The Cognate Advantage

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The basics

Cognates: words across two languages which overlap in meaning and appearance- orthographically and/or phonetically
- e.g. Spanish “teléfono” - English “telephone”

Cognate Advantage: also referred to as “cognate facilitation effect”; the ability to recognize or produce cognates faster than non-cognates
- This transfer of lexical knowledge is only possible through the ability to recognize cognates
- Therefore, by making students aware of these cross-linguistic similarities, we can encourage them to access their L1 skills

The research

- Spanish & English share over 20,000 cognates (Nash, 1999)
- Bilinguals are faster at recognizing words that are cognates than at recognizing non-cognates (Sunderman and Schwartz, 2008)
- Heightened awareness of the relationship between Spanish and English played an important role in the transfer of knowledge which, in turn, enhanced reading comprehension (Jimenez, Garcia & Pearson, 1996)
- Use morphology as learning strategy (Ramirez, Chen & Pasquarella, 2013)

Recognizing strategies

Introduce concept
1. Index cards which consist of cognate pair
2. Groups receive a few of the Spanish index cards, no more than five,
3. Collectively discuss & define
4. T distributes cards with corresponding English words
5. Ss match cognate pairs
6. Class discussion: How did you identify pairs? What similarities did you notice?
7. Introduce concept of cognates
8. Ss discuss how cognates can help them learn vocabulary in English
Teaching morphology

1. Ss receive handout Cognate Suffix Patterns with categorized groups
2. Ss ID & extract patterns found in each set of words
3. T give an example of the English cognate for each group of words  
   E.g. estación → station
4. Do various examples to assure comprehension
5. Ss complete list with English cognate (individually)
6. After checking answers together as a class, students share any cognates they are familiar with that are not on the list.

Example

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Spanish</th>
<th>English</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>completamente</td>
<td>completely</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>directamente</td>
<td>directly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>especialmente</td>
<td>especially</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>exactamente</td>
<td>exactly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>finalmente</td>
<td>finally</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>afortunadamente</td>
<td>fortunately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>inmediatamente</td>
<td>immediately</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>perfectamente</td>
<td>perfectly</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>realmente</td>
<td>really</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>totalmente</td>
<td>totally</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Questions?

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**Legendary Heroes**

*These are the stories of two legendary heroes. Although these two heroes seem very different, they have many qualities which are the same.*

One was a great athlete. He was the best boxer in the world. Many years ago, he was often in the public eye. He talked a lot. He liked to be noticed. When he got older, however, he lived more quietly. He made a rare public appearance in 1996, in Atlanta, United States, where he lit the Olympic Flame, opening the Olympics.

The other person never wanted to be noticed. She went quietly about her work of helping poor people in India. She lived with and cared for the homeless, the poor, and the dying. But she became very famous indeed for her work, and she inspired many other people to follow her example.*

*(Passage taken from “Legendary Heroes” by Eva Wood; The Wright Group in Bothell, WA, 2000.)*