False Friends: People and Feelings

English words for family, character and feelings that look familiar to Spanish speakers but mean something different, from A1 to C2.

A1–C2 · English Vocabulary, Lesson 8

my parents and relatives · nice, not sympathetic · reach a compromise

Family *A1–A2*

parents	relatives
mother	father
grandparents	children
brothers	sisters
aunt	uncle
cousin	family member
son	daughter

parents = mother + father only · relatives = all your family

People *A1–A2*

nice	friendly
kind	sympathetic
polite	rude
educated	clever
excited	happy
simple	easy
please	thank you

nice = pleasant · sympathetic = understanding when you have a problem

Feelings and mix-ups *B1–B2*

Feelings: disappointed, disappointing, a disappointment · worried · excited about

Not what they seem: deception (a trick) · preoccupied (thinking of something else) · crude (rough or rude)

Plans: I've got plans · I've arranged to… · a commitment · an engagement · reach a compromise

Chance: by chance · casual clothes · a casual chat

Reacting: ignore someone · not know · bother · annoy · disturb

Idioms: put your foot in it · get the wrong end of the stick

*I was **disappointed** with the film, and I **put my foot in it** when I said so to the director's sister.*

a person is disappointed; a thing is disappointing

Partial friends and politeness *C1–C2*

Partial friends: sympathetic to · a sympathetic character · compromise your safety · compromising · crude oil

Useful phrases: an educated guess · deceptively simple · a casual acquaintance · a preoccupation with

Politeness: indirectness, a hedge, understatement, impose, save face

Two strategies: negative politeness (avoid imposing) · positive politeness (show warmth and closeness)

Reasoning: stereotyping · hasty generalisation · judge by whose rules?

*The council was **sympathetic to** the plan, but would not **compromise** on safety.*

I was wondering if… = a hedge: easy to say no to

Being polite

- *Could I have some water, please?*
- *Sorry to bother you, but…*
- *Would you like some more?*
- *Thank you, that was lovely.*

Common mistakes

- ~~My parents are very many.~~ → I have a lot of **relatives**.
- ~~He's very sympathetic.~~ → He's very **nice**.
- ~~I'm preoccupied about the exam.~~ → I'm **worried**.
- ~~I like fish crude.~~ → I like **raw** fish.

Words with a past

- **ignore**: first meant "not to know"
- **casual**: first meant "by chance"
- **simple**: Latin *simplex*, "one-fold"
- **parent**: Latin *parere*, "to give birth"

My new words

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