

USING COGNATES TO SUPPORT COMPREHENSION IN ENGLISH FOR SPANISH-SPEAKING ENGLISH LANGUAGE LEARNERS

Cognates are words in two languages that share a similar meaning, spelling, and pronunciation. While English may share very few cognates with a language like Chinese, 30-40% of all words in English have a related word in Spanish. Described in another way, some research indicates that Spanish and English share 10,000 to 15,000 cognates! Furthermore, some measures identify that 78% of the words on the Academic Word List are true cognates or partial cognates. Thus, for Spanish-speaking ELLs, cognates are an obvious bridge to English language vocabulary growth.

Cognate recognition helps students see connections between Spanish and English through related roots and morphological parallels. Students can use awareness of cognates as a tool toward closing the vocabulary gap. There is evidence that cognate instruction can engage students and boost their achievement.

Not surprisingly, researchers who study first and second language acquisition have found that students benefit from cognate awareness. Cognate awareness is the ability to use cognates in a primary language as a tool for understanding a second language. Children can be taught to use cognates as early as preschool. As students move up the grade levels, they can be introduced to more sophisticated cognates, and to cognates that have multiple meanings in both languages, although some of those meanings may not overlap. One example of a cognate with multiple meanings is *asistir*, which means to assist (same meaning) but also to attend (different meaning).

Take the time to explicitly teach even young English learners what cognates are and how to notice them. Introduce the idea with some common examples, like *family-familia* or *camera-cámara*. Then have them match a few. For example:

<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
center	centro
radio	radio
class	clase
desert	desierto
magic	magia
gorilla	gorila
color	color
circle	círculo

Encourage students to look for cognates in anything they read, and to listen for them during read-alouds or other classroom activities. Remind them of this periodically.

Cognates are great, but...

1. Please be aware that our students come with a wide range of vocabulary in their native language; we may point out a cognate, but if they do not know the word in Spanish, then pointing it out to them will be of no help. At best, excellent instruction about the transfer of linguistic information through cognates may improve students' abilities in both languages.
2. Take care to also explain that cognates can have different stress patterns in the two languages. If this is not explicitly taught, it may be more difficult for students to identify and make use of cognates. For instance, the word *condition* has stress on the second syllable, but its cognate, *condición*, has stress on the final syllable.
3. Make sure you and students both are aware of *false cognates*. See below...

False Cognates

It is also critical that you warn students about false cognates. For example: *embarrassed/embrazada* and *pie/pie*. These are words that look and sound similar but do not have the same meaning in English and Spanish. Ask students if they know what *pie* means in Spanish (*foot*), and ask what the word *pie* means in English (*dessert*). Another example of a false cognate is the word *embarrassed* in English (*ashamed*) and *embrazada* in Spanish (*pregnant*). Give students some cognates and some false cognates and ask them to identify each. Examples of false cognates:

<u>English</u>	<u>Spanish</u>
globe	globo (balloon)
pie	pie (foot)
rope	clase
soap	sopa (soup or pasta)
large	largo (long)
exit	éxito (success)
hay	hay (there is)
embarrassed	embrazada (pregnant)
cry	cría (breeding)

Common Greek & Latin Roots that are cognates in English and Spanish

As students move up through the grade levels and build awareness of affixes and roots, it will be appropriate to cover common Greek and Latin roots that are cognates in English and Spanish.

<u>Root</u>	<u>Meaning</u>	<u>English examples</u>	<u>Spanish examples</u>
aud	hear	auditorium, audition, audio	auditorio, audición
astir	star	astrology, astronaut	astrología, astronauta
bene	good	benefit, benevolent	beneficio, benévolo
bio	life	biography, biology, biome	biografía, biología, bioma
dict	speak, tell	dictate, predict, dictator	dictar, dictador
mit, mis	send	mission, transmit, permit	misión, transmitir, permiso
ped, pod	foot	pedal, centipede, pedestrian	pedal, pedestre, pedestal
phon	sound	phoneme, microphone	fonéma, fonética, micrófono
port	carry	transport, portable	transportar, portátil

SEE BELOW FOR LIST OF COMMON ENGLISH/SPANISH COGNATES...

