

False friends in (not so closely) related languages

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South Africa's various multilingual communities – a mix of eleven official languages and many other, smaller languages – offer unique opportunities to study constructions in contact. The influence of two of the West Germanic languages on each other, English and Afrikaans, has been the subject of study for many years – see for example Bekker (2019), and Donaldson (1991). However, insights from diasystematic construction grammar (DCxG) on this language pair are notably sparse (see Van Rooy (2021); note Coleman (2018) as well).

So-called **false friends** have not been studied extensively from a DCxG perspective (as far as we could determine). We define **false friends** as syntactic, morphological, or lexical constructions from two different languages, which have (near) identical phonological and/or orthographical forms, but different meanings. Such divergence in meaning could be ascribed to, among others, direct transfer of phonological and/or orthographical forms between (closely) related languages. Compare the following corpus examples (CTeXT 2022):

1. Kom **maak my 'n offer**. [≈ Kom maak vir my 'n *aanbod*.]
come make me a **sacrifice**
'Come **make me an offer**.'
2. Laat die familie eers daarmee **deel**. [≈ Laat die familie eers daarmee *omgaan / dit hanteer*.]
Let the family first with.it **divide**
'Let the family **deal** with it first.'
3. ... en **uit+mis op** die lekker van die lewe. [≈ ... en die lekker van die lewe *misloop*.]
and **out+make.droppings on** the nice of the life
'... and **miss out on** the good in life.'

We will analyse these and other relevant examples from a DCxG perspective to gain more insight into the complexity of false friends, their role in constructional change, and their status as constructionalizations.

References

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