

False friends in tech production

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Linguist of the house, speaking

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- From a bi-lingual home
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False friends

... et tu, Brute?

“A “false friend” is a word in a language that has a correspondingly similar word in a different language. However, those words do not have the same, or even vaguely similar, meanings. When translating one language to another they feel as if they are an easy substitution, but they are not.”

<https://www.star-uk.co.uk/false-friends-in-language-translation/>

Rock
(German)



Rock
(English)



Worldtranslation

Burro
(Spanish)



Burro
(Italian)



Worldtranslation

But what does that mean in tech?

Different disciplines have different jargon.

Jargon \approx language

=> Different disciplines use the same words, but not the same meaning

Warning:

Big Rant incoming about developers and the Agile Manifesto

A painting of a group of people in a meeting, with text overlaid. The painting shows several people standing around a table, looking at a document or screen. The style is somewhat impressionistic, with soft lighting and visible brushstrokes. The text is overlaid in the center of the image.

Manifesto for Agile Software Development

We are uncovering better ways of developing software by doing it and helping others do it.
Through this work we have come to value:

Individuals and interactions over processes and tools

Working software over comprehensive documentation

Customer collaboration over contract negotiation

Responding to change over following a plan

That is, while there is value in the items on the right, we value the items on the left more.

What people mean by “documentation”

- White papers
- Product Backlog Items/Jira descriptions of feature scope
- Design documents
- Implementation details
- Data sheets
- End user guides
- Video tutorials
- // comments
- Docker files
- Legal requirements

And it doesn't stop there:

- Definition of Done
- Ready for development
- Minimal Viable Product
- “It's been documented”

OK, now we're all angry - now what?

Decrease friction by seeing conflict as a matter of language barriers.

Time for some meta communication:

- What do you mean by this?
- Can we just sync on what we're actually agreeing on?
- What does it mean to “document” this?

And for some Process:

- Feature scoping = docs scoping
- Tasks for doc input
- Iteration; write fiction, edit fiction
- As many contributors as possible
 - More eyes on the prize

First we need to be aware of it, so that we can talk about it.

Any questions?