COMMON ENGLISH – SPANISH COGNATES

*Don't forget some basics: Spanish **ll** sounds like English **y** (tortillas); Spanish **h** is silent (hola); Spanish **j** can sound like English **h**, or a guttural **h** (frijoles).*

English	Spanish
	A
accident	accidente
accidental	accidental
accompany	acompañar
acrobatic	acrobático/a
active	activo/a
activities	actividades
admire	admirar
admit	admitir
adult	adulto
adventure	aventura
adopt	adoptar
adoption	adopción
affect (v)	afectar
African	africano
agent	agente
air	aire
alarm	alarma
allergic	alérgico/a
anaconda	anaconda
animal	animal
announce	anunciar
appear	aparecer
appetite	apetito
April	abril
area	área
arithmetic	aritmética
artist	artista
association	asociación
astronomer	astrónomo

atmosphere	atmósfera
attention	atención
August	agosto
autograph	autógrafo
automobile	automóvil
	B
baby	bebé
banana	banana
banjo	banjo
bicycle	bicicleta
biography	biografía
blouse	blusa
brilliant	brillante
	C
cafeteria	cafetería
calendar	calendario
camera	cámera
camouflage	camuflaje
canyon	cañón
captain	capitán
capture	capturar
catastrophe	catástrofe
cause	causa
celebrate	celebrar
cement (n.)	cemento
center	centro
centimeter	centímetro
ceramic	cerámica
cereal	cereal
ceremony	ceremonia
character	carácter
chimney	chimenea
chimpanzee	chimpancé

cholera	cólera
circle (n.)	círculo
circular	circular
class	clase
coast	costa
colony	colonia
color	color
colossal	colosal
committee	comité
common	común
complete (adj.)/(v.)	completo(a) / -ar
completely	completamente
company	compañía
concert	concierto
condition	condición
confetti	confeti
conflict	conflicto
confused	confundido
confusion	confusión
constellation	constelación
construction	construcción
contagious	contagioso/a
continent	continente
continue	continuar
contract (n.)	contrato
contribution	contribución
coyote	coyote
crocodile	cocodrilo
cube	cubo
curious	curioso/a
cycle	ciclo
D	
December	diciembre
decide	decidir
decoration	decoración, adorno
delicate	delicado/a

demonstrate	demonstrar
dentist	dentista
depend	depender
deport	deportar
describe	describir
desert	desierto
destroy	destruir
detain	detener
determine	determinar
diamond	diamante
dictator	dictador
different	diferente
difficult	difícil
dinosaur	dinosaurio
direction	dirección
directions	direcciones
directly	directamente
director	director
disappear	desaparecer
disaster	desastre
discord	discordia
discrimination	discriminación
discuss	discutir
disgrace	desgracia
distance	distancia
distribute	distribuir
dollar	dólar
double	doble
dragon	dragón
dynamite	dinamita
E	
economy	economía
effect	efecto
electric	eléctrico/a
elephant	elefante
eliminate	eliminar

enormous	enorme
energy	energía
English	inglés
enter	entrar
equipment	equipos (<i>atlético</i>)
escape	escapar
especially	especialmente
evidence	evidencia
exam, test	examen
examine	examinar
exceed	exceder
exclaim	exclamar
explain	explicar
explosion	explosión
exotic	exótico/a
extra	extra
extraordinary	extraordinario/a
F	
family	familia
famous	famoso/a
fascinate	fascinar
favorite	favorito/a
February	febrero
ferocious	feroz
finally	finalmente
firm	firme
flexible	flexible
flower	flor
fortunately	afortunadamente
fruit	fruta
function	función
funeral	funeral
furious	furioso/a
G	
galaxy	glaxia
gallon	galón

garden	jardín
gas	gas
giant	gigante
gigantic	gigantesco/a
giraffe	jirafa
golf	golf
glorious	glorioso/a
gorilla	gorila
group	grupo
guard	guardia
guide	guía
guitar	guitarra
gymnasium	gimnasio
gymnastics	gimnasia
H	
helicopter	helicóptero
hippopotamus	ipopótamo
history	historia
honor	honor
hospital	hospital
hotel	hotel
hour	hora
human	humano/a
I	
idea	idea
identification	identificación
imagine	imaginar
immediately	inmediatamente
immigrants	inmigrantes
importance	importancia
important	importante
impressed	impresionando/a
impression	impresión
incredible	increíble
incurable	incurable
independence	independencia

influence (n)	influencia
influence (v)	influenciar, influir
information	información
insects	insectos
inseparable	inseparable
insist	insistir
inspection	inspección
intelligence	inteligencia
interesting	interesante
interrupt	interrumpir
introduce	introducir
introduction	introducción
invent	inventar
investigate	invesigar
invitation	invitación
invite	invitar
island	isla
J	
June	junio
July	julio
K	
kangaroo	canguro/kanguro
kilogram	kilogramo
L	
leader	líder
lemon	limón
lens	lente
leopard	leopardo
lessons	lecciones
line	línea
lion	león
list	lista
locate	localizar
M	
machine	máquina
magic	magia

