

RESOURCE · REFERENCE

False friends that cost you at work

False friends are the words that look like a gift and are not. Most lists collect the funny ones; this one starts with the ones that change what you have agreed to, moves on to the ones that get numbers wrong, and only then gets to the classics.

If you work between English and Spanish, the first two groups are worth ten minutes of your attention.

The ones that change your meaning

actually / actualmente

actually = en realidad · actualmente = currently

"Actually, we finished" means in fact. If you mean right now, say currently in English and en realidad for the Spanish sense.

eventually / eventualmente

eventually = finalmente, con el tiempo · eventualmente = possibly, occasionally

English eventually promises it will happen. Spanish eventualmente suggests it might. A contract is not the place to confuse them.

compromise / compromiso

compromise = acuerdo, concesión · compromiso = commitment

"We reached a compromise" is a concession. Un compromiso is an obligation you have taken on. In a negotiation these are opposite signals.

discuss / discutir

discuss = hablar de, tratar · discutir = to argue

Saying you want to discutir the proposal sounds like you want a fight. Use comentar or tratar.

pretend / pretender

pretend = fingir · pretender = to intend, to aim

"Pretendemos ampliar el equipo" means we intend to. In English that would be a claim of faking it.

The ones that cost money

billion / billón

English billion = mil millones (10^9) · Spanish billón = 10^{12}

A thousandfold error hiding in one word. In finance, write the digits.

estimate vs budget

estimate = estimación · budget = presupuesto

Spanish presupuesto covers both a quote and an internal budget. In English a quote is binding in a way an estimate is not – worth spelling out.

decimals and thousands

1,500 in English = 1.500 in Spanish

English uses the comma for thousands, Spanish the point. On an invoice this is not a small detail.

dates

03/04 = 3 April in the UK and Spain, 4 March in the US

Write the month as a word in international emails. Every trainer says this; people still lose days to it.

The ones that make you sound odd

assist / asistir

assist = ayudar · asistir a = to attend

"I will assist the meeting" is a common one from Spanish speakers. You attend a meeting.

realize / realizar

realize = darse cuenta · realizar = to carry out

"We realized the project" sounds like you suddenly understood it.

support / soportar

support = apoyar · soportar = to put up with

"I support my colleagues" is warm. Soporto a mis compañeros means you tolerate them.

sensible / sensible

sensible (EN) = sensato · sensible (ES) = sensitive

"That's a sensible decision" is praise. Calling a decision sensible in Spanish says it is delicate.

introduce / introducir

introduce a person = presentar · introducir = to insert

"Let me introduce my colleague" is presentar. Introducir belongs to cables and data.

notice / noticia

notice = aviso, darse cuenta · noticia = news item

"I gave notice" means resignation or warning, not that you shared news.

The ones people enjoy getting wrong

embarrassed / embarazada

embarrassed = avergonzado · embarazada = pregnant

The most famous one in the language. It has been said in real meetings, more than once.

constipated / constipado

constipated = estreñido · constipado = having a cold

Explaining your absence needs care in both directions.

large / largo

large = grande · largo = long

"Un informe largo" is a long report, not a big one.

career / carrera

career = trayectoria profesional · carrera = degree, or a race

"Mi carrera" usually means what you studied. English career is the whole working life.

This one is on me. Print it, share it with your team, put it next to your screen. No signup, no strings.

If you want these worked through against your own meetings, emails and documents, the first session is free:

wordroot.de/booking.html

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