain*: Je suis restée à la maison - I stayed at the house. When it is used idiomatically, it is translated by *rest*: He refused to let the matter rest - Il refusait d'en rester là.

The verb to rest in the sense of getting some rest is translated by *se reposer*: Elle ne se repose jamais - She never rests.

Réunion vs Reunion

Une réunion can mean *collection*, *gathering*, *raising* (of money), or *reunion*. A reunion is une *réunion*, but note that it usually refers to a meeting of a group that has been separated for an extended period of time (e.g., class reunion, family reunion).

Robe vs Robe

Une robe is a *dress*, *frock*, or *gown*, while a robe is un *peignoir*.

Sale vs Sale

Sale is an adjective - *dirty*. Saler means to *salt*. A sale is *une vente* or *un solde*.

Sympathique vs Sympathetic

Sympathique (often shortened to sympa) means *nice*, *likeable*, *friendly*, *kindly*. Sympathetic can be translated by *compatissant* or *de sympathie*.

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Type vs Type

Un type is informal for a *guy* or *bloke*. In the normal register, it can mean *type*, *kind*, or *epitome*. Quel type de moto ? - What kind of motorbike? Le type de l'égoïsme - The epitome of selfishness.

Type means un *type*, un *genre*, une *espèce*, une *sorte*, une *marque*, etc.

Unique vs Unique

The French word unique means *only* when it precedes a noun (unique fille - *only girl*) and *unique* or *one of a kind* when it follows. In English, unique means *unique*, *inimitable*, or *exceptionnel*.

Activity Four – Can you think of any more false friends in English? (arrive, actually, realise , pass an exam …..)

In most cases translating words into French in order to learn their meaning in English is not a good idea, it's better to learn them in their context, in an expression or sentence which makes their meaning clear. However for false friends it's a good idea to learn them with their translation : ex- bloke = type, genre = type

Activity Five – Role Plays – invent some misunderstandings based on these false friends.

For example : Is this the library ?
Yes sir.
OK well, I'd like to buy this book please.
Ah, well sir I'm afraid that's not possible, you can borrow it but not buy it. We don't sell books, we just lend them.



Activity Six – Article – Read and discuss.

How To Identify a False Friend.

A false friend is someone who is not really your friend. They are the type of people who we sometimes accidentally become friends with. So, how do you identify them to prevent a friendship from starting?

1/ Notice how often a friend tries to embarrass you or make you look bad in front of anyone or everyone, espeically after you've told, asked, or begged them to stop. This can be a major sign that the person does not care for you as a friend but rather as a source of entertainment, at your expense, of course.

2/ Observe if the "friend" is mean to you or makes fun of you all the time. A mean friend may try to take advantage of you or possibly push you around. Keep in mind that some friends make fun of you in a joking way, while others do it to lower your self-esteem. Realize what they are doing, and find someone else who appreciates you.

3/ Notice how often a friend breaks promises that they make to you. Maybe your friend calls you up to see a movie, but then cancels your plans at the last minute, or even worse only a minute or two after making it. This can be a major sign that the person does not want your friendship but only your companionship, and only when they can get nobody better to fill that void.

4/Notice how often someone's friendliness increases whenever they want you to do something for them, and diminishes whenever they don't want you to do something for them. For example, let's say you're going to have an awesome party next weekend. This person may start being nice to you and acting like your friend so you will invite them. Or they start being nice to you and then try to get you to do something you wouldn't ordinarily do. This is a major sign that they only want to pretend to be your friend as long as there is something you can do for them, but not be your friend if they can't get something specific for their efforts. Realize that some people will only be your friend if you do something for them. Try to be aware of the fact that this person probably does "not" want to be your friend, and find someone better to hang out with who actually likes you for who you are.

5/Notice how often they ignore you: ignore what you say, ignore your presence, fail to introduce you when they're making introductions, they offer something to someone nearby but not to you, etc. Some people just like to talk about themselves and not care one bit about you. On the other hand, some people act super nice to you one day, but the next day they act as though they have no idea what-so-ever of who you are. What ever may be the case, you should think twice about being this person's friend if this is frequently occurring.

6Notice how often the person only behaves friendly to you when no other friends are around. This may mean that the person is talking to you out of boredom and does not actually want to be your friend. Also, if the person constantly leaves without warning or explanation, take this as a hint they do not want to be your friend.

7/Notice how often a friend chews you out for making mistakes, or chews you out for bringing their mistakes to their attention but chews you out for making even little mistakes. Some people want to surround themselves with perfectly-behaving people so that they will be perceived as being better than they actually are. It doesn't work, but lots of people for some reason believe that it does.

8/If you find yourself to be in any of the above situations very often at all, it might be time to start seeking other people to spend time with. If you find yourself to be in one or more of the above situations pretty frequently, it is time to start spending time with other people.