magician	mago
magnificent	magnífico/a
manner	manera
map	mapa
March	marzo
march	Marchar, caminar
May	mayo
medal	medalla
memory	memoria
metal	metal
microscope	microscopio
million	millón
miniature	miniatura
minute (n.)	minuto
minute (adj.)	minúsculo
modern	moderno
moment	momento
monument	monumento
mountain	montaña
much	mucho
multiplication	multiplicación
multiply	multiplicar
music	música
N	
nation	nación
natural	natural
necessity	necesidad
nectar	néctar
nervous	nervioso/a
north	norte
notice	noticia
November	noviembre
O	
obedience	obediencia
obey	obedecer (<i>cumplir</i>)
object (n.)	objeto

observe	observar
occasion	ocasión
ocean	oceáno
October	octubre
office	oficina
operation	operación
orbit	órbita
orchestra	orquesta
ordinary	ordinario
P	
palace	palacio
panic	pánico
paper	papel
park	parque
part	parte
patience	paciencia
penguin	pingüino
perfect	perfecto/a
perfume	perfume
permanent	permanente
personality	personalidad
photo	foto
photograph	fotografía
photographer	fotógrafo/a
physical	físico
piano	piano
pilot	piloto
pioneer	pionero
pirate	pirata
planet	planeta
planetarium	planetario
plan (n.)	plan
plants (n.)	plantas
plates (n.)	platos
poem	poema
poet	poeta

poetry	poesía
police	policía
possible	posible
practice (n)	práctica
practice (v)	practicar
prepare	preparar
present (v)	presentar
problem	problema
professional	profesional
Q	
qualification	calificación
qualify	calificar
quality	calidad
quantify	cuantificar
quart	cuarto
R	
radio	radio
ranch	rancho
rectangle	rectángulo
really	realmente
reflect (<i>mirror</i>)	reflejar
reflect (<i>ponder</i>)	reflexionar
restaurant	restaurante
retire	retirar
reunion	reunión
rich	rico/a
rock	roca
rose	rosa
route	ruta
S	
sandals	sandalias
secret	secreto
section	sección
select (v.)	seleccionar
September	septiembre
series	serie

service	servicio
shampoo	champú
similar	similar
sofa	sofá
solve	resolver
sound	sonido
special	especial
specific	específico
splendid	espléndido/a
statistics	estadística
stomach	estómago
study	estudiar
subject	sujeto
submarine	submarino
subtitle	subtítulos
sum	suma
superior	superior
surprise (n.) / (v.)	sorpresa / -ar
T	
taxi	taxis
telephone	teléfono
telescope	telescopio
television	televisión
temperature	temperatura
terrible	terrible
theatre	teatro

tiger	tigre
title	título
tomato	tomate
totally	totalmente
tourist	turista
traffic	tráfico
trap (v.)	atratar
tremendous	tremendo
triangle	triángulo
triple	triple
trumpet	trompeta
tube	tubo
type	tipo
typical	típica
U	
uniform	uniforme
union	unión
unique	único/a, sólo
unite	unir, unirse
united	unido/a
V	
vegetables	vegetales
version	versión
visit (n.) / (v.)	visita / -ar
volleyball	voleibol
vote (v.)	votar

Also note cognates and close relations among affixes and terms of weights and measures:

Weights & Measures Prefixes

English	Spanish	Prefix meaning
deca-	deca-	10 times
hecto-	hecto-	100 times
kilo-	kilo-	1000 times
deci-	ceci-	1/10
centi-	centi-	1/100
milli-, mili-	milli-, mili-	1/1000

Volume/Area Terms

English	Spanish
liquid	líquido
quart	cuarto
gallon	galón
ounce	onzas
liter	litro
cubic	cúbico

Distance Terms

English	Spanish
area	área
yard	yarda
mile	milla
meter	metro
kilometer	kilómetro
centimeter	centímetro
millimeter	milímetro

Weight Terms

English	Spanish
gram	gramo
kilogram	kilogramo

Adapted/Sourced from:

Colorín Colorado (2011). *Using Cognates to Develop Comprehension in English*. Retrieved September 20, 2014, from <http://www.colorincolorado.org/educators/background/cognates/>

Flinspach, S., Scott, J., and Miller, T. (2010). *Looking at Cognates: What's Importante y Necesario in Instruction?* University of California, Santa Cruz. Vocabulary Innovations In Education (VINE).

Third Grade Teacher Reading Academy. (2002). Austin, TX: UT System; Texas Education Agency; Education Service Center Region 13; Education Service Center Region 4.

http://spanish.about.com/od/spanishvocabulary/a/intro_to_suffixes.